The Sheffield Peace Movement 1934 - 1940

David Anthony Stevenson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2001

Abstract:

The object of the thesis was to build a portrait of a local peace movement in order to contrast and compare it with existing descriptions of the peace movement written from a national perspective. The Sheffield Peace Movement is examined from the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War to the disestablishment and reformation of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council in 1940 as a result of its support for the anti-war line taken by the Communist Party of Great Britain. The peace movement is treated holistically. Political, religious and other organisations associated with it are discussed alongside groups specifically devoted to the issues of peace. These various strands are followed through from the impulse to unity which existed after the successful operation of the Peace Ballot, through the fundamental division between pacifist and *pacificist* outlooks which began with the War in Abyssinia, to the final split of the movement when its large *pacificist* majority accepted the necessity for war with Germany. The character of local peace movements, it is suggested, depended very much on the political, social and economic context in which they flourished. The history of the Sheffield movement is characterised by competition between three groups for its leadership. The Labour Party dominated its political relationships but is scarcely to be understood without reference to Communist-inspired efforts to form a Popular Front of socialist and liberal groups. The Anglican Church leadership provided a strand of *pacificism* difficult to distinguish from defencism but nevertheless crucial to the position of the majority of the movement at the outbreak of war, while Nonconformism dominated the city's pacifism. Despite the strength of both these party political and religious influences, however, the League of Nations Union led the Sheffield movement during two key periods. The growth of the *pacificist* consensus, which at a national level saw the formation of a coalition spanning both right and left of British politics, is a stronger theme in Sheffield than the move of the minority pacifist wing into absolutism. The impact of a new "realism" on the "utopian" theories of the first decade and a half after the Great War is generally to be found in the move from the quasi-pacifism of the early thirties, which found expression on the Left in Sheffield in the policy of working-class war-resistance, to the rather crude version of League of Nations inspired Collective Security embodied in the mutual defence pacts and guarantees sought by Britain after March 1939. The ideological complexion of Sheffield's Left-wing and its importance in the deliberations of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council ensured that, overlaying the general move towards *pacificism,* were a number of specific objections to aspects of the "realist" policies espoused by the national Labour leadership rooted in Communist Party policy and opposition to Chamberlain's National Government. The superficial similarities between communist objections to specific aspects of war preparations and the policies of the pacifist rump of the peace movement gave the impression that Sheffield was a centre of opposition to the war. The fundamental division between the *pacificist* and pacifist approaches ensured, however, that these two groups, the only remaining anti-war elements of the Sheffield movement after October 1939, never entered a formal alliance. The Communist Left remained wedded to interaction with working class groups while the remaining pacifists became isolated and increasingly quietist under the relentless pressure of the pro-war majority including their former *pacificist* colleagues in the peace movement.

Contents:

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

The Peace Movement Nationally 8
A Chronology of Events Impacting on the Peace Movement 34
Sheffield, the Economic, Social and Political Background 42

Chapter 2: Do You Want Peace or War? 61

From the National Congress Against War and Fascism to the Peace Ballot (August 1934 - May 1935)

Commemoration 61
The National Youth Congress Against War and Fascism and the Impact of the United Front 63
Attitudes to the League of Nations 69
The Aftermath of the Congress 73
The Peace Ballot:
(a) Preparations 77
(b) Political Reactions 80
(c) Reactions in the Churches 87
(d) The Results 89
The Sheffield Disturbance and the United Front 93
Summary of Chapter 2 100
Chapter 2, Appendix: Peace Ballot Results 103

Chapter 3: Towards a United Peace Movement: 105

From the Esperantists' Peace Council to Reactions to the Hoare-Laval Plan (June 1935 - January 1936)

(a) Sheffield and Eccleshall Cooperative Society Education Committee and the Sheffield Esperantists 106
(b) Sheffield Youth Peace Council 108
(c) The Women's Peace Rally 110
(d) The Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction 112
(e) The STLC Peace Committee 113
The War in Abyssinia 115
Air Raid Precautions 123
The General Election 125
Summary of Chapter 3 132
Chapter 3, Appendix: General Election Results in Sheffield and Nationally: 135

Chapter 4: Bringing Everybody In 137

From Reactions to Rearmament to the First Phase of the Spanish War (February - December 1936)

Reactions to Rearmament 139
The First Sheffield Peace Week and the Formation of the Sheffield Peace Council 145
The Sheffield Youth Peace Council 157
The League of Nations Union in Difficulties 161
Pacifism and the Beginnings of the Peace Pledge Union 168
The Influence of the Communist Party 176
The Effect of the early months of the Spanish War 180
Summary of Chapter 4 188

Chapter 5: No Halfway House and... No Compromise 191

From the Unity Campaign to Saving China and Peace (January 1937 - January 1938)

The Unity Campaign 191
The Impact of Labour Party Attitudes to Rearmament on the Peace Movement 196
Sheffield Peace Council and the Second Sheffield Peace Week 203
The Revival of the League of Nations Union 207
Anti-Militarism and the Peace Movement's Defence Policy 215
The Peace Pledge Union in Operation 221
Domestic Fascism in Sheffield 225
The Second Phase of the Spanish War 228
Summary of Chapter 5 232

Chapter 6: Despised and Abused by Future Historians 235

From Eden's Resignation to Munich and its Aftermath (February - December 1938)

The Resignation of Eden 235
The Popular Front 241
The League of Nations Union and the International Peace Campaign 245
The Shape of the Consensus: 252
(a) Spain 253
(b) The Sheffield China Relief Committee and the "Refugee Problem" 257
(c) Air Raid Precautions 262
Developments in the Peace Pledge Union 267
Munich 272
Summary of Chapter 6 285

Abbreviations used in the thesis:

AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
ARP	Air Raid Precautions
ASLEF	Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
BAWM	British Anti-War Movement
CO	Conscientious Objector
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
DLP	Divisional Labour Party
ETU	Electrical Trades Union
FoR	Fellowship of Reconciliation
FU	Federal Union
HPG	Hastings Peace Group
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IPC	International Peace Campaign
LNER	London and North Eastern Railway
LNU	League of Nations Union
LSI	Labour and Socialist International
NAFTA	National Amalgamated Furniture Trades Association
NALGO	National Association of Local Government Officers
NCL	National Council of Labour
NCS	New Commonwealth Society
NEC	National Executive Committee (of the Labour Party)
NMWM	No More War Movement
NUDAW	National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers
NUGMW	National Union of General and Municipal Workers
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
NUWM	National Unemployed Workers' Union
PAC	Public Assistance Committee
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
POUM	Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista - Spanish Revolutionary (i.e. anti-Stalinist) Communists
PPU	Peace Pledge Union
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
STLC	Sheffield Trades and Labour Council
SWUC	Sheffield Workers' Unity Committee
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UDC	Union for Democratic Control
UPA	United Peace Alliance
URC	University Representatives Committee
WEA	Workers' Educational Association
WIL	Workers' International League
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
YCL	Young Communist League
YMA	Yorkshire Miners' Association

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis attempts to construct a holistic description of peace activism in Sheffield between August 1934 and July 1940. Despite the very different bases of their interest in peace, activists operating in Sheffield during most of this period regarded themselves as a movement[1] and consciously promoted unifying events as an expression of what they viewed as a commonality of purpose, albeit overlaid with differing emphases. The fundamental division within the movement between pacifism: "the belief that all war is always wrong and should never be resorted to, whatever the consequences of abstaining from fighting" and what Martin Ceadel, following A.J.P. Taylor's usage, labels *pacificism*: "the assumption that war, though sometimes necessary, is always an irrational and inhuman way to solve disputes, and that its prevention should always be an over-riding political priority",[2] was delineated as early as 1935. Nevertheless, as late as May 1938 activists were cooperating across this divide to promote peace activity. In the last phase the secession of the pacifists into their own groupings with a very different agenda was less damaging to this holistic conception than might have been expected because the variety of traditions which made up the *pacificist* coalition continued, to an extent, to view themselves as a movement. While this owed something to the left-wing ideological concept of a Popular Front, it embodied a wider recognition of the primacy of the need to promote a unity of national purpose across political divides in resistance to the expansionism of Germany, Italy and Japan and in opposition to what was felt to be the accommodation of the National Government.

Activists in Sheffield viewed themselves as having a particular significance within the wider interest in peace, which dominated the latter part of the thirties primarily because of their location in one of Britain's largest armaments centres. The sense of the importance of the local movement was enhanced, however, for those on the Left because Sheffield was seen as an embodiment of progressive Left-wing opinion.[3] Although less

---

[1] The "Peace Movement" was referred to by Dr A.M. Boase of Sheffield University when he addressed the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council on 28th April 1936.

[2] Ceadel, M., Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, The Defining of a Faith, Oxford, 1980, p3

[3] Interestingly, George Orwell, who visited Sheffield in the nineteen thirties, commented ironically on the Sheffielders' sense of their own importance: "Sheffield, I suppose, could justly claim to be called the ugliest town in the Old World: its inhabitants, who want it to be pre-eminent in everything, very likely do make that claim for it." The Road to Wigan

specifically local in origin it is clear that the sense that particular groups had a special role to play in "saving" peace was widespread. Sheffield's beleaguered Liberals felt that the loss of Liberal influence had been crucial, Nonconformist elements viewed the drift away from religion as of central importance and pacifists believed that the only hope was the adoption of their own, more humanitarian, values. That the proposed solution would in each case have raised the profile and importance of the group concerned alerts us to the fact that the primacy of the issue of peace in the later thirties ensured that groups were not only simply reacting to international events but sought to promote themselves and their views through the peace movement. There was a competition for influence in Sheffield because of the vitality of a number of traditions in the city that involved themselves in peace activism and this had a profound effect on the development of the movement.

There are already a small number of works on elements of the peace movement in Sheffield during the thirties. Bill Moore, himself a participant in the earlier phase of these events, has written short articles and pamphlets on the period.[4] An official history of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council was produced in 1958 which offers quite a full account of the reorganisation of the council in 1940[5] while seeking, in a manner redolent of many of the writings of the immediate post-war period, to distance the authors from the "tragic contradiction" which was felt to characterise pre-war opinion.[6] J.W. Mager's unpublished dissertation, "'Believing that Socialism and Peace are Indivisible' - the attitude of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council towards Peace and War between 1919 and 1939"[7] is available in the public library. There is a short memoir of C.H.

Pier, London, 1937, (Penguin edn. 1962) p95

[4] Moore, E.L. (Bill), All Out! - The Dramatic Story of the Sheffield Demonstration Against Dole Cuts on February 6th 1935, Sheffield, 1985, Moore, E.L., "The Anti-War Movement in Sheffield in the 1920's and 1930's", Sheffield Forward, September 1980, Moore, E.L. (ed), Behind the Clenched Fist - Sheffield's Aid to Spain 1936 - 1939, Sheffield, 1986

[5] Mendelson, J., Owen, W., Pollard S., and Thornes V.M., Sheffield Trades and Labour Council 1858 - 1958, Sheffield, 1958, pp94 - 98

[6] The authority of the views expressed is undermined by inaccuracies. C.S. Darvill's visit to Spain is wrongly dated, which is a small matter, but more significantly two of the four successful Labour candidates in Sheffield given in the 1935 General Election did not actually stand on that occasion.

[7] Mager, J.W., "'Believing that Socialism and Peace are Indivisible' - the attitude of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council towards Peace and War between 1919 and 1939", MA dissertation, Sheffield University, 1983

Wilson MP,[8] and a longer, nationally focussed biography of A.V. Alexander MP.[9] These, neither singly nor as a group, offer a comprehensive description of popular agitation on the issue of peace in Sheffield during the thirties.

"History from below" in the thirties has largely come to be identified with groups on the Left and to focus on manifestations of the disagreement between the Labour Party leadership and those within and without the party opposed to their gradualist constitutional methods. Although the issues around which peace activity coalesced at a national level have been extensively debated in this context by historians of the various official and unofficial elements of the Labour Movement, there appears to be a dearth of local studies on the single issue of peace which take as their focus all elements operating within the peace movement. Indeed, it has not been possible to locate a study that examines the peace movement within the same parameters as the present work in another locality. There are, however, a number of studies that invite comparison with sections of this thesis.

Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn, writing of nearby West Yorkshire describe the Labour Party organisations there as "remarkably responsive to the national movement" on peace policy and find that dissent "...was usually concentrated in a few areas - most notably in Bradford."[10] They believe that: "...in West Yorkshire the peace movement declined quickly, and that the Socialist League and Communist Party carried little weight in this immensely working-class and trade union dominated local movement."[11] They describe the national peace policy which the local parties followed as one of collective security coupled with disarmament and conclude: "It was only when it was realized that such a policy would not materialize that the Labour parties in West Yorkshire followed Attlee, Bevin and other generally right wing leaders along a path of action which supported rearmament and contemplated the possibility of war..."[12] They acknowledge, however, that the change of attitude to foreign policy during the later thirties "...created problems for the large and cumbersome structure of the Labour Party" and describe the

---

[8] Wilson, A.C., Cecil Henry Wilson 1862 - 1945, Sheffield, 1946

[9] Tilley, John, Churchill's Favourite Socialist: A Life of A.V. Alexander, Manchester, 1995. This is to an extent an exercise in hagiography and does not have a great deal to say specific to Sheffield.

[10] Reynolds J. & Laybourn K., Labour Heartland - The History of the Labour Party in West Yorkshire During the Inter-War Years 1918 - 1939, Bradford, 1987, p148

[11] *Ibid*, p135

[12] *Ibid*, p30

adjustment as "slow" and "confused", although they reiterate that the local Labour Party "...appears to have followed the national party in its abandonment of old shibboleths".[13] That Reynold's and Laybourn's "slow" and "confused" evolution of peace policy within a "cumbersome" party structure should, nevertheless, be seen to have existed within the context of general agreement with the national party leadership, indicates attitudes within the West Yorkshire Labour Movement very different from those of Sheffield.

Richard Stevens' research into the relationship between the Communist and Labour Parties in Nottingham suggests a situation closer to that in Sheffield. Communists, he writes, were tolerated although: "...the fundamental tolerance within the Trades Council cracked somewhat under pressure, but did not shatter". During 1940 he finds that antagonism to the Communist Party increased and those who "flaunted their communism too openly" were disciplined. The major difference was that communists in Nottingham were not sufficiently influential to set the trades council against party policy.[14] Nottingham had only a trades council with union representation, while Sheffield's Trade and Labour Council was much larger and included political representatives. The combination of political and union representation may thus have been one of the factors in making that body a centre of resistance in the final phase. Political representation on the STLC provided, however, both supporters and opponents of radical views.

Sections in books by Noreen Branson[15] and Angus Calder[16] on the early months of the war suggest, in line with Stevens' work, that Sheffield's experience of mainly communist inspired opposition to the war within the Labour Party was not unusual. The atypical factor was that this opposition was influential enough to set the STLC against party policy. Sheffield was one of only ten places to have their trades councils forcibly reorganised during this period and the only one outside of Outer London. Nine further

---

[13] *Ibid*, p132

[14] An "imperialist war" resolution was lost by 40 - 16. Stevens, Richard, "'Disruptive Elements'?: The Influence of the Communist Party in Nottinghamshire and District Trades Council, 1929 - 1951", Labour History Review 58/3 (1993), pp25 - 26

[15] Branson, N., History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927 - 1941, London, 1985, p276 Branson reports that by the end of 1939 there had been anti-war resolutions from 84 Labour Party organisations, 24 trades councils, 97 other trade union organisations and 31 Cooperative organisations.

[16] Calder, A., The People's War, London, 1969 Calder notes that 70 out of the approximately 400 active Labour Constituency Parties had supported calls for a truce by the end of November 1939.

trades councils spread across the country were made to conform to rules.[17] There were obviously factors at work in Sheffield which ensured that either the Communist Party had more influence on the Labour Party or that anti-war feeling within the Labour Party was stronger there than in other localities.

Jane Bowen's study of two Sussex peace groups with a dominant ethos of absolute pacifism invites comparisons with other sectors of the Sheffield movement. Hastings Peace Group's main thrust was disarmament and it was far from quietist.[18] Its leaders criticised the Quakers for being "...too tentative and lukewarm". It shared concerns for the creation of unofficial contacts with citizens of other countries and worked through the International Friendship League with youth exchanges. When it was formed in 1929 it was autonomous. It affiliated to the PPU in 1936 but Bowen writes: "At no point did the culture of other groups, religious or secular impinge to any degree on the activities of the HPG, although members of the group participated in local religious and social affairs". It was for this reason, Bowen believes, that in an increasingly hostile environment the HPG disbanded at the beginning of the war, destroyed by the dislocation of the early months of the conflict. Despite its overtly pacifist character only 12 of its 200 members went on to become objectors.

The Lewes Fellowship of Reconciliation, also studied by Bowen,[19] although geographically close was dissimilar in character. It was begun by a charismatic local Anglican vicar after he preached a strongly anti-war sermon at the Armistice Day service in November 1934. The success of the new group was ensured by the character of "four leading citizens with strong pacifist convictions" who were working in the town between 1934 and 1938. In contrast to Hastings these individuals were heavily involved with local industrial, political and religious movements and Bowen writes: "The strength of the Lewes FoR lay not only in the talent of its leadership and the network of contacts available to them, but in the social and cultural background which ran parallel to pacifism". Although the vicar's own congregation included a large number of parishioners antagonistic to his views who moved away to other churches, his stand was endorsed by the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell,[20] on the grounds of freedom of

---

[17] Figures from TUC Report 1940 in Branson, N., *op cit*, p285n

[18] Bowen, E. J., "Attitudes to Peace and War - Sussex Peace Groups 1914 - 1945", Southern History, 9 (1987), pp149 - 151

[19] *Ibid*, pp152 - 155

[20] Alan Wilkinson regards Bell, Bishop of Chichester from 1929 to 1957, as having

conscience. Anglicans were therefore the focus of the peace movement in Lewes in contrast to the Quakers within the local FoR who kept a low, quietist profile. The local press was not antagonistic, although the local context was hostile. The local authorities cancelled the 1935 Armistice Day service to prevent a repetition of the events that had led to the group's formation. The Lewes groups did survive into wartime but became a refuge for a pacifist minority as other non-absolutists drifted away.

Bowen's discovery of the importance to pacifism of a few key figures is paralleled in Sheffield across the spectrum of peace opinion. In so far as unofficial sources reflected the peace movement's opinion, a quite small number of individuals acted as spokesmen and women for the different strands within the movement. The sources do not allow us to judge whether these individuals' views reflected those of their constituency or led opinion within that sector. Nevertheless differences between the provenance of the leaderships in different localities suggest that the views of individual leaders were a factor in defining the character of local peace movements. The differences observed by Bowen between the roles of the same denominations and religious peace groups in Hastings and Lewes parallels the differences of policy emphases observed in different locations within the same national political organisations. Bowen ascribes the greater influence of the Lewes FoR within its locality to the maintenance of links with its social and cultural milieu. This suggests that it is necessary, in assessing the success of local peace movements, to examine the links they established with groups whose primary remit was not peace activity.

The study most likely to provide a comparative view to the present thesis, Anthony Carroll's "The Debate over Rearmament in the North East of England between 1931 - 1935"[21] is devoted to an area with similar industrial characteristics, particularly with regard to armaments production. Carroll finds: "...no evidence of unions openly

---

"...made the name of that lovely Cathedral city synonymous with all that is most admirable in the Christian tradition and famous throughout the world". Wilkinson, A., Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches 1900 -1945, London, 1986, p141

[21] Carroll, A.F., "The Debate over Rearmament in the North East of England between 1931 - 1935", MA dissertation, Durham, 1992

advocating rearmament as a means of improving employment prospects". Indeed, one of his most interesting discoveries was copies of The Gun, a newsletter circulated amongst workers at Vickers-Armstrong, which he describes as following a CPGB line. This campaigned against arms sales to Poland, which was antagonistic to the Soviet Union, from Vickers during a period of high unemployment. The existence of such a campaign is a warning against viewing attitudes in armaments centres within too simple a framework of economic determinism. Carroll's overall impression was, however, that although unions were chary of rearmament there was little direct involvement by trade union branches in anti-war agitation.

Outside of the trade unions in the North-East Carroll believes that there was a correlation between parliamentary constituencies' military and rearmament connections and voting patterns in the 1935 General Election. Explaining for instance the "low" 7.2% swing to Labour in Jarrow he writes: "...there was undoubtedly a fear that if Labour was elected the rearmament programme might be halted". This view was shared by contemporary commentators on Sheffield. The Times, for instance, commenting on the 1930 by-election in Brightside, similarly attributed the low Labour turnout to fears that naval disarmament would lessen the number of jobs in the steel industry.[22] Carroll dates the dilemma faced by the peace movement over support for disarmament or collective security, however, to the Abyssinian Crisis at the end of period he covers and believes that it: "...crystallised many people's views over rearmament". By the end of 1935, he states: "No one could doubt that nationally the public had made its decision in favour of rearmament".

Although Carroll uses press coverage in a similar manner to the present study, his focus on the rearmament debate rather than on the groups conducting that debate gives his dissertation a different perspective. His findings illustrate, however, the same regional variations as the other studies with groups working in the North East under nationally defined ideological banners behaving very differently from their counterparts in other parts of Britain. Harold Macmillan, unusually for a Conservative, for instance, engaged with the peace movement in the North-East, even before appeasement, and the Middlesborough Society of Friends in a correspondence with The Northern Echo acted

---

[22] Thorpe, A., "The Consolidation of a Labour Stronghold 1926 - 1951", in Binfield C., *et al* (eds), The History of the City of Sheffield 1843 - 1993, Vol 1, "Politics", Sheffield, 1993, p96

as an autonomous peace group in a manner which was not observed, for instance, in Bowen's study.

While none of these studies imitates the primary purpose of the present work in constructing a local narrative of the peace movement as a whole in the period leading up the outbreak of the "real" war and the defeat of France, they confirm that, although the growth of the peace movement was a national phenomenon, the character of local sections of it was not uniform. In analysing Sheffield's peace movement, therefore, it is necessary to define: Firstly, in what ways it differed from the national history of the movement, secondly, what regional social, economic or political factors might offer an explanation of those differences and thirdly, bearing in mind the atypical and unique factors of the local situation, what tentative critique of the received view of the national peace movement of the period might be derived from an examination of the movement in Sheffield.

The Peace Movement Nationally:

Martin Ceadel argues that the peace movement should be defined, not with reference to policies, but to theories. His broad definition is that the peace movement consists of those putting forward alternatives to the argument that no peace is achievable beyond a stable truce between armed and watchful states.[23] During the 1920s few people would have dissented from the view that the lesson of the Great War had been that there was a need for a widely accepted definition of international order to which aggrieved states could in some form appeal for a peaceful resolution of their grievances. In Britain by the beginning of the 1930s the rejection of war had deepened in the face of the exposure, in the memoirs published at the end of the previous decade, of the terrible conditions endured by soldiers in the Great War and the realisation that advances in aeroplane technology had made the large scale delivery onto civilian areas of the high explosives which had created such conditions a logistical possibility. As the rejection of the established machinery of negotiation by the expansionist states in the early thirties destroyed the international consensus on the peaceful settlement of disputes so the consensus within Britain on the form and function of such an international system

---

[23] Ceadel, M., "The Peace Movement between the wars: Problems of definition", Taylor, R., & Young, N. (eds), Campaigns for Peace: British Peace Movements in the Twentieth Century, Manchester, 1987, pp72-73

disintegrated. This ensured not only that almost every group and individual with a public role pronounced at some point on the vexed question of what Britain's foreign policy should be but also that all of the political parties, most religious denominations and a large number of non-political organisations had some form of association with the peace movement. In examining the component organisations of the peace movement, therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind that at the high points of its activity the influence of the peace movement was greater than the sum of its parts.

The largest of the groups specifically dedicated to the issue of ensuring peace was the League of Nations Union which in 1931 enjoyed a peak national membership of 406 868. This put it on a par with the major political parties in Britain. Peak membership for the Labour Party in the period was 447 150 in 1937. In Sheffield, although the LNU was undoubtedly pre-eminent in the membership of peace organisations, the strength of the local Labour Party ensured that it was not able to compete on the same terms. In 1939 when the membership nationally of the Labour Party and LNU was approximately 2:1 (408 844:193 366), in Sheffield the seven Constituency Labour Parties had nearly six times the membership of the Sheffield LNU (4 809:815).[24] Although the national LNU lost 75% of its membership during the decade, even in 1940 it still had a membership of 100 088, comparable with that of its main rival, the Peace Pledge Union.

The verdict of historians on the LNU has generally been harsh. The author of the book length study devoted to it, Donald S. Birn, describes it as a failure.[25] Part of its difficulties originated in its membership policies. In pursuit of political influence it sought to use its bald membership totals as a lever on politicians. Thus in March 1933 it announced the enrolment of its millionth member at a time when the number of actual subscribing members was already falling. This revealed a large throughput of uncommitted individuals whose enrolment bulked the membership figures. The union's inclusivity caused it considerable policy problems in the later thirties as both its Conservative and pacifist members opposed the need for military sanctions to uphold international order. The organisation's success in impacting on the school curriculum and

---

[24] These figures are not entirely a fair comparison since from 1936 - 1939 there were three branches of the LNU, Sheffield itself, Hallam and Firth Park. Membership figures for the two smaller branches have not survived but we can be sure that total LNU membership in Sheffield was certainly no greater than one quarter of Labour Party membership.

[25] Birn, Donald S., The League of Nations Union, 1918 - 1945, Oxford, 1981

in attracting religious groups into association with it promoted the tendency, writes Birn, "...to talk about the League as an abstract 'good thing', hardly linked to practical matters of foreign policy and defence budgets".[26] The LNU was committed by its Royal Charter to a non-political stance and its leadership tried to avoid identifying themselves with politically controversial causes. This made cooperation with the Left of the peace movement over specific issues difficult.

The union, formed in October 1918 by the amalgamation of the League of Nations Society (formed May 1915) and the League of Free Nations Association (founded earlier in 1918), was always *pacificist* in inspiration. By the beginning of 1934 the credibility of the LNU was already weakened by its response to the Manchurian Crisis. Having failed to lead "League opinion" in the early stages of the crisis in condemnation of Japanese aggression it subsequently failed, despite having muted its response in order to remain on good terms with leading politicians in the British government, to persuade them that an effective sanctions policy in cooperation with the United States should be applied when the Japanese failed to respond to moral pressure. The crisis cast doubt on the twin pillars of LNU policy, Collective Security and Disarmament.

By 1935 the leadership of the LNU, particularly in the persons of Gilbert Murray and Lord Cecil, were ready both to re-define collective security to include an acceptance of the need to employ coercion against states challenging international order and to accept some measure of rearmament by Britain in pursuit of this. By mid-1936 these two leaders had come to regard rearmament as essential to the creation of a credible collective security. During the period covered by this essay, therefore, the policy of the union was evolving in a realist direction away from what its critics have described as its utopian vision of the first decade after the war.[27] The union's association with Lord Davies' New Commonwealth Society, founded in October 1932, which supported the creation of an international military and air force as the means of enforcement, placed this realism, however, in a rather utopian context. Ceadel believes that although the NCS grew out of disappointment at the failure to act against Japan in 1931, Conservative opposition to the creation of a supra-national organisation to oversee the operation of an international military group blunted the force of the LNU Executive's conversion and left

---

[26] *Ibid.* p138

[27] The most telling criticism written from this perspective in the period was E.H. Carr's, Twenty Year's Crisis 1919 - 1939, London, 1939

it emphasizing diplomatic, financial and economic sanctions.[28] The Executive Committee was always divided on Davies' plan, certainly as a short-term goal, but the General Council asked the organisation to explore the idea as an alternative to national rearmament. As with the Labour Party, even the non-pacifist rank and file of the union were very reluctant to support rearmament by a government, of whose motives there was great suspicion, without a guarantee that such weapons would be used to pursue a policy of collective security. When the Executive first presented a cautious resolution accepting the need for rearmament to the General Council in December 1936 it provoked a revolt. It was not until June 1937 that the General Council reluctantly endorsed the need for rearmament and there continued to be disputes over the issue until 1938.

As a campaigning organisation the LNU achieved prominence with its Peace Ballot conducted in most parts of Britain during the early months of 1935 which collected replies from 11 640 066 individuals. This increased public awareness of the issues surrounding the maintenance of peace and mobilised activists but has been criticised for over-simplifying the problems of collective security and giving the impression that a public endorsement of the League presented an easy alternative to war. After 1936 the LNU attempted to produce a similar effect on a European scale by involvement in the International Peace Campaign whose methods were more activist-based and popular than the rather genteel and middle-class agitation of the LNU. While this was successful in involving individuals within Britain who would not have joined the LNU, it was criticised for distracting the union from its quieter longer term goals of educating public opinion and influencing official thinking as well as for associating the union too closely with communist activists. Birn argues that the LNU's alliance with the IPC was a liability in this respect because the communist influence in that organisation made the Labour leadership, who in policy terms were the natural allies of the LNU, more wary of involvement with the union.[29]

After 1937 the LNU's views increasingly converged with the Labour, Liberal and dissident Conservative opposition to Chamberlain's appeasement policy. Both

---

[28] "Thus the New Commonwealth Society's utopianism had the ironic effect of encouraging the LNU leadership to evade the issue of military sanctions altogether," writes Ceadel. "The Peace Movement Between the Wars: Problems of Definition", *op cit*, p83

[29] Birn, *op cit*, pp174 -175

Conservatives and pacifists "were abandoning the Union in droves by 1937".[30] writes Birn. This removed one of the greatest obstacles to a unity of view within the LNU but, although Winston Churchill associated himself loosely with the union from the autumn of 1936 and more definitely after 1938 when he became one of the Vice Presidents, the organisation's traditions prevented it from providing a medium in which the coalition of defencists and *pacificists* seeking a more robust foreign policy could coalesce. It rejected a bid for cooperation from the Council of Action at the time of Eden's resignation and in deference to his wishes restrained its members' reaction to the event. Although by 1938 it had recognised that Hitler's regime presented the greatest threat to European stability and had attempted to encourage a stiffer response to moves against Austria and Czechoslovakia, it was not able to promote a strong response amongst its branches against the Munich agreement.

The shock of Munich, argues Birn, turned the LNU leadership "in new directions".[31] The LNU had sought to realise its ambitions for the League by creating pro-League opinion amongst both the governing politicians and the public in Britain, believing that Britain enjoyed a natural pre-eminence amongst the League of Nations and could offer a lead at Geneva that would ensure world peace. The Hoare-Laval Agreement and the subsequent failure of the National Government to implement effective sanctions against Italy had demonstrated that the LNU had failed to convince Conservative politicians of the need for a League dimension to foreign policy. The LNU's hope that public opinion could still force the politicians to adopt a League based policy was dashed by public relief over Munich which appeared to demonstrate that in the wider population there was no stomach for an internationalist response to aggression. This lessened the confidence of the LNU leadership by suggesting that Britain's influence on world events was no longer decisive.

The ameliorative aspects of the League's work had provided the least controversial of the activities supported by the LNU and the union involved itself in the work for refugees which many other sections of the peace movement were also promoting. Munich prompted the LNU also to look at the question of British colonies and accept an international dimension to their administration. There had been a reluctance to do this in part because the organisation was so much involved with the British establishment but

---

[30] *Ibid*, p179
[31] *Ibid*, p196

also because pacifists within the organisation had sought to use this issue to undermine the leadership's stress on the creation of collective security and to pledge the LNU to appeasement through treaty revision and the redistribution of territory. In December 1938 the LNU accepted the need for the creation of machinery to remedy grievances. Nevertheless, alongside these policies the LNU maintained its opposition to appeasement and stressed the need for cooperation with France and the Soviet Union to stop aggression.

The invasion of the rump of Czechoslovakia in March vindicated the LNU's position but did not return it to an influential position. The moribund state of the League was underlined when neither Czechoslovakia nor subsequently Poland appealed to the League of Nations to stop German aggression. Despite the National Government's acceptance of something akin to the policy of alliances advocated by the LNU, no *rapprochement* took place between the union and the Conservative Party. In the last months of peace the LNU leadership were unsure as to whether the guarantees to Poland and other states represented a return to the kind of debased collective security that they themselves had been forced to accept after the failures of the thirties or whether it amounted to a return to the power-bloc diplomacy of the pre-1914 era. They worried that the failure to conclude an agreement with the Soviet Union suggested the latter and that the guarantees to eastern states were seen as an alternative to alliance with Russia.

At the outbreak of war the LNU became involved in a rather profitless effort to ensure that Britain received authorisation from the moribund League for its stand. The Soviet Union's invasion of Finland on 30th November 1940 revived the League which subsequently expelled Russia. Birn describes this as embarrassing the LNU who appreciated that the main threat to Europe came from Germany. In attempting to encourage the Government to ask the League to condemn Germany also, the LNU came up against the problem that the Foreign Office were unwilling to do this in the hope of preserving Italian neutrality. Despite these caveats it was clear that the LNU's policy over the latter part of the thirties firmly aligned them with support for the war and the organisation's more productive work during the conflict was in the discussion of war aims.

The Peace Pledge Union was the second most important of the organisations specifically devoted to the issue of peace and the only other group with a mass

membership.[32] The union reached a peak membership of 136 000 in April 1940. Formed by the Revd H.R.L. (Dick) Sheppard it started in his newspaper appeal of October 1934 for men to send him a postcard indicating that they were ready to attend a meeting to endorse the resolution: "We renounce War and never again, directly or indirectly, will we support or sanction another". In July 1935 after a meeting of signatories in London he attempted to turn those who had pledged themselves into the active Sheppard Peace Movement. Although the idea in itself was not new, the simplicity of the pledge's commitment and the timing of its activation which coincided with a pacifist mood prompted, writes Ceadel, by doubts about the moral validity and efficacy of the League, by a new intellectual interest in justifying pacifism on humanitarian grounds and by an enthusiasm for economic appeasement, was fortuitous. In May 1936 the organisation evolved into the Peace Pledge Union with a collective leadership composed of "Sponsors". In July 1936 it opened its membership to women although it remained more than two-thirds male despite the fact that in other organisations, most notably the Cooperative Party, it was women's sections that were noted for their pacifism. The PPU became the refuge of pacifist opinion as the other organisations of which pacifists had been members, particularly the LNU and the Labour Party, toughened their policies on sanctions and more openly embraced the necessity of force to their internationalist and *pacificist* policies.

Although the PPU never suffered the kind of dissension that was experienced in the Labour Party and the LNU as the events of the thirties forced the realisation of the fundamental incompatibility of pacifist and *pacificist* views, there was a polarisation of opinion within the organisation. As far as inspiration went, the PPU, certainly in its earliest phase, was a successful coalition of Christian and humanitarian pacifism. (Most political pacifists had been associated with the Left and few remained pacifists in the face of the fascist aggression in Spain.) Tensions in the PPU centred on the three orientations described by Ceadel: "...the sectarian position of total withdrawal from society; the collaborative position of taking part in political life to the extent of supporting *pacificist* campaigns; and the most optimistic position of all, which clearly presupposes exceptionally favourable circumstances, non-violence.... which assumes that pacifism can

---

[32] Information for the sections on pacifist organisations comes from Ceadel's book, Pacifism in Britain 1914 -1945: The Defining of a Faith, Oxford, 1980

be applied as an immediate effective policy in the world as it is."[33] The deepest fault line in the PPU divided those who believed that change could only operate at an individual level and whose pacifism was expressed through pursuit of self-development and witness to views on life of which pacifism was often but one expression,[34] and those who continued to view the PPU as performing a political role, a pacifist LNU, seeking to bring pressure to promote peaceful change. Sheppard, who had been involved with Maude Royden's Peace Army plans in 1931 - 1932, originally envisaged the movement following the third orientation in an activist non-violence. Mohandas K. Gandhi's non-violent campaign against the Salt Tax had begun in India in 1930 and he had visited London and met a number of leading British figures in the peace movement during the Round Table Conference in 1931.

These three groups were sub-divided further. Those in the first group who took a quietist view and believed that all political activity amounted to an attempt to coerce others were not easily identified with those whose flamboyant acts of witness or unconventional lifestyles were a deliberate advertisement of their dissenting beliefs. To attribute proportions of the membership to these groups is difficult because there appears to have been a high ratio of sympathiser members to activist adherents.[35] Views in the second group ranged from the crude belief that the PPU was a political force because the refusal of its membership to be involved in war would of itself prevent Britain's entry into conflict, to those who viewed ameliorative works within internationalist organisations as an effective agency of long term political change. The extent of these disagreements should not be exaggerated. For much of the period economic appeasement through the calling of a World Conference to re-distribute access to global resources was a unifying policy. The PPU Manifesto of March 1938 identified the

---

[33] *Ibid*, pp15 -16

[34] Ceadel writes: "[George] Orwell's cruel caricature of the ILP socialist of the thirties was perhaps more accurate as a satirical portrait of a rank and file pacifist of the twenties: 'typically, a prim little man with a white-collar job, usually a secret teetotaller and often with vegetarian leanings, with a history of Nonconformity behind him, and, above all, with a social position he has no intention of forfeiting'." *Ibid*, p83 (Orwell quoted from The Road to Wigan Pier, London, 1962 edn., p152)

[35] This was certainly true after the Phoney War ended. Even though the PPU's peak membership was achieved in April 1940, the active membership of the PPU was tiny: although it still had 98 414 pledges in its 'live membership file' at the end of the war, less than 4 000 members had participated (by post) in any of the wartime elections of the PPU's national council. Ceadel, "The Peace Movement Between the Wars: Problems of Definition", *op cit*, p94

unequal distribution of international wealth as the cause of fascism and called upon the League of Nations to be committed to redress this as the Van Zeeland Report had urged.

Pacifists generally welcomed the policy of appeasement as addressing both this issue and the need to revise what they regarded as the punitive Versailles Treaty, although many were wary of identifying themselves with a National Government which allied this with both rearmament and imperialist economics. The events of 1938 - 39 demonstrated to all but the most optimistic that pacifism could not hope to have a short-term political influence and as the war loomed the PPU's membership moved increasingly towards quietism and welfare support for conscientious objectors. Although the numbers of such objectors were greater than in the Great War, they were never more than 2.2% of each age group in the call up and the percentage decreased as the war progressed. Those who continued to pursue a political role for the PPU after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 were forced, in continuing to call for economic and territorial appeasement of Germany, to become apologists for Nazi excesses. The PPU's apparent endorsement of the Link, an Anglo-German friendship society which attracted fascist support in Britain, discredited the group in 1939. In the new conditions after the end of the Phoney War in April 1940 and defeat of France in June, PPU leaders called for their membership to cease any activity which hindered the war effort.

While the No More War Movement could not be described as the forerunner of the PPU, its pacifist views represented one, mainly socialist-pacifist, strand of the larger pacifist movement which became the PPU. Founded in 1921 by some members of the wartime No Conscription Fellowship, by 1934 both its membership and its influence had reached a low point. A fierce internal struggle in the early thirties was followed by a move at the Sheffield Conference in 1932, paralleling the Independent Labour Party's disaffiliation from the Labour Party, into a sectarianism which viewed pacifism solely within a socialist context and encouraged hostility to other pacifist traditions. The organisation thus put itself in no position to benefit from the upsurges of non-socialist pacifist feeling identified by Ceadel in the 1935 - 1936 period. This was not only due to the disarray in its ranks but also because socialists, under the impact of the rise of fascism were generally moving towards a militant anti-fascism. These currents forced the NMWM (apart from the Birmingham Branch) to subsume itself in the PPU in February 1937 to avoid the destruction of its pacifist ethos by an attempt to commit it to a declaration of active support for the armed resistance to fascism of the Spanish Republicans.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation, founded in December 1914, represented a very different strand of quietist Christian pacifism. It co-existed with the PPU throughout 1934 -1940. Benefiting from the move away from collaborative pacifism at the end of the period, its membership reached 9 813 in 1939. The FoR's view that man could only be redeemed from war by the bestowal of God's grace made it an ideal refuge for Christian pacifists who accepted that war had become inevitable but wished to continue to stand apart from the conflict. The influence of members of the FoR on the larger peace movement was not, however, as limited as this suggests and Vera Brittain [36] makes much of George Lansbury's personal diplomacy to the Fascist leaders and of the work of the International FoR's Embassies of Reconciliation.

If the PPU represented in part a pacifist reaction to the failure of the League of Nations, the Federal Union movement was a later evolution of disillusionment with the internationalist vision embodied by the League. Paradoxically it initially re-united *pacificists* reacting against Britain's failure to take a stand against German designs on Czechoslovakia and pacifists who remained interested in political solutions to the European Crisis after the failure of appeasement. It did this by proposing a different, and it could be argued even more utopian, internationalist model for a political settlement of the crisis through a federation of existing states.

The Federal Union movement was the product of the convergence of similar ideas developed by an American correspondent at the League in Geneva, Clarence K. Streit, in his book Union Now, published in the spring of 1939, and three British men, Patrick Ransome, Charles Kimber and Derek Rawnsley.[37] The point of contact in Britain between the independently developed schemes was Philip Kerr, Lord Lothian, who, as a member of Lord Milner's Kindergarten group of young imperialists and later in association with the Round Table quarterly journal, had been involved with the development of ideas for a federal government for the Empire. In 1935 Lothian had given as the Burge Memorial Lecture a talk entitled "Pacifism is not Enough, nor Patriotism Either", later published as a pamphlet and described by Andrea Bosco as "one of the classics of Federalist thought". The New Commonwealth Society took up the

---

[36] Brittain, Vera, The Rebel Passion: A Short History of Some Pioneer Peace Makers, London, 1964, Chap 3, pp31 - 54

[37] Information for this section comes from Bosco, Andrea, "Lothian, Curtis, Kinder and the Federal Union Movement (1938 - 1940)", Journal of Contemporary History, 23 (1988)

Federalist theme after March 1939 and in the same month Kimber and Rawnsley arranged with the publishers of Union Now that each copy would contain a card giving the address of their organisation. The inaugural meeting took place in July 1939.

During the first period of the FU, which coincides with this thesis, conflicting currents were the cause of considerable confusion amongst putative members. Those whose interest was the product of *pacificist* disappointment in the League looked for the new organisation to embody principles that would address the failure of the League to contain aggression. Streit himself envisaged a political union on a federal basis opposing itself to the Axis Powers. Pacifists, on the other hand saw Federalism as the political expression of a reformed international economic system to which the question of force would be irrelevant. While the LNU had successfully contained conflicting visions of the role of the League in line with this division for a number of years in the mid-thirties, the outbreak of war early in the FU's history forced the organisation to argue out whether it was offering a plan which, by addressing the causes of the war could be the basis for a ceasefire, or whether it was declaring a war aim which might be realisable after the defeat of the nationalist regimes in Germany, Italy and Japan. The division in FU's genesis was also the cause of conflict because the older generation tended to be in favour of an "Atlantic Federation" of Anglophone countries, the United States, Britain and the Dominions, while the younger generation, including its three British originators, were looking to a European Federation. After the German offensive in April 1940 FU became identified with the majority *pacificist* view but what immediate practical application it had possessed was destroyed by the German occupation of Britain's European allies. Bosco believes that Federal Union had an influence on the entry of the United States into the Second World War, European resistance movements during the war and the creation of the European Community after the end of the conflict. In Britain, however, he suggests that the movement weakened after Dunkirk partly as a result of the logistical problems created by the mobilisation of its mainly young supporters in the civilian or military war effort.

Five of these organisations, but not the New Commonwealth Society, were also component parts of the Sheffield peace movement. There were a few other societies with less influence locally who nonetheless were part of an overall view of the national movement. The Union for Democratic Control, formed in 1914 by neutrality campaigners, is identified by Ceadel as having moved from its broader *pacificist* insistence on the democratic control of foreign policy during the 1920s to an anti-fascist

research and propaganda body during the later 1930s under the leadership of Dorothy Woodman. The current of opinion which it had originally represented remained important to the whole of the peace movement. Its contemporary role, however, was in support of the *pacificist* Left.

The National Peace Council, formed in 1904, had no individual members and acted as a coordinating body for the peace movement. Ceadel cites a few events organised by the council as having significance for the evolution of pacifism, particularly the 1933 Congress at which Sir Norman Angell and Clifford Allen, Lord Allen of Hurtwood, made clear their *pacificist* response to the deteriorating international situation, the 1935 Congress which snubbed the NMWM's speakers for their sectarianism and the Petition after Munich which expressed the view shared by pacifists and some *pacificists* that the settlement in Czechoslovakia must be followed by a wider World Conference.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, founded at the Hague in 1915, was a small grouping claiming 3 500 members nationally in the thirties.[38] It enrolled individual members and its influence on the movement generally consisted, like other numerically small components of the peace movement, of the effect the views of these members had in the larger coalitions in which they operated. It undertook two campaigns in the thirties which impacted on the national scene, the World Disarmament Petition of 1932 and the People's Mandate. This American initiative, which commenced in Britain at the end of 1935, allied a call for the peaceful resolution of disputes with the pursuit of international economic reform and disarmament. The People's Mandate had attracted the support of 28 national organisations by April 1936 and 1 250 000 adherents by August 1936. The WILPF was truly international and there were tensions between the British section and those from other nations. Some of these tension centred, as in other groups, on the divisions between pacifists and *pacificists*. The British WILPF spoke from a pacifist position in June 1935 when it called for air disarmament and was anti-sanctionist, particularly objecting to food blockades. Although it continued to believe in neutrality it began to talk in terms of solidarity with the victims of aggression and called for a boycott of Japanese goods in 1937. It supported Eden's stance, which was regarded as pro-League, at the time of his resignation early the following year and by the

---

[38] The information in this section comes from Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, Pioneers for Peace: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915 - 1965, London, 1980

Anschluss had accepted the necessity of a sanctionist agenda.

The rise of totalitarian fascist regimes and the increasing range and sophistication of bombing aircraft prompted a particular type of peace activism amongst women rooted in maternalist feminism.[39] This focussed particularly on the non-militarist education of children, opposition to arms spending in favour of greater welfare provision and the likely scale of civilian casualties in any future conflict. Jill Liddington identifies two other strands of women's peace activism, equal rights feminism which promoted a more broadly motivated involvement in the peace movement and a separatist view which identified war as man-made violence.

Turning to the political parties involved in the peace movement, the attitude of the Labour Party, providing as it did the official parliamentary opposition to the National Government, was clearly crucial. The party added, however, at least three distinct and at times conflicting elements to the peace movement because its official policy was opposed by a vociferous Left-wing and, increasingly as it moved into an avowedly *pacificist* line, by a small, but well-known, Christian pacifist clique. Like the LNU, the Labour Party's foreign policy was based on Collective Security and Disarmament. In the years immediately after the war the influence of the radical liberal UDC had been strong on policy and the party had opposed aspects of Versailles which it regarded as unnecessarily punitive and destabilising. The party was never pacifist, although it tolerated pacifist opinions, and during the twenties the increasing perception of the waste and futility of the Great War gave a retrospective credibility to those in the movement who had opposed it, and particular those conscientious objectors who had gone to prison rather than serve in it. Labour's first policy in the period of this essay, the war-resistance strategy adopted at the 1933 Hastings Conference which pledged the party "to take no part in war" had limited support in official circles, particularly since the call for a general strike against war was unpopular with the leaders of the Trades' Union Congress after the failure of the 1926 stoppage. It offered a superficial unity to pacifists and those associated with the Socialist League who were attempting to commit the party to a distinctly socialist policy. 1933 was the high-point of an undifferentiated pacifism amongst the wider public, marked by the Oxford Union's "King and Country Debate"[40]

---

[39] Liddington, J., The Long Road to Greenham - Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820, London, 1989, "Chapter 8: Pacifism or Anti-Fascism", pp152 - 171

[40] There has been an argument amongst historians as to whether the success of the

and by the result of the East Fulham by-election in which a Labour candidate, emphasising the peace question, overturned a Conservative majority of 14 521.[41] Although the Hastings Conference decision chimed in with both this mood in the country and a leftward turn amongst party members following the split of 1931, in terms of the continuum of Labour foreign policy it was an aberration. The party's considered conclusion about the early stages of the deterioration in the international situation, given by Arthur Henderson in 'War and Peace', was that while Labour was prepared to renounce war as an instrument of national policy, it believed that the Japanese invasion of Manchuria had not rendered the League of Nations obsolete. The way forward lay in collective action in support of the Covenant against Japan.[42]

At the 1934 Southport Conference the Hastings resolution was brought within the parameters of official policy by restricting war resistance to conflicts in which the British government acted outside of the framework of the League and international arbitration. The pacifist sounding pledge in the resolution was quietly dropped, rather than publicly repudiated. It was during the Abyssinian Crisis of the following months that these tensions in the party came to a head and the 1935 Brighton Conference voted decisively under trade union influence for an active policy of sanctions, including in the case of recalcitrance, military sanctions, against Italian aggression in Abyssinia. The resignation of Lord Ponsonby, Labour leader in the House of Lords, in the weeks before the conference and of George Lansbury, Labour leader in the Commons, after the vote confirmed the *pacificist* basis of Labour policy. The opposition of the Socialist League, however, was couched in different terms and argued that until the capitalist government of Britain was replaced by a socialist one it was unsafe to ask it to pursue a policy of sanctions since it was incapable of acting outside of the bourgeois class interests which

---

resolution: "That this country will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country" was indicative of a pacifist or a *pacificist* sentiment. Ceadel demonstrates that its proposers were thinking in pacifist terms at the time of the debate. Ceadel, M., "The 'King and Country' Debate, 1933: Student Politics, Pacifism and the Dictators", Historical Journal, 22 (1979), pp416 - 419

[41] There has been some debate as to whether the East Fulham result was really the product of the foreign policy debate. Ceadel, while accepting that a number of factors contributed to voting patterns including a general disappointment with the National Government on both domestic and external matters, concludes that: "...it was the peace question which had the greatest emotional impact". Ceadel, M., "Interpreting East Fulham", in Cook, Chris & Ramsden, John, By-Elections in British Politics, London, 1997, p109

[42] Naylor, John F., Labour's International Policy, London, 1969, pp77 - 78

were the origin of war. Although this view was defeated at the Conference it attracted 102 000 votes, a tiny minority of the votes cast, but representing the views of a hundred Labour constituency parties. The Socialist League's own 3 000 membership included less than 1% of Labour Party members but its views were prevalent amongst a section of Labour activists involved in the peace movement. The League's adoption of a United Front strategy in common with the Communist Party and ILP in January 1937, which led to its dissolution under the threat of disciplinary action later that year, impacted heavily on Labour Party involvement in the peace movement.

Like other *pacificists* evolving a pragmatic policy to contain a re-arming Germany, the Labour Party was forced to confront the fact that in the short term Collective Security and disarmament were incompatible. Up to the highest levels in the party, however, there was an unwillingness to be identified with the National Government's rearmament programme. The 1936 Edinburgh Conference therefore committed the party to maintaining such forces as were consistent with Britain's League membership but repudiated "a purely competitive armament policy". This was very important to the membership of the peace movement since it continued to promote the coalition of pacifist, *pacificist*, and Left-wing Labour activists against rearmament. In July 1937 the Parliamentary Labour Party abstained rather than voted against the service estimates signalling an end to outright opposition to rearmament. The manifesto International Policy and Defence which appeared in the same month accepted that an incoming Labour Government would have to be equipped to defend the country and that until it had brought about a change in the international situation it would be unable to reverse the programme of rearmament. Against the wishes of the pacifists and the Left, this new position was endorsed by the Bournemouth Conference in October.

There was no Labour Conference in 1938 but official Labour policy continued to evolve under the impact of events. Labour was not opposed to some international redistribution of resources and territory to achieve a peace settlement, although the nature of the fascist regimes had diminished enthusiasm for the policy. As Chamberlain's strategy in foreign policy posed appeasement and collective security as alternatives Labour continued with its support of collective security in keeping with the *pacificist* majority in the peace movement. This went some way to unify official policy and the anti-fascist animus of left-wing elements in the party and marked almost a complete break with the pacifists whose influence had reached a low point. Public relief at the Munich Settlement caused Labour leaders to waver a little but not to depart from their

criticism of Chamberlain's appeasement. This view had been vindicated by the time the Southport Conference met at the end of May 1939 and the party enjoyed a leadership position in the *pacificist* peace movement. During the last months of peace it shared a critique of Chamberlain's ineffective efforts to construct a peace-bloc with the LNU, the Liberal Party and dissident Conservatives. It remained wary of extra-parliamentary cooperation with other political groupings, however, and divided from defencists, who were otherwise ready to identify themselves with this section of the peace movement, by its opposition to conscription. This, paradoxically, superficially re-aligned it with pacifist elements in the peace movement.

At the outbreak of war, the Labour Party expressed critical support for the declaration of hostilities. The conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet pact had detached communist support from the *pacificist* coalition and, in the rather artificial conditions of the Phoney War, dissident Left-wing Labour activists were part of the rump of the peace movement which remained opposed to the conflict. The German offensive and the entry of the party into the Churchill coalition dramatically reduced those prepared to continue to associate with the anti-war faction.

The Cooperative Party largely shared a similar relationship with the peace movement but there were two key points of difference. In April 1938 the Cooperative Party National Conference broke with the discipline of the Labour movement, which forbade official contacts with outside political groups, and voted to support the United Peace Alliance.[43] Although this decision was overturned two months later, it has been seen as suggesting a significant widening of the anti-fascist *pacificism* associated with the Popular Front which was has also been detected in the increased public support for the Spanish Republic in the last months of its existence. In contrast, up until the declaration of war, the Women's Cooperative Guilds provided the largest support for the pacifist cause outside of organisations specifically dedicated to peace. As late as June 1938, the Guilds, which had a membership of 83 000 women in England and 32 000 in Scotland, re-affirmed their pacifism by 897 votes to 623. They were probably the only major component of the Labour Movement where pacifism remained dominant as late as this and in areas where they flourished their activism in peace causes made them the

---

[43] The motion achieved a large majority: 4 290 000 to 396 000. Carbery, T.F., Consumers in Politics, A History and General Review of the Cooperative Party, Manchester, 1969, pp39 - 41

major representatives of pacifism within it.[44]

The Independent Labour Party removed itself from the "official" Labour Movement by disaffiliating from the Labour Party in 1932. It did this on the basis of an analysis that the 1929 Crash and the global financial instability and severe unemployment which followed it marked the beginning of the end of capitalism. Regarding the break up of the Labour Government in 1931 under the stress of the economic implications of these problems as symptomatic of the reformist line taken by the Labour Party, the ILP set itself on a course of more doctrinaire socialism, with the implicit understanding that a revolutionary situation was likely to evolve.[45] As far as the membership and wider influence of the party went this was a disastrous move which had marginalized the ILP by the time the war came to a small sectarian grouping with a parliamentary presence dependant upon the former popularity of the party on Clydeside. Within the peace movement, however, the party played a larger role. Its views were identified with those inside the Labour Party in the Socialist League, which consisted in part of those ILP members who chose to stay in the movement when the ILP seceded, and which became the voice of Left-wing opposition to Labour's peace policy, particularly at the 1934 and 1935 conferences. The ILP also acted with the Socialist League and the Communist Party in promotion of the united front, a strategy which had considerable impact on the development of the peace movement in the mid-thirties and for which the ILP acted as a vanguard.

The ILP's peace policy in the thirties was consistently idealist. Believing that no stable peace could exist without the destruction of capitalism, it opposed the League of Nations, economic and military sanctions, and alliances with capitalist powers.[46] It continued to advocate war resistance to all conflicts involving Britain and to oppose rearmament but became strongly and militantly anti-fascist, particularly after the outbreak of war in Spain. The sectarianism of the ILP was emphasised because on the one hand its acceptance of violence as part of this struggle distanced it from former NMWM pacifists, while on the other its *pacificism* did not evolve in the same pragmatic

---

[44] Liddington believes male historians of the peace movement have paid insufficient attention to this sector of the movement. Liddington, J, *op cit*, p152

[45] Dowse, R.E., Left in the Centre - The Independent Labour Party 1893 - 1940, London, 1966

[46] James Jupp reviewing the foreign policy of this section of the Left suggests that its attitudes were "...often unrealistic to the point of silliness". Jupp, J., The Radical Left in Britain 1931 - 1941, London, 1982, p89

directions as that of the Labour and Communist Parties. The ILP did not revise its views on the League and Collective Security after the Soviet Union joined in the autumn of 1934. In Spain the ILP's revolutionary analysis led to support for its syndicalist allies, the POUM, in whose militia a number of ILP members, including George Orwell, went to fight. The POUM's disagreements with the Republican Government over the non-revolutionary administration during the war led to its suppression by force in which communists played a prominent part. Although ILP leaders in Britain played down the split in the cause of solidarity with Spain,[47] the relationship with the Communist Party deteriorated amidst mutual recriminations. The decreasing membership of the organisation lessened its importance to the peace movement after 1937 and the dissolution of the Socialist League. Dissident Labour Party peace activists looked to the CPGB for inspiration.

The Communist Party of Great Britain's analysis of the situation in the thirties differed significantly from the ILP's. The destruction of the German Communist Party after Hitler came to power led the Comintern to conclude that communists must combine with others on the Left to resist fascism.[48] Although the ultimate aim of this united front was revolutionary, in the short term the building of this coalition required some of the compromises associated with the gradualism that the party had, particularly in the period 1928 - 1932, so despised. The party was always to an extent ambivalent about this line and continued to deploy a revolutionary rhetoric.[49] In the first period after Hitler came to power the communists sought to attract non-communist peace activists to a peace movement dominated by their ideology. This movement, based on war resistance, was a product of the ideological identification of fascism as a militant form of capitalism towards which all other capitalist states would move. The USSR's application to join the

---

[47] Buchanan, T., "The Death of Bob Smillie, the Spanish Civil War, and the Eclipse of the Independent Labour Party", Historical Journal, 40 (1997), pp456 -457

[48] The standard text on the Communist Party in this period is Branson, N., History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927 - 1941, *op cit*

[49] Although CPGB theorists, and most particularly R. Palme Dutt, continued to argue that the adoption of the Popular Front policy had not weakened the party's commitment to revolutionary action, Kevin Morgan writes: "Inevitably as Communists devoted themselves to immediate sectional struggles on a broad basis, they tended to lose sight of the relationship of these struggles to Dutt's second wave of revolutions, the more so as these revolutions obstinately refused to materialise." Morgan, K., Against Fascism and War, Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935 - 1941, Manchester, 1989, p49

League of Nations was a recognition that most wars were fought between capitalist states and that those who wished to fight an ideological battle against fascism could do so in alliance with states whose antagonism to the fascist states was actually a matter of capitalist self-interest. On a domestic political level, this development of the united front position to accept alliance with "bourgeois elements" was termed the Popular Front.

The CPGB's pragmatic response to the Abyssinian War put it firmly in the *pacificist* camp and in opposition to the more sectarian response of the ILP. Communists supported the Abyssinians against the Italian fascists and urged the imposition of League sanctions. Within the peace movement communists abandoned the efforts to promote their own front organisation and moved towards a Popular Front policy. The Peace Councils in vogue in the mid-thirties were inspired in part by the Popular Front governments that came to power in France and Spain. The outbreak of the Spanish War diminished the influence of the communists on the peace movement because it both made cooperation with pacifists more difficult and redirected the party's energies elsewhere. Doubts about the National Government's intentions, which were reinforced by its reaction to the war in Spain, prevented the party following the Labour Party into an acceptance of rearmament.[50] The emotional as well as the organisational links between the CPGB and the Soviet Union ensured that the party would not risk arming a capitalist government that it was feared might engage once again in an interventionist war against the USSR.

In other ways the party was firmly in the realist camp. It opposed appeasement and urged the building of alliances with other countries resisting fascism. The majority of the *pacificist* peace movement came to agree with the CPGB that support for the Spanish Republicans was preferable to a victory for Franco and that an alliance with the Soviet Union to contain German expansion was a crucial element to European stability. After the outbreak of war this realist and largely consistent policy was ditched because of the Soviet Union's signing of a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. What had been the ambivalence regarding the good faith of imperialist and capitalist powers was redefined

---

[50] John Saville argues that this opposition to rearmament was not an illogical adjunct to the CPGB's and the broader Left's anti-fascism. Quoting from a speech made by Aneurin Bevan to the 1937 Labour Conference he suggests that in the political circumstances of the time it was not unreasonable to suggest that collaboration on the issue of rearmament threatened "...the spiritual and the physical independence of the working-class movement..." Saville, J., "May Day 1937", in Briggs A. & Saville, J. (eds), Essays in Labour History 1918 - 1939, London, 1977, pp256 - 259

into the dominant line. The CPGB, formally an ally of the majority *pacificist* peace movement which had come to believe, paradoxically, that war was inevitable and allied victory the only way to ensure that international conditions conducive to eventual peace could prevail, was suddenly alone with an anti-war movement consisting largely of pacifists, fascists and Trotskyists.

The extent of the influence of communist policy on the peace movement remains controversial. The party was always one of the smaller components of the movement in membership terms although its membership grew from 6 500 in February 1935 to 17 750 in July 1939.[51] Undoubtedly the CPGB sought to manipulate the peace movement to further its own political ends and was no different in this regard from any other political party. Some public indication of the extent to which it practised entryism was provided by the exit of individuals from organisations supporting the war effort in October 1939. Its greatest influence, however, although indirect, was through the open activities of its members within the peace movement, through the influence of its coherent ideological framework on sympathisers, particularly within the Labour Party, and through those who entered into coalition with organisations in which communist influence was strong. The presence of communists in the peace movement also shaped its development through the refusal of their opponents, particularly within the leadership of the Labour Party, to be associated with anything resembling a united front.

By the early thirties the Liberal Party was in considerable disarray. Three factions existed. The National Liberal Party under Sir John Simon, Foreign Secretary 1931 - 1935, was part of the National Government. The "Samuelite" Liberals led by Sir Herbert Samuel had initially joined the coalition Government but resigned in September 1932. A third, smaller group of Welsh MPs, loyal to David Lloyd George, was also in opposition. At the 1935 General Election Lloyd George's campaign was notable for an intervention on the issue of peace. His Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction allied a "New Deal" approach to economics with support for the League of Nations. The council offered to endorse candidates of whatever party who were prepared to support the

---

[51] Kevin Morgan offers an interesting commentary on CPGB membership in the period 1939 - 1941, for which figures were never released. The issue is controversial because it reflects on the support enjoyed by the communists' anti-war line after October. Morgan concludes that while the party probably suffered a loss of membership in the first year of the war, its membership had started to recover even before the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941. Morgan, Against Fascism and War, Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935 - 1941, Manchester, 1989, pp311 - 317

policy. Historians have been cynical about this phase of Lloyd George's career, largely seeing in it a desperate last attempt to regain office.[52] Samuel lost his seat in the Commons at the election and the opposition Liberals reunited under Sir Archibald Sinclair. As peace became the major issue of the second half of the decade the Liberals followed the same policies as outlined by the LNU and the Labour Party. They opposed appeasement and Lloyd George's parliamentary interventions against Chamberlain in the period after the resignation of Eden are quoted in many of the texts on the subject. Lloyd George's own position was not, however, as consistent as these interventions sometimes make it appear for in the early months of the war he expressed interest in the possibility of a negotiated peace.

Liberal Party members were natural members of the *pacificist* coalition within the peace movement and their involvement was perhaps more significant than the minority parliamentary position of their party suggested. The underlying tenets of the non-socialist internationalist tradition in which the theory of collective security developed in the twenties and continued to evolve during the thirties were Liberal.[53] This was as true of the Labour Party as it was of the League of Nations Union.[54] The British tradition of popular activism on foreign policy was Liberal in origin and although the twentieth century had seen the development of an alternative socialist tradition, there were considerable sectors of the peace movement in the thirties whose attitudes were a recognisable continuation of late-nineteenth century Liberal attitudes. Their political fortunes ensured that the Liberals were not opposed to coalition in the same way as the Labour leadership or some of the dissident Conservatives. Forces amongst the Liberal opposition tending towards coalition were strong, however, not simply as a matter of

---

[52] e.g. Cowling, M., The Impact of Hitler 1933 - 1940, Cambridge, 1975, pp36 - 41

[53] David Long describes the enthusiasts for an international organisation between the wars as Hobbesian idealists and new liberal internationalists. The basis of their thought explains the wide appeal of the League of Nations as the European Crisis developed. Hobbesian idealists' preconceptions were little different from those of the realist critics of the League, writes Long. The crucial difference in their views being that Hobbesian idealists believed that: "...an international interest could be found and that an international organisation could express it..." Realists remained profoundly sceptical on this point. The new liberalism's acceptance of welfarism and social reform allied it in the short term with the non-revolutionary Left and a collectivist view of foreign policy. "Conclusion", Long, David & Wilson, Peter (eds), Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter War Idealism Reassessed, Oxford, 1995, pp314 - 317

[54] Ceadel, "The Peace Movement Between the Wars: Problems of Definition", *op cit*, p79

political expediency, but because of the shared basis of Liberal ideology which underpinned the peace movement's views. The peace debate of the thirties was shaped too by the fact that all those competing for public support on foreign affairs were aware that the collapse of the Liberal vote in the late twenties suggested that there were individuals, by then within other political groupings, for whom Liberal moral and ethical judgements on foreign policy might continue to have force. The views of Liberals and ex-Liberals became an important component of the *pacificist* grouping opposed to appeasement. They were a crucial element in manifestations of popular support for Popular Front policies generally examined through the results of the by-elections unsuccessfully contested by A.D. Lindsay at Oxford in October 1938 and won at Bridgewater by Vernon Bartlett in November of the same year.[55]

The identification of the National Government with the Conservative Party might suggest that the party has little place in a history of the peace movement. The LNU, however, made great efforts in the early part of the period to keep contact with Conservative views in the hope of preserving an internationalist dimension to an increasingly defencist foreign policy. The LNU's demonstration that League ideals mattered to large sections of the public through the Peace Ballot influenced Conservative rhetoric and its determined inclusivity kept individual Conservatives within its fold longer than might have been expected. Sir Austen Chamberlain finally left the organisation in June 1936 after the General Council voted for the continuation of sanctions against Italy. The National Government's failure to impose effective sanctions on Italy, its rearmament policy and its replacement of Eden in a bid to appease the fascist states divided even the LNU from the Conservative Party. Conservatives opposed to appeasement moved, however, closer to the common position held by the *pacificist* majority within the peace movement. Although the received view has been that: "...these Conservative opponents of Chamberlain were his most telling critics and his most worthy adversaries",[56] party discipline ensured that it was difficult for Conservatives to openly associate with the

---

[55] Iain MacLean does not, however, believe that these results demonstrated a long-term trend in public opinion against Chamberlain's appeasement policy. Examining Mass Observation's results for the same period he cautions: "Most people, most of the time, had no views at all about foreign policy; foreign affairs played little or no part in their assessment of leading politicians." McLean, I., "Oxford and Bridgewater", in Cook, C. & Ramsden, J., *op cit*, p127

[56] Rock, W.R., Appeasement on Trial: British Foreign Policy and its Critics 1938 - 1939, Hamden, 1966, p16

peace movement. Nevertheless, the most enthusiastic proponents of the Popular Front publicly, and a wider cross-section of opposition politicians privately, recognised that an anti-appeasement coalition including dissident Conservatives was one possible outcome of the period. The dialogue between *pacificists* in the peace movement, the full implication of whose views was that armed confrontation with Germany and Italy was unavoidable, and dissident Conservative defencists who continued to accept that an internationalist dimension to their policy based on a view of international law was essential, shaped the peace movement in the last years of peace.

The British Union of Fascists, later British Union, whose membership reached a peak of 40 000 in the first half of 1934, was antagonistic towards the peace movement throughout most of the period. As war approached, however, its identification with continental fascism led it to emerge as an anti-war party. Pacifists made some approaches to the party in this period and there was even some debate about joint membership of the British Union and the PPU. The extent to which the BU's claim to have an independent foreign policy was regarded with scepticism by the British Government was revealed when its leaders were interned after the Nazi spring offensive in 1940.

Although Church attendances were declining in the period, opinion on the question of peace in the Churches and the leadership of individual clerics had considerable impact on the peace movement. The LNU assiduously courted involvement by the Churches through its corporate membership scheme. David A. Martin reports that in the earlier part of the interwar period the hopes of Free Churchmen, both pacifist and non-pacifist, centred almost exclusively on the League of Nations.[57] Ceadel points out that theological fashion was moving at this time from an immanentist philosophy which because it presupposed God's presence everywhere within the secular world was favourable to Christian intervention in politics to a transcendentalist philosophy which exalted God as superior to and independent of the universe and thus discouraged Christian participation in public affairs.[58] The fact that this did not impact on a number of leading religious pacifists until political circumstances forced absolute pacifism into a quietist phase indicates that the Christian peace movement was reacting to the same forces within international affairs as the secular peace movement. Alan Wilkinson stresses the extent to

---

[57] Martin, David A., Pacifism, an Historical and Sociological Study, London, 1965, p173

[58] Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1915, *op cit*, pp164 -165. Ceadel has written specifically on Christian pacifism in "Christian Pacifism in the Era of the Two World Wars", in Shiels, W.J., The Church and War, Oxford, 1983

which church attitudes, particularly among Christian pacifists, were a continuation of the rationalist, progressive liberal theology of the twenties which ignored: "The evidence provided by the [Great] war that underneath the conscious surface of European civilisation there seethed dark irrational forces..."[59] These New Testament attitudes were not an obvious basis for comprehending the political conditions fostered by the dictatorships of the thirties and pre-disposed Christians, both pacifist and *pacificist*, towards appeasement.[60] Although interest in Christian attitudes to conflict during the inter-war years has focussed on the development of absolute pacifism and the best known Christian leaders of the peace movement, George Lansbury, Sheppard, Stuart Morris and Charles Raven were all pacifists, none of the denominations, apart from the Quakers, were doctrinally pacifist.

Anglicanism was the denomination most affected by the tension between the generalised pacific views that the First World War had engendered and a doctrinal commitment to the lawfulness of war. In the autumn of 1929 a series of meetings in the "Christ and peace" campaign had resulted in the adoption by the Church of England's 1930 Lambeth Conference of the declaration: "War as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ".[61] The role of an established church demanded, nevertheless, that those at the apex of its hierarchy involved themselves in the activities of the state, including the bearing of arms, and there was only one pacifist bishop. This did not preclude involvement with the *pacificist* peace movement. Wilkinson sees the Anglicans contribution as having a significant influence on the character of the movement: "...a further development and strengthening of the pre-war alliance between liberal Christianity and a progressive ideology".[62] The acceptance

---

[59] Wilkinson, *op cit*, p95. Wilkinson describes Bishop E.W. Barnes of Birmingham, the only pacifist bishop, as representing the "...apotheosis of liberal theology". His rationalist explanations of the miracles of faith led even his son, writes Wilkinson, in an otherwise admiring biography to admit that there was "little poetry in him". *Ibid*, p96

[60] "To most people of the Christian tradition appeasement seemed the embodiment of the gospel - penitence for past sins by the allies and the offer of reconciliation and forgiveness to the outcast: the equivalent in international affairs of the ecumenical vision of international Christian reconciliation." *Ibid*, p139

[61] The 1924 ecumenical Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC) which attracted 1500 delegates, although divided between pacifists and *pacificists*, had combined to condemn war as "...contrary to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ". It had urged churches to refuse to support wars waged before, or in defiance of, arbitration. *Ibid*, pp88 - 89

[62] "Both Raven and Sheppard were inheritors of the pre-war alliance between political

by Anglicans, of otherwise conventional defencist views, of an internationalist moral dimension to foreign policy was also an important component of peace movement opinion. The best known Anglican peace activists were, however, pacifists. This reflected the fact that, despite the pressures of establishment, the Church of England recognised the right of Anglicans to freedom of conscience on the issue. That pacifism was no bar to preference into the middle order of the Clergy was demonstrated by the fact that Sheppard, Morris and Raven were all Canons. Anglican pacifism, however, although influential was not numerically strong, the Church of England Peace Fellowship, founded by Morris in 1934 appears to have collapsed when Morris and Sheppard concentrated their energies on the PPU. The Anglican Pacifist Fellowship was not formed until the summer of 1937[63] and had something over 1 500 members by September 1939.

Nonconformity was numerically more important to the peace movement than was Anglicanism. At the height of Corporate membership of the LNU in 1934 when 2 656 religious organisations were affiliated to the union just 21.3% (511) of the 2 404 congregations for whom a denomination was given were Anglican.[64] Methodist churches accounted for just over a third (805 affiliations) of the corporate membership of the LNU. Methodism also had a larger pacifist constituency. There had been a Wesleyan Methodist Peace Fellowship in 1916 but the Methodist Peace Fellowship grew out of reactions to the events of the thirties. It was formed by the Revd Henry Carter in November 1933 after his conversion to absolute pacifism sometime between mid-February and mid-March 1933. The Fellowship had 3 500 members by September 1939. While Carter was mainly associated with Christian pacifist peace activity, he endorsed the practical efforts of pacifists to improve the international situation in the mid-thirties, particularly associating the Fellowship with George Lansbury's efforts to call a world conference. Carter also became one of the 36 Sponsors of the PPU. After the outbreak of war Carter formed the Christian Pacifist Forestry and Land Units to give young conscientious objectors constructive and socially useful employment.

Although, like the other Nonconformist sects, Congregationalism was *pacificist*, providing the second largest denominational contingent of the LNU corporate

---

and theological liberalism." Wilkinson, *op cit*, p105

[63] Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, *op cit*, p174 & p210. Information on the pacifist movement within the Churches comes from the same source.

[64] Birn, op cit, p137 gives figures for LNU Corporate Membership.

membership scheme at 22% (529 affiliations) and beating the Anglicans into third place, Congregationalist ministers were more likely to be pacifists than their Methodist contemporaries. The Congregational Peace Crusade had been formed as early as 1926 (although it had to be reactivated in May 1933 by Leyton Richards) and pacifism was very influential at Mansfield College, Oxford where Congregationalist ministers trained, particularly through the presence of the Revd Cecil J. Cadoux.[65]

Both the Baptists and the Presbyterians had a sizeable presence in the LNU's corporate membership with 238 and 213 congregations affiliated respectively. Both also had their own pacifist grouping, the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship and the Presbyterian Pacifist Group both founded in 1934. The Unitarian church was much smaller with just 26 congregations affiliated to the LNU but its pacifist group, the Unitarian Peace Fellowship was founded a year earlier in 1933. The influence of these denominations on both pacifist and *pacificist* peace activism in the localities depended on the pre-existing comparative strength of the churches, which varied considerably. As early as November 1933 pacifist denominational groups were coordinated by the Council of Christian Pacifist Groups and this may in part explain the surviving impression of the dominance of pacifism in the Churches.

The Society of Friends was the only sect with an avowedly pacifist ethos. It operated as a group within the peace movement through the Friends Peace Committee (established 1888) and the Northern Friends Peace Board (established 1913). Its influence was more widespread than this suggests, however, through the activities of individual Quakers in a variety of other peace bodies. The Quaker tradition was divided between absolutists and those of a collaborative tendency who combined a political *pacificism* with a personal pacifism. The development and growing strength of the absolutist tradition in the later thirties, combined with the failure of the *pacificist* remedies of the twenties, has obscured the contribution of the latter tradition which Ceadel describes as a "growing element" within the sect.

The Roman Catholic Church was the exception to the general role of the Churches in the British peace movement. Just 14 Roman Catholic congregations were affiliated to the LNU. Although Catholics did have their own peace organisation, Pax, which had 150 members by September 1938, the denomination's relationship, certainly officially, was dominated, particularly after the anti-clerical persecutions in Republican areas of Spain in

---

[65] C.J. Cadoux was author of The Early Christian Attitude to War, (1919)

the summer of 1936, by an anti-socialist impetus which made cooperation with the secular peace movement difficult.[66] Even before this, the church's doctrinal commitment to the just war coupled with its authoritarian structure had not made it fertile ground for the peace movement. Pax itself stopped short of absolute pacifism, believing that modern warfare was incompatible with the principles of a just war. Like other denominations the Catholic Church had local strong points. Tom Buchanan has suggested that the conflict between loyalty to the Labour Movement and to the Church in these localities influenced attitudes to the war in Spain.[67] If he is right then Catholicism may also have acted as a negative influence on the coalescence of the peace movement.

Joining with these groups at various points in the thirties in peace activity were a host of other organisations. Coordinating bodies such as the League of Nations Union, the National Declaration Committee, the British Anti-War Movement, local peace Councils and the International Peace Campaign, actively sought the cooperation in specific campaigns or activities of groups whose own purposes suggested possible sympathy with the peace movement. Attempts were made to engage organisations for the young, for women, for international friendship, religious groups, trade unions, and groups pursuing leisure activities or lifestyles which suggested sympathy with an egalitarian or peaceful coexistence. Apart from a few rigorously sectarian or quietist groupings within the peace movement this reflected a view held in common that the peace movement's purpose was to bring democratic pressure on government by the demonstration of the widest possible support for a foreign policy based on non-aggressive principles.

A Chronology of External Events Impacting on the Peace Movement:

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931 was the first event to bring into question the internationalist system of pacification based around the League of Nations which had been put in place after the Great War. Reaction in Europe and the United States was muted by the depth of the economic crisis following the Wall Street

---

[66] Wilkinson notes that John Eppstein in Must War Come? (1935) had attempted to "...interpret Roman Catholic and papal teaching as supportive of the League and to prove that peace work was not the monopoly of protestants and socialists". Such views had little impact at the time and Wilkinson reports that Eppstein felt both "...isolated and defensive as a Roman Catholic in peace work". *op cit*, p94

[67] Buchanan, T., The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement, Cambridge, 1991

Crash of 1929 and in Britain by the ramifications of the disagreements within the Labour Party which led to the formation of the National Government. The failure of the League to deter the Japanese and fully involve the United States (which was not a member) in international reaction to the invasion also revealed faults in the League's constitution. For League Council decisions to be binding, for instance, required the assent of all members and Japan was able to veto action.[68] There was an even-handedness in the League's treatment of Japan and China which failed to label Japan as the aggressor during the first months of the fighting or to introduce an effective inducement for the Japanese to desist. When attitudes in the League eventually hardened against Japan, as they began to after March 1932, the Japanese government withdrew from it.

The long-awaited Disarmament Conference convened in February 1932. Its failure to make progress signalled the end of the hopes that had grown around the building of a system of internationalist pacification after the Great War. The withdrawal of Germany from both it and the League of Nations in October 1933, following Hitler's accession to power in January, made the last few months of its existence superfluous. By the time it was adjourned *sine die* in May 1934 it was clear that the Japanese invasion of China had heralded an altogether different trend in international affairs. Although these events destroyed faith in the efficacy of internationalist solutions (indicated in Britain by the beginning of the fall in LNU membership) they also promoted amongst the peace movement's constituency a more determined effort to create a popular peace movement to counteract the return to international anarchy. If the initial reaction was a restatement of, or renewed commitment to, beliefs and policies which had been thrown into doubt by these antipathetic international events, there were also signs in some sectors of the movement of the beginnings of the move away from the idealism of the twenties towards the realism of the later thirties. Reaction was complicated on the Left by the belief of some activists that the economic crisis of the period heralded the final phase of capitalism and that a revolutionary situation was likely to develop. This thesis promoted a sectarian idealism which encouraged resistance to the realist compromises which defined the policies of their *pacificist* allies. This was particularly evident in opposition to the League of Nations, which was viewed as an instrument of capitalist hegemony, and on the question of whether rearmament should begin while a capitalist government was in office.

---

[68] Henig, Ruth B., The League of Nations, London, 1973, p6

The murder of the Austrian Chancellor Dolfuss in July 1934 by Austrian Nazis was an early indication of the extent of the party's pan-German ambitions. In raising the ghost of the Archduke Ferdinand it helped to galvanise those who believed that a repetition of the events of twenty years before could be prevented by determined action. Assessment of Italian reaction to the event promoted, however, one of the continuing delusions of those who sought to appease the ambitions of the dictators, that Italy could be persuaded that its national interest lay in allying itself with the non-fascist European powers against the ideologically similar German regime.

In fact it was Italian designs on Abyssinia which laid before the peace movement the clear choice between accommodation and containment delineated in the arguments within the peace movement over the imposition of sanctions, economic and military, on states indulging in unprovoked aggression. The invasion of October 1935 and the imposition of economic sanctions divided pacifists and *pacificists* within the peace movement by clarifying the difference between their policies. In the same period the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of July was the first indication that British government reaction to the new situation in Europe was based on bilateral accommodation, rather than the continuation of the internationalist containment it appeared to re-endorse under pressure from the Peace Ballot results in the run up to the General Election in November.

The public outcry in December when the Hoare-Laval Pact revealed that the British Government was in fact pursuing a trilateral accommodation of Italian ambitions (with the French) convinced the non-political peace movement, mistakenly, of the success of the pressure group approach it had adopted. The failure of the piecemeal sanctions imposed by the League, the failure once again to achieve an agreement with the United States for an oil embargo and British government resistance to the use of its naval power to blockade the Suez Canal to give expression to the League's condemnation of the invasion, further discredited the League ideal. Within the peace movement this led to two distinct reactions. Amongst *pacificists* this promoted the view that the internationalist approach had been only half-heartedly tried and encouraged the view, even amongst supposedly non-party groups, that the election of a government committed to this view should be the peace movement's ultimate aim. This chimed in with the Left's call for the election of a Popular Front government. Amongst pacifists, however, it promoted the view that the League should never have been viewed as an instrument of enforcement and that its role should be re-defined to secure by negotiation a resolution

of the underlying economic causes of war.

The German reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936 revealed the difficulties that a *pacificist* policy of containment faced in the historical context of the Versailles Treaty. If it was difficult on moral grounds to justify the allied occupation of German territory, it was equally difficult to refuse pan-German expansionism where German speaking populations of neighbouring countries appeared to be expressing a desire to be incorporated into the Reich. The lack of reaction from Britain and France also reinforced the view that their existing governments lacked the physical will to pursue a policy of containment even based on the kind of defencist arguments by which British foreign policy towards Europe had been based in the nineteenth century and on which French policy towards Germany had been based in the immediate post-war period.

The outbreak of the Spanish War in July when right wing insurgents, including the fascist Falange, revolting against the elected coalition of the Centre and Left were aided by Italian and German forces, produced a greater reaction in Britain. The majority *pacificist* section of the peace movement was split between those who wished to contain the conflict by a neutrality policy of Non-Intervention (a lesson read from August 1914 when a conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia had been allowed through the system of alliances to become a general conflagration) and those with an alternative socialist internationalism who believed it was essential to actively aid the Spanish Republicans to defeat the fascist insurgents. The conflict had far-reaching ramifications for the peace movement in Britain. It convinced those on the Left, for whom war resistance had been a quasi-pacifist tradition, that there were circumstances in which force was the only response and thus destroyed the coalition between pacifists and the Left which had been a legacy of the Great War. For such *pacificists* it made rearmament a political rather than a moral question. This was the beginning of the end for the "all-in" peace movement which had evolved out of reaction to the events of the early thirties. The destructive effects of the revelation of the fundamental incompatibility of the reactions prompted by absolute pacifism and *pacificism* was compounded by the organisational arguments within the Left reflecting the anti-communism of the Labour Party leadership and the simple logistical effect of the involvement of so many activists in campaigning for the Republicans. The blatant violations of the Non-Intervention Pact by Germany and Italy, the large-scale executions of Republicans in captured areas, the indiscriminate bombing of civilians and concerns about the effect of a fascist Spain on the balance of power, moved a significant number of *pacificists* away from the policy of non-

intervention. The active participation of the Left in what amounted to *de facto* military sanctions (albeit within a civil war to which the application of the League of Nations covenant was contentious) ultimately strengthened the identification of the *pacificist* peace movement with defencists who supported the containment of fascism within an ideological paradigm of nationalist self-interest.

War, albeit undeclared, erupted again in China in July 1937 after an exchange of gunfire at the Marco Polo Bridge. Although pacifists in Britain continued to see each of the areas of conflict as separate symptoms of the continuing inequalities and injustices of the colonial period and the post-war settlement, *pacificists* were increasingly identifying the three militarist powers of Japan, Germany and Italy as the source of the international problems. The merging of the Berlin-Rome Axis with the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact into a trilateral pact in November 1937 confirmed *pacificists* in this view. The Labour Party campaigned for economic sanctions against Japan in the autumn of 1937, although the peace movement as a whole remained wary of full support for the second stage of such a policy, military sanctions. Although the campaign against Japanese attacks on China never achieved the intensity of the various aid for Spain events, popular protest in 1937 was much stronger than it had been during the initial incursion of 1931 - 1933. In part this reflected the fact that during 1937, with the German air attack on Guernica in April and the Japanese bombing of Chinese towns in the autumn, some of the worst fears of the peace movement about civilian involvement in future war were brought to fruition. The Sino-Japanese war continued until it merged in the wider conflict of the Second World War but in Britain reaction to it quietened in response to further international problems closer to the British mainland.

The resignation of the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, over disagreements about conversations with the Italians in February 1938, revealed that the general drift towards a policy of accommodation under the leadership of Ramsey McDonald and Stanley Baldwin, had become under the more dynamic leadership of Chamberlain, a determined strategy. The policy of Appeasement polarised the peace movement further revealing the essential incompatibility of pacifism and *pacificism* in the antipathetic conditions of the late thirties. Rejection by Chamberlain of even the pretence of adherence to an internationalist view pushed those in the peace movement who had attempted to take a non-political stance, but who remained convinced that the League of Nations had a role to play, into an alliance with the political opposition and with dissident Conservatives. Conversely it allied the minority pacifist movement, albeit

uneasily, with mainstream Conservatism and the small pro-fascist groups. The *Anschluss*, which occurred almost immediately afterwards, exacerbated these divisions by re-iterating for Chamberlainites and pacifists the difficulties of opposing Pan-German ambitions while underlining for the majority peace movement and anti-appeasement Conservatives' concerns about Nazi methods and the scale of Nazi ambitions.

The lines of argument within the peace movement that would be deployed in the face of the German demand for the incorporation of the Sudeten German speaking population into Germany and their secession from Czechoslovakia were clear from the spring of 1938. Pacifists believed that this was an adjustment to the Versailles Treaty which could be accomplished without destabilising Europe. The majority *pacificist* movement believed that the demand had been orchestrated by the Nazi regime, that the methods pursued both by Heinlein's supporters and by the German regime were immoral and that therefore Britain in concert with France and the Soviet Union should protect the integrity of Czechoslovakia diplomatically and back it with the threat of force. The personal intervention of Chamberlain in September to avert the occupation of the Sudetenland by force was applauded by pacifists. The majority *pacificists* were presented with a problem for it was difficult for them to condemn Chamberlain who had clearly worked hard to preserve peace but at a price which they regarded as unacceptable. The difficulties that any peace movement faced in propounding policies which risked war in the interests of a fairer settlement were compounded, not only by the moral complexities of the right of the Sudetenlanders to self-determination outside of Nazi manipulation, but also by the evident public relief at the success of Chamberlain's diplomacy.

The outrages of *Kristallnacht* just over a month later, demonstrated to those sections of the peace movement who had supported the Munich Agreement the moral difficulties of the accommodation of the Nazi regime which embodied values which were repugnant to it. Doubts about Hitler's integrity and signs of the guilt that some peace activists felt at having supported Germany's demands merged in the collection of a petition demanding a World Conference to discuss a wider settlement of the economic and territorial inequalities which promoted conflict. There remained, even at this late stage, some measure of agreement between pacifists and *pacificists* about this matter.

The invasion by German forces of the rump of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 ended the hopes of non-pacifist appeasers. It vindicated the majority *pacificist* view that accommodation had been a mistake and revitalised sections of that part of the peace movement which had been debilitated by the apparent popularity of appeasement during

the months after Munich. Hitler's takeover of Czechoslovakia was the first indication of his appetite for non-ethnic German territory and its effect was thus greater than earlier treaty violations in influencing wider public opinion to accept the necessity for a stand against German expansionism. The German regime's rebuttal of obligations entered into at Munich presented much more serious problems for the pacifist view. Absolute pacifists faced a choice between continuing to appease German ambitions in the face of stark evidence that concessions were not lessening German demands as grievances were addressed or eschewing political involvement and opting for a quietist view that pacifism was a faith without immediate political relevance.

It could be argued that at this point the majority *pacificist* peace movement and their containment defencist allies ceased to exist as an oppositional force since the national Government had moved into a position of seeking regional mutual defence pacts as the internationalist dimension to a policy of rearmament. The ineffectiveness of the League of Nations had already forced internationalists to accept these agreements as a substitute for the overall Collective Security that had failed to develop within the League. The reciprocal agreement announced between Britain and Poland on 6th April 1939, the joint guarantees with France to Rumania and Greece following the Italian invasion of Albania on 7th April and the Anglo-Turkish declaration of intent to resist any further aggression in the Mediterranean in May did not, however, bring the government and the *pacificist* peace movement into an alliance. The peace movement remained suspicious of British Government intentions. These suspicions centred particularly on the failure to conclude an agreement with Russia and on the announcement by Chamberlain in April of the introduction of conscription. The former of these concerns, particularly amongst those on the right of the peace movement who had formerly been opponents of the Soviet Union, was a continuation of the realism which had begun to characterise the *pacificist* section of the movement after 1936. The latter was a reminder, particularly with regards to the leadership of the trade union movement which had been one of the motors driving the realism of Labour's foreign policy, that political idealism continued to be a potent counterweight to the implementation of an effective policy of containment.

The announcement of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact occurred so shortly before the declaration of war that its implications for the *pacificist* sector of the peace movement were not immediately apparent. The loss of the support of the Soviet Union for a policy of containment promoted further divisions within the British peace movement which went far outside of the relatively small number of Communist Party

members. The status of the Soviet Union as the first workers' state gave its position resonance within a broad swathe of the British Left and outright opposition to the war was undoubtedly later strengthened by the signing of the pact. The failure to conclude an alliance with the Soviet Union was regretted throughout the *pacificist* peace movement, however, and national unity was not enhanced by the widely held view that the National Government's dilatoriness in the matter was prompted by narrow ideological objections.

The outbreak of war did not initially alter the positions of the various components of the peace movement. The majority *pacificist* section accepted that the declaration of war was the implementation of military sanctions against an aggressor and that it was just. The decision by the Communist Party at the beginning of October 1939 that the war was an imperialist war split the *pacificist* coalition and had an effect beyond the fairly small number of party members. Sympathisers in the Labour party found justification for their concerns about supporting a political truce with Chamberlain, who continued to be distrusted, and Communist party campaigns provided a focus for the grievances and doubts provoked by the new situation. The artificiality of the Phoney War prompted a period of intense speculation on what Britain's war aims should be and the likely shape of a post war settlement which fed on the latent utopianism within the peace movement. This provided a platform for the long-term solutions proposed by pacifists. Membership of the PPU peaked at the end of the Phoney War. The fundamental division between pacifists and *pacificists* became expressed through differing attitudes to the possibility of a ceasefire and peace talks. In general *pacificists* were not willing to enter into negotiations without a German withdrawal from Poland.

The invasion by the Soviet Union of Finland on 30th November presented the *pacificist* peace movement with a dilemma. While some associated with the peace movement attempted to temper their disapproval with the realist view that Britain and France could not afford to be at war with both Germany and Russia, the Left split between those who supported Finland and those whose loyalty to the Soviet Union prevented them condemning the aggression. That conflict ended in March and on 9th April 1940 Hitler's forces invaded Denmark and Norway.

Within little more than a month the failure of the British counter-attack in Norway had weakened confidence on the Conservative benches in Chamberlain to the extent that he resigned. As the German attack on the Low Countries and France progressed the new coalition government formed in Britain included a number of leading figures whose views had been associated with the *pacificist* peace movement. What appeared to be the

imminent invasion of Britain after France was defeated in June 1940 gave rise to a different public mood. The new urgency dislocated the population through the mobilisation of manpower and the membership of most political organisations fell. The interwar peace movement disappeared as the split in the movement became absolute. While *pacificists* were certainly not uncritical of the wartime administration, nor uncritical of the way in which the war was prosecuted, they accepted that their hopes for a more peaceful world depended upon an allied victory and the destruction of the regimes in Germany, Italy and Japan. Those who continued to believe in an immediate ceasefire were the pacifist rump of the old peace movement, the Communist Party, pro-fascists and the Trotskyists.

Although communists had attempted to rebuild a wide peace alliance after they had moved into opposition to the war, once real hostilities commenced those opposed to the war found themselves under pressure from public opinion and the authorities and with little in common ideologically. The fascist leadership was interned. The British Union, which some commentators have suggested had recovered some of its membership during the Phoney War, ceased to have any political significance. Trotskyists were a tiny minority with little influence. Many pacifists moved into quietism, restricting themselves to active support for conscientious objectors. Those who did not, along with the majority of the Communist Party, were generally careful to see that the expression of their disapproval of the war fell short of the active impediment which would have attracted prosecution.

Sheffield, the Economic, Social and Political Background:

The description of Sheffield as the "City of Armaments" revealed, like most labels, a partial truth. Sheffield industry was divided between the "Light Trades", blade forging and finishing, file cutting, silver plate ware, *et cetera*, and the "Heavy Trades", the production of steel sheet and plate, stampings, forgings and wire. The Light Trades were Sheffield's staple industry until the mid-nineteenth century but the Heavy Trades became increasingly important in the second half of that century. It was the mechanisation of war and the creation of larger precision weaponry which made the name of Sheffield synonymous with armaments. In both world wars Sheffield had probably the greatest concentration of arms producing industries in the United Kingdom. Even in peacetime during 1936, Sheffield was producing 13% of Britain's steel, its value constituting a considerably greater proportion of the gross national production since much of it was

specialist alloy steel.[69]

This had impacted on local political traditions because the craftsman based trade unions of the Light Trades had, by and large, remained loyal to the Liberal Party up until the Great War while the Heavy Trades, with a greater proportion of semi-skilled workers had been influenced by the new unionism, which began in the last decades of the nineteenth century, towards separate working class political representation. The increased workforce in the Heavy Trades, which was the result of munitions production during the Great War, made their newer trade unionism dominant over the traditional craft unions. This ensured that after 1918 the Labour Party had rapidly become a major force in the city. The Liberal Federated Trades Council was absorbed by the Labour Trades Council in 1920. Sydney Pollard remarks, however, on the continuing toleration of an "unusually wide" range of theoretical opinions. "Lib-Labs" survived into the early thirties and there was a reluctance to expel those whose allegiance was to the Communist Party. It was only in the latter part of the period that an increasingly national view of politics forced Labour orthodoxy on the local party.[70]

The impact of armaments production on the character of local politics was not simple to describe. In peacetime Sheffield was not dependent upon armaments orders although such work provided a considerable proportion of employment. No hard figures for the percentage of Sheffield steel destined for armaments production in the thirties exist. Geoffrey Tweedale finds that at Hadfields such orders accounted for 17% of the company's turnover during the 1930 - 1935 period and employed 566 individuals. Commercial work kept a further 3 391 employees busy in the same company.[71] As the thirties progressed the dominance of arms work increased. At Firth-Browns in 1930 armaments work stood at just 10% of the order book. By 1935 18% of the total value of its orders was made up solely of armour-plate and shell orders and this had increased to 29% by 1938. In the final year of peace these two items accounted for 43% of its production.

Despite its dependence on military orders there was no culture in Sheffield of

---

[69] Tweedale, G., Steel City, Entrepreneurship, Strategy and Technology in Sheffield 1743 - 1993, Oxford, 1995, p297. Other details on production in the thirties are from the same source.

[70] Pollard, S., History of Labour in Sheffield, Liverpool, 1959, p265

[71] Comparative figures for the English Steel Corporation were 20% and 860 employees on defence work as against 5 050 employed on commercial work. Tweedale, *op cit*, p298

"deference" voting (as was to be found in some localities with a strong military presence) and, perhaps more unusually, little sign of tactical voting in favour of candidates connected to parties likely to increase armaments orders. Sheffield's steel production had a multitude of uses outside of the armaments industry and this gave the "Swords into Ploughshares" argument, one of the mainstays of peace movement propaganda, a particular resonance in the city. The experience of armaments production during the Great War, despite the high wages enjoyed in certain sectors, had not enamoured the politically aware amongst Sheffield's workers with arms work. In Pollard's view the Great War "...served to hasten the evolution of an independent working-class political outlook" in Sheffield. Its Shop Stewards' Movement had embodied the dissatisfaction felt by engineering workers with the government direction of both manpower and working practices during wartime. This was not, however, the only negative aspect of armaments work. The Great War had seen the development of over-capacity in Sheffield as a result of the demand for armaments and between 1921 - 1931 there was nearly a 30% reduction in employment in both the light and heavy trades for males. The instability of armaments work was blamed for the fact that the history of Sheffield during the interwar years was overshadowed by unemployment. Sidney Pollard writes:

> Although there were ups and downs, conditions improved between 1924 and 1929, deteriorating into a severe depression in 1932, to be followed by a slow recovery afterwards, there was throughout the whole period, a hard, irreducible core of men out of employment.[72]

Throughout the 1920s unemployment had not dipped significantly below 15% but 1932 was the worst year for unemployment with a third of those registered out of work and an abrupt increase in pauperism. The iron and steel trades had 50% unemployment and the situation was little better for those in the cutlery and tool trades. Engineering and the silver trades were more secure but still suffered over one third unemployment.

---

[72] This section is based on Pollard, S., History of Labour in Sheffield, Liverpool, 1959, pp248 - 268. Amongst large towns with an insured population of 100 000 or more, Sheffield suffered some of the worst unemployment in Britain. It was reported in 1932: "It will be seen that whereas Liverpool appears to have suffered slightly more seriously than Sheffield up to 1930, Newcastle-on-Tyne more seriously up to 1929 and Stoke on Trent slightly more seriously in 1928, 1929, and 1930, the percentage of unemployment in Sheffield was among the highest throughout the period, and in 1931 it was the highest of all by a considerable margin [34% to Glasgow's 30.3%]." Owen, A.D.K., A Report on Unemployment in Sheffield, Sheffield Social Survey Committee, Survey Pamphlet No 4, 1932, p71

The following year saw little improvement, particularly in the pauperism figure which actually rose by a few hundreds. By 1934, when this essay begins, unemployment as a whole had fallen to approximately one in five and pauperism to one in ten. For the next three years unemployment fell by roughly 4% a year to reach 9% by 1937. It rose again in 1938 but dropped just below 9% in the last year of peace. Pauperism dropped by 3% in 1935 and remained at around 7% for a couple of years before dropping again to approximately 4% for the last three years of peace. Its 1939 figure was 3.9%. Although much of this improvement was traceable to armaments orders, Sheffield's more radical trade union and left-wing political leaders continued to insist on the insecure nature of the "boom".[73]

Nor had the connection with the armaments industry brought a sense of prosperity to Sheffield's workers. For those in full employment by the end of the period real wages in Sheffield were about 25% higher than they had been in 1914 but the sense of well-being such statistics might have suggested was seriously affected by the levels of unemployment about which Pollard writes: "Even a short spell of unemployment... could reduce a family to levels of comfort below those of pre-war years". This was experienced by a large number of working class families because the pattern was not for long periods of unemployment but rather a continuous movement into and out of employment. The population of Sheffield remained almost static in the period (511 757 in 1931 increasing to 512 850 in 1951) but this concealed an exodus resulting from the high level of unemployment.

Paradoxically, therefore, in Sheffield while the question of peace loomed larger than in most other localities because of the involvement of the local economy with the production of war materials, local attitudes amongst the politically active working class reflected not only nationally felt concerns about the moral, ethical, and pragmatic aspects of the maintenance of peace but also a local view that armaments production had brought not only unwelcome government interference in the workshops but large scale unemployment in its wake. Pollard agrees that "...the pacifism of working-class organisations was strongly marked"[74] but views the resurgence of this tradition from 1936 onwards as part of an increasing national dominance of the local political agenda.

---

[73] Although no hard figures for the whole sector are available, Pollard certainly believes that the increase of the proportion of men in employment was "maintained after 1937 by armament orders" . Pollard, *op cit*, p269

[74] Pollard is using pacifism in its older, more generalised sense here.

There were a number of Labour "traditions" in Sheffield but the mainstream of the party was heavily trade union dominated. Its Left-wing politics were based more on the expression of concrete working-class need than on intellectual doctrine and this trend became more pronounced when in November 1926 the local electorate made Sheffield the first large provincial city to have a Labour administration.[75] Apart from the year November 1932 - November 1933 the Labour Party controlled the Council throughout the period. There were 25 wards in the city each electing three councillors, one seat being contested each November for a three year term. In addition the council had 25 Alderman elected by members of the council. In November 1934 the total figures were: Labour 56, Progressives 34, Conservatives 8 and two Independent Aldermen. 14 wards were Labour, eight were Progressive, and two (Ecclesall and Nether Edge) were still describing themselves as Conservative. The socially divided nature of the city was emphasised by the fact that in only one ward was there mixed Labour and Progressive representation. By the time of the electoral truce in 1939, Labour's advantage had slipped but not disappeared: 53 Labour councillors faced 45 Progressives (now including the councillors from Ecclesall and Nether Edge who had formerly labelled themselves Conservatives) and the two Independents. There were still only two wards which had mixed political representation.

Even before 1900 representatives of labour had taken an interest in municipalisation and after 1927 the new administration set out a programme of "municipal socialism"[76] which impacted on the educational, housing and unemployment policies of the city giving these a distinctly Labour complexion. Despite the apparent radicalism of the label there was a strong sense amongst local Labour leaders of the responsibilities of office and of the necessity to demonstrate that working class individuals had the capacity to administer one of England's largest cities effectively for the greater benefit of the majority of its population. The concentration upon administrative and practical matters ensured that the highly political reaction of many of

---

[75] Vernon Thornes and Albert Ballard, writing in the sixties, referred to Labour's 1926 victory as the product of: "Militancy created by the General Strike" but more recently historians have tended to view domestic issues, most particularly dissatisfaction with the local administration on housing, as contributory factors. Thornes, V., and Ballard, A., 40 Years Labour Rule in Sheffield, Sheffield, 1968, p6

[76] This was the subtitle of the pamphlet by E.G. Rowlinson, Labour leader of the city council, written during the interregnum of 1932 - 1933. Rowlinson, E.G., "Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield 1926 - 1932", Sheffield, 1932 (reprinted 1982), p3

Labour's rank and file to the split in the party in 1931 and the endemic unemployment of the period was viewed by Labour representatives on the City Council with the same kind of scepticism as it was viewed by the national Labour leadership.[77] The tensions between the national leadership and the constituency parties which characterised the party in the thirties were to an extent therefore locally manifested in disagreements between the ruling Labour Group on the city Council and the activists of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council. The sense amongst local activists of the exclusion of the STLC from the counsels of the Labour Group left that body free to pursue its own determinedly oppositional policies in contrast to the moderation which was felt to characterise the Labour administration of the city.

There can be no doubt that Labour control of the city in the period between the wars led to improvements in working-class living conditions. Particularly the annual crude mortality and infant mortality statistics declined in the period to the levels of the UK as a whole. Pollard believes that this was a significant achievement given that: "...Sheffield was still a crowded, smoky city, containing many dangerous occupations and having one of the highest proportions of unemployment in the country". Overcrowding was still a problem in the old central working-class districts but Sheffield had one of the most active slum clearing and rehousing programmes in the country and by 1938 8% of the entire population had been rehoused. The period therefore saw a movement by both working class and middle-class families to outlying suburbs and this undoubtedly weakened Labour's political hold on the inner city.

The antipathetic nature of the national administration limited, of course, the scope for local action. Nowhere was this truer than in the administration of unemployment benefits and the involvement of Labour politicians in this issue was extremely controversial. While the local Labour Party leadership ensured that the scales paid locally were efficiently administered at the most generous levels allowed, anger at the plight of the unemployed became to an extent directed at them. Their involvement discredited the gradualist constitutionalism which their position reflected and undoubtedly strengthened the hand of the Communists and those local Labour activists who espoused a more revolutionary view.

---

[77] Pollard believes that this split between activists and the administration reflected also "...political apathy among a growing proportion of working-class families" who were becoming more concerned to use the voice they now had for incremental economic advantage rather than to address outstanding social injustices.

The strength of the Labour Party in the city was reflected at a constituency level fairly rapidly after the Great War. In the 1918 General Election Coalition Liberals held three of Sheffield's seven parliamentary constituencies, Attercliffe, Brightside and Hillsborough with the Conservatives winning the other four. In 1922 these three seats became Labour and thereafter the Liberal Party had no parliamentary representation in the city. At the 1929 General Election the Labour Party took the Attercliffe, Brightside, Central, Hillsborough and Park Constituencies in the city while the Conservatives retained Ecclesall and Hallam. The 1931 election saw a very different result with the Conservatives winning every seat in the city and the Liberal Party, which had contested five seats in 1929, disappearing from the hustings. The Labour Party regained control of four of the seven seats in 1935. (The full General Election results for Sheffield in 1929, 1931 and 1935 are given in Chapter 3 Appendix, p135).

The overall local voting figures for the elections of 1931 and 1935 do not suggest the extent of Labour dominance over the city. The middle-class suburbs covered by the Ecclesall and Hallam constituencies were at that period unreachable territory for the Labour Party. Subtract these two constituencies from the overall results and the dominance of Labour in Sheffield becomes much more apparent. In the remaining five predominantly working class divisions Labour won 56.5% of the vote in 1929 with the Conservatives taking 30.2% and the Liberals 12.4%. Even in the rout of 1931, Labour retained 40.5% of the vote with the Conservatives achieving 56.8%. Although this was a very poor performance, it compared favourably with most of the rest of the country, where opposition Labour candidates received almost ten percentage points less support and where National Government candidates (represented in Sheffield solely by the Conservatives) achieved a poll of more than ten *per cent* more of the popular vote. Labour would have retained Attercliffe in 1931 but for the intervention of the Communists. 1935 saw Labour almost regain its 1929 position in these constituencies with 55.2% of the vote. This was 8 324 votes short of the combined total of Labour and Communist votes in 1929 on a four *per cent* lower turnout. Although nationally the Labour Party just bettered its 1929 percentage of the vote, the transfer of Liberal votes to the Conservatives left that party in an unassailable position. In these areas of Sheffield the Conservative candidates received almost nine *per cent* less votes than in the country as a whole, while the Labour Party was enjoying a level of support 17 percentage points above what it was achieving nationally.

The dominance of the Labour Party in Sheffield ensured that the local peace

movement included a large number of figures from the Labour movement but the initiative on the issue generally rested with figures outside of the mainstream of the party. The Labour leadership, despite their general concordance with the peace movement, remained suspicious of the dissenting and oppositional nature of the views of some elements within it. Much of the dynamism of the peace movement in the thirties can be traced to two groups who had their own traditions within the broader Labour movement in Sheffield: a harder-edged, ideological, revolutionary impulse which by the later thirties had become largely identified with the Communist Party as well as a tradition of more holistic, New Life Socialism which had flourished amongst intellectuals, elements of the lower middle-class and sections of the skilled working-class during the 1880s, whose wider concerns were later mirrored by those of many pacifists.

The revolutionary tradition in Sheffield politics stretched back to the Sheffield Constitutional Society of 1791. It encompassed the Sheffield Radical Union of 1831, the Chartist period, the "anarchism" of those associated with Isaac Ironside in the early 1850s as well as the later Sheffield Anti-Property Association, and the Sheffield Outrages. At certain periods this radicalism had moved into the sphere of direct action against targets in the city. The movement for working-class political representation in the 1890s had impacted on this tradition but in the early years of the twentieth century there had remained amongst particularly the Social Democratic Federation (later Party) a tradition of direct action, particularly on the issue of unemployment, which had recognisable links with the later tactics of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. During the thirties the Communist Party attempted to foster an awareness of this tradition at their major public events in the city[78] and had, in the person of George Fletcher, a direct link with pre-war activism on the issue of unemployment.

Sheffield had a number of links with nationally renowned events and figures associated with peace issues and the experience of the Shop Stewards' Movement during the Great War, viewed by contemporaries as uniting elements of this radical tradition in the city with the political issues raised by war, continued to have an influence, particularly on members of the AEU. J.T. Murphy, the pre-eminent leader of the Sheffield Shop Stewards' Movement, although no longer living in Sheffield by 1934,

---

[78] A Communist Demonstration planned for 11th October 1936 was set to include banners depicting an 1812 march by grinders and an 1839 "silent" meeting by Chartists on Sky Edge. "Sheffield Red Marchers' Banner of Bread and Blood", The Independent, 6.10.36., p7

continued to have contact with the Labour Movement in the city. The extent to which such leaders can be seen as having a traceable influence on peace thought in the city is one of the more interesting question raised by the thesis. As his biographer records, however, Murphy's legacy to the peace movement, even during this initial phase of his career, was less clear cut than might superficially appear. In January 1918 when the Sheffield Trades Council had voted to widen the stoppages into an outright attack on the war, Murphy had been one of those successfully urging that the movement remain narrowly focussed on the grievances of members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers within the workshops.[79]

After the war Murphy joined the new Communist Party and became one of its leading figures, although he was involved in a number of disagreements with other leaders. In 1930 he stood against Fred Marshall in the by-election in Brightside occasioned by Arthur Ponsonby's elevation to the House of Lords and received 1 084 votes, bettering this to 1 571 in the General Election of October 1931. In 1932 he was redeployed by the CPGB from London to become head of the Sheffield party. It was from there that he resigned over a rather obscure internal argument over the extension of credits to the Soviet Union.

Murphy joined the Islington Borough Labour Party and in April 1933 became involved with the Socialist League of which he rapidly became General Secretary. Murphy was a conviction politician and after the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations in September 1934 he argued against the policy of opposition to League sanctions for which the Socialist League is best remembered. Having lost the argument at the Socialist League's annual conference he remained loyal to the policy of the group until October 1935 when the Italian action against Abyssinia led him to publicly renew his opposition to official policy.

Ironically this was precisely the line taken by the Communist Party and Murphy became a strong supporter of the Popular Front after the fascist uprising in Spain. He became a supporter of the broadest definition of the popular front and accepted the need, in the face of fascism, to temporarily substitute the defence of parliamentary democracy for distinctive socialist goals. He resigned from the Socialist League in the summer of 1936, believing that the unity campaign with the ILP and Communist Party for the affiliation of the CPGB to the Labour Party was too narrow a focus and would lead to

---

[79] Darlington, Ralph, The Political Trajectory of J.T. Murphy, Liverpool, 1998, pp4 - 5

the destruction of the Socialist League within the Labour Party. Murphy joined forces with figures from a wider political spectrum to become full-time organiser for the "People's Front Propaganda Committee". This anticipated the position into which most *pacificists* had moved by 1938. Murphy, speaking at the 1939 Southport Conference, urged the Labour Party to adopt a strategy of uniting with other parties opposed to the government in a short term agreed programme. The resolution was defeated. Murphy's views, while recognisably part of the spectrum of left-wing thinking on peace throughout the thirties, thus followed a very idiosyncratic path.

Although Sheffield was a predominantly working-class city with a Labour political tradition dependant upon unionism, it had a played a part in the development of the early socialist tradition in Britain during the 1880s before the evolution through the commencement of the ILP in 1893[80] and the Labour Representation Committee in 1901 of the type of Labourism which characterised working-class self-representation after 1918. John Ruskin, chose Sheffield in 1877 as the first venue for a communitarian experiment by his Guild of St George. St George's Farm at Totley, leased by Ruskin for a group of men who mainly worked as shoemakers, was an experiment in community ownership rather than communal living. It very quickly ran into difficulties over disagreements between the group and Ruskin and by 1879 Ruskin was using the land for experiments in market gardening.[81] Nonetheless it was an early example of contact between intellectual interest in communism and working class activism. In the person of William Harrison Riley, the leader chosen by the shoemakers, it provided also a link to Marxism. Riley, whose personality may have been in part responsible for the rapid failure of the experiment, had published a newspaper between 1872 and 1875 that became the voice of the British section of Marx's First International.

Edward Carpenter, who, although less important than Ruskin in the originality of his ideas had a more abiding influence on this tradition of socialist thought, came to Sheffield as an adult education lecturer also in 1877, significantly, it has been suggested,

---

[80] Edward Hartley believes that the failure of the Sheffield Socialists to involve themselves in the "New Unionism", which flourished particularly at nearby Rotherham in the period 1888 - 1890, was significant in divorcing the two traditions. Hartley, E., "Edward Carpenter (1884 - 1929)", Sheffield City Libraries Local Studies Leaflet, 1979, p10

[81] Armytage, W.H.G., Heavens Below, Utopian Experiments in England 1560 - 1960, London, 1961, pp293 - 301

at a time when the Eastern Question was agitating the liberal moral consciousness.[82] His association with the development of the local Labour movement was to be of much longer duration than Ruskin's. From 1878 he lived near the Totley experiment and was a friend of Riley. During his early years in the city under a variety of influences, including the anarchist Kropotkin and the Indian mysticism of the Bhagavat Gita, he developed his own socialist ethos. In 1883 Carpenter joined the Fellowship of the New Life, read Hyndman's England for All (1881) and joined the SDF. In 1886 he started the Sheffield Socialist Club which had 100 members, about twenty of whom were active. In 1889 Carpenter went to Paris to the Socialist International as delegate from the club. In 1890 the club attempted to intervene in the municipal elections on the issue of the smoke nuisance. The club disintegrated shortly after, however, as the influence of anarchist elements grew. Dr John Creaghe started the Sheffield Anti-property Association in 1891, but left Sheffield in the same year blaming Carpenter's non-violence for his failure to attract more people to the association. The Sheffield Socialist Club was restarted in 1896.

Carpenter was thus one of a number of aesthetic socialists who moved into an organisational role in the early Labour Movement, the most important of whom was William Morris (who addressed the inaugural meeting of the Sheffield Socialist Club). While contact with Sheffield's working-class was both intellectually and emotionally important to the development of Carpenter's ideas,[83] essentially: "Carpenter held that the changes that occur at the level of the individual and in the realm of ideas are more important than those that come about through legal or political processes".[84] This anticipated one of the important debates within pacifism. Carpenter's books and life-style on the smallholding he bought at Millthorpe, nine miles south of Sheffield, were popularising inspirations to early British socialism.[85] His influence produced another

---

[82] Baruah, D.K. "Edward Carpenter and the Early Sheffield Socialists", Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society, Vol 10, Part 1, 1971

[83] "Sheffield and Socialism", a pamphlet giving an affectionate portrait of Carpenter's Sheffield comrades, consisting of a short extract from his autobiography, My Days and Dreams (1916), was published in Sheffield in 1993.

[84] Baruah, *op cit*, p58

[85] Hartley attempts to assess Carpenter's importance both locally and nationally. He concludes that Carpenter's influence is difficult to quantify and quotes E.M. Forster's introduction to the 1949 edition of Towards Democracy to the effect that Carpenter was largely forgotten by that date because "...he was a pioneer whose work has passed into our heritage". Hartley himself writes: "By the turn of the century, Carpenter's framework

experiment in communal living in Sheffield in 1896, the Norton Colony.[86] Carpenter was thus a bridge between what became the mainstream Labour movement and the exponents of communitarian experiments in the expression of the new socialist consciousness. Although events were to divorce pacifism almost completely from socialism, Carpenter's influence prefigured not only the life-style of a number of well known pacifists but also the pacifist communities which flourished briefly at the end of the period.[87]

The extent of the direct influence of Carpenter on pacifism both locally and nationally is a moot point. Carpenter was not best known for his views on peace issues although during the Boer War he had produced Boer and Briton (1900) which gave a socialist view of the conflict and during the Great War he had published The Healing of the Nations (1915) which had maintained an anti-war stance. Carpenter had left the Sheffield area in 1922 and died in Guildford, Surrey in 1929. H.J. McLachlan, son-in-law to Revd Alfred Hall and husband of Joan McLachlan, two of the best known of Sheffield's Christian pacifists of the era, reveals that he had never heard of Carpenter before he was presented with a signed copy of Carpenter's Towards Democracy (1883) in the mid-thirties by a member of his congregation who had personally received it from the author in 1898.[88]

McLachlan was not a Sheffielder, however, and there are signs that some sections of both the pacifist and socialist movements in Sheffield were aware of their debt to Carpenter. Frank Dawtry of the NMWM gave a pacifist address to the Carpenter Memorial service on 7th July 1935.[89] Records of this annual service, which began in 1930 reveal that many of the older members of Sheffield's Labour establishment had personal contact with Carpenter, who remained active as a speaker to the local Labour Movement until the Great War. After the Second World War the service's remit was widened and it acted as a memorial to other well-known figures in the Labour movement, including E.G. Rowlinson, leader of the City Council throughout the period,

---

for social criticism and moral behaviour was 'in the air'." Hartley, *op cit*, p15

[86] Armytage, *op cit*, pp310 - 311

[87] Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, *op cit*, pp308 - 309. The only pacifist 'community' (loosely defined) in Sheffield came together in January 1941 as a group of twelve volunteers subjected to medical experiments as an alternative to war service. See Mellanby, Kenneth, Human Guinea Pigs, London, 1945

[88] McLachlan, H.J., "A Prophet of Our Time: Edward Carpenter 1844 - 1929", Faith and Freedom, Vol 32, Part 3, No 96, p140

[89] "Poet Who Hated Humbug", The Independent, 8.7.35., p5

who had died in 1941. Alf Barton, ILP councillor pre-war and Labour Councillor during the 1920s, read one of the addresses at the first Carpenter Memorial Service in 1930. His widow, Eleanor Barton, one of the best-known figures in the Women's Cooperative Guilds during the later thirties, although she was no longer resident in Sheffield, was president of the Carpenter Memorial Fellowship in 1947. Similarly a young Fred Marshall, who was to become Labour MP for Sheffield Brightside in 1930, is to be found in a photograph of Carpenter and a visiting group from one of the Clarion organisations.[90] It was indeed among such peripheral groups of the Labour movement as the Clarion Cyclists and Ramblers that Carpenter's holistic approach remained important while his influence on the mainstream movement waned. After the Great War such attitudes were still to be found amongst adults working in groups like the Woodcraft Folk who were associated with the peace movement. G.H.B. Ward, of the Sheffield Ramblers, J.H. Bingham, well-known for his association with voluntary educational work in the city, Albert Ballard, A.V. Alexander's electoral agent for the Cooperative Party and E.G.G. Lyon of the LNU all officiated in some capacity at the Carpenter Memorial Services immediately after the Second World War.[91]

Although the strength of the local Cooperative Party reflected the practical concerns of working-class consumers, its educational and social programme also reflected a holistic approach with affinities to the tradition with which Carpenter was associated. The fact that most of the adult education available, which had expanded in response to unemployment, originated either from the Left-wing or in connection with the Churches[92] made adult classes like those run by the Cooperative movement an important forum for the discussion of peace issues. A local Cooperative Party had been started in the city in 1917 which collaborated with the Labour Party in elections and affiliated to it in 1930. It had in the Hillsborough MP, A.V. Alexander, a nationally recognised figurehead.

The movement into the Labour Party after the Great War of prominent former Liberal members of the Union for Democratic Control had a strong influence on the

---

[90] Reproduced in Hartley, *op cit*, p9

[91] Edward Carpenter Memorial Service Programme and Record, Sheffield, 1947 & 1948

[92] There were tensions between the two traditions of adult education and the churches were sensitive about an overly "political" tone to their adult classes. Revd S.J. Granville, for example reported to his church leaders that the fellowship meeting "...had been effectively cleared of political and argumentative elements". St John's Wesleyan Church, Crookesmoor Road, Leaders' Meeting Minute Book, 9.7.36.

pacificist foreign policy of the party in the 1920s. In Sheffield, however, the two most influential members of the group were part of a pacifist tradition. Cecil Henry Wilson, Labour MP for Attercliffe during most of the period, perhaps the best known pacifist parliamentarian of his day after George Lansbury and Arthur Ponsonby, was a living example of the way in which Liberal progressive views on foreign policy in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had become both the foundation of Labour Party foreign policy and the basis for interwar pacifism. His father, Henry Joseph Wilson (1833 - 1914), had been Liberal MP for Holmfirth (1885 - 1912). His biographer writes of him: "From his earliest Sheffield days Wilson had consistently championed internationalism..."[93] He had protested against the British government's attitude to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 and described the Indian Frontier War of 1898 as "wicked and unjust". He despaired of the increasingly pro-imperialist tone of the Liberal Party as Lord Rosebery assumed the leadership and voted against the proposed grant to Lord Kitchener for his Sudan campaign. He welcomed the Czar's disarmament proposals of 1899 and when the Boer War broke out became a prominent member of the Transvaal Committee. He collaborated in the formation of the League of Liberals against Aggression and Militarism whose aim was the pursuit of peace and the extension of the "Rights of Self-Government" to the colonies. Opposition to the war did not make him popular. He was attacked by the Sheffield Liberal newspaper, The Independent, and a meeting he had organised at the Cutler's Hall to hear Cronwright Schreiner speak had to be abandoned when a hostile crowd gathered. Wilson persevered, however, and held a private meeting at his home for 50 anti-war Liberals at which a Sheffield Branch of the South African Conciliation Committee was formed with his son, C.H. Wilson, as local secretary. Wilson's majority at Holmfirth dropped to 787 at the Khaki Election of 1900 but he maintained his anti-war stance. He protested in Parliament about the "barbaric methods" being employed by the British military authorities in South Africa in July 1901 and asked questions about the concentration camps there in 1902. In 1906 and 1909 he protested against the Navy estimates and as a member of the Armaments Protest Committee urged that the money be spent instead on "social purposes". The committee attracted little support within Wilson's own party and, writes his biographer, "...finally Wilson found himself allied, as he had been in the South Africa War days, with the

---

[93] Fowler, W.S., A Study in Radicalism and Dissent, The Life and Times of Henry Joseph Wilson, 1833 - 1914, London, 1961

protagonists of the nascent Socialist Group".[94] C.H. Wilson moved over to the Labour Party at the end of the Great War.

Arthur Ponsonby, Brightside's Labour MP during the 1920s, did not have such strong links with Sheffield as either of the Wilsons and was no longer in regular contact with the city during the period covered by the thesis.[95] He made, however, an important and original contribution to interwar pacifism largely during the period in which he was associated with the city. His Peace Letter Campaign, which presaged the method of the PPU's peace pledge, was launched in Sheffield in 1925. Ponsonby's distinctive contribution was his attempt to produce an objective secular inspiration for a "utilitarian" pacifism which "...must be recognised as worthy of attention as the first attempt to adapt pacifist inspirations to take account of both the increased suffering and destruction, and the dislocating side-effects, produced by modern war, which made any net benefit from fighting undeniably harder to justify".[96] He also published two important peace books. The first, Now is the Time: An Appeal for Peace (1925), presented an argument for utilitarian pacifism addressed to the pacific instincts of ordinary people and based not only on the waste of war, but also on the inefficacy of war as a resolution of international problems. Armaments and war preparations did not provide security, explained Ponsonby, and wars themselves always left unresolved disputes which were the seeds of further wars.

His second book, Falsehood in Wartime (1928) illustrated his belief in the warlike nature of governments by demonstrating that much allied propaganda during the Great War had been based on deliberate falsehoods. His biographer believes that, as well as becoming an instant international best-seller, the book "...set the tone for public reaction against the Great War that culminated in the publication shortly thereafter of the great series of anti-war memoirs".[97]

Like Murphy, Ponsonby's route through the key questions of the period was eclectic. Although he did accept a collaborative orientation in Labour's foreign policy formation during the minority Labour governments, he favoured disarmament by example and had begun to speak out against the use of sanctions in the Bryce Committee

---

[94] *Ibid*, p117

[95] In 1930 he was elevated to the Lords and he last visited the city as one of its MPs in 1929. See Raymond A. Jones' Arthur Ponsonby - The Politics of Life, London, 1989

[96] Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, *op cit*, pp80 - 83

[97] Jones, *op cit*, p168

during the Great War. Ponsonby was thus in advance of the move by pacifists away from a League-based policy. In public he remained loyal to the disarmament and collective security platform until he gave vent publicly to his real views in a letter to The Times during the Abyssinian Crisis. After that he resigned the Labour leadership in the House of Lords and on occasions spoke against the official Labour view.

Ponsonby was extensively involved with the national peace movement. He was president of the War Resistors' International and of their British affiliate the NMWM, presiding at their 1932 Sheffield conference. He was a personal friend of Sheppard and later became a PPU Sponsor. He also chaired the drafting committee meetings for the Parliamentary Pacifist Group, in which Wilson was a prime mover. Both in the peace movement and in the Labour Party, however, Ponsonby had influence rather than leadership. Indeed, his elevation to the leadership in the upper house was largely as a result of the fact that he did not have enough support in the Commons to command a ministerial post. During his years as a Labour MP he must, nevertheless, have had contact with many of those interested in the peace issue in Sheffield who were still active in the second half of the 1930s.[98]

The impression should not be left that most Sheffield Liberals had moved into the Labour Party. On the contrary Labour's opponents on the City Council before 1930 had been an alliance of Liberals and Conservatives and this became consolidated into a group who called themselves "Progressives". Although this continued to include some Liberals it was dominated by the Conservative Party. "Such Liberals as remained," writes Andrew Thorpe, " were moving more and more towards the Conservatives, their leading figures especially alienated by Lloyd George's radical policies from 1926 onwards".[99] In the 1935 General Election, in Sheffield as a whole, this political alliance of Conservatives and ex-Liberals outpolled the Labour Party. Despite the fact that during the period the active Liberal Divisional Associations declined from five to four and active ward groups fell from ten to eight, a number of figures in the peace movement in the city continued both to label themselves as Liberals and to espouse attitudes to foreign policy which had been associated with the Liberal Party in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

---

[98] Ceadel, for instance, in discussing Ponsonby's public acceptance of a gradualist approach to disarmament during the second Labour Government, quotes from a letter to Basil Rawson, then ILP secretary, but better known later as a leader of the Woodcraft Folk. Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, *op cit*, p83

[99] Thorpe in Binfield *et al*, *op cit*, p93

In contrast the local Conservative Party, which in its higher echelons had a number of prominent Sheffield industrialists, reflected in its policy the influence of local armaments production and was hostile to the local peace movement. There were indeed no local representatives of that tradition of Conservatism that moved into a rejection of appeasement and alliance with the *pacificist* peace movement.

The two daily newspapers in Sheffield had been divided between the Liberals and Conservatives and Labour's growing popularity was never reflected in the local press. The formerly Radical The Sheffield Independent did not move into the Labour sphere when the Federated Trades Council was absorbed. Labour's journalistic voice remained amateur productions distributed free which had a limited circulation outside of the active movement.

Thorpe believes that the character of Sheffield's religious affiliations helped Labour to acquire an early dominance in the city. Unlike Liverpool, there were no significant ethnic divisions expressed through religion and as the influence of the churches declined, the role of religion became less divisive with Anglican and Nonconformist clergy often prepared to share a platform. Their religious views had a positive influence on the leading Labour politicians in the city helping: "...to ensure that an uncorrupt public life and notions of working class self help and respectability were strong veins running through Labour politics in this period".[100] A number of Labour leaders, including A.V. Alexander, Cooperative Party MP for Hillsborough from 1922, and J.H. Bingham, leader of the Labour Group on the council from 1946 were lay preachers.

As in most parts of Britain the churches played a significant independent role in the peace movement in Sheffield. In religious affiliations, it is not perhaps surprising to discover that: "The most important fact in the religious history of Sheffield is the early and continuing strength of the Dissenting Tradition".[101] In order of size the four denominations that dominated were the Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists and Catholics. By 1851 the Wesleyans were already second to the Anglicans and recording more attendances. Although the numbers regularly going to church were falling by the 1930s[102] and the Congregationalists, who had been influential in the local Liberal Party in

---

[100] *Ibid*, p87

[101] Lunn, D., Chapters Towards a History of the Parish and Cathedral Church of St Peter and St Paul, Sheffield, 1987, (preface) np quoted in Binfield, C., "Religion in Sheffield", Binfield C., et al (eds), *op cit*, p284

[102] In 1937 a Gallup Poll recorded 27% regular church attendance, 41% occasional, 17%

the period 1843 - 1921, in particular were a declining force, the Methodists continued to have the largest single congregation in the city at their Victoria Hall. According to Clyde Binfield, this had an impact on Anglicans in the city, not doctrinally, but in the pursuit of a social engagement particularly under the second Bishop who was enthroned in 1940. The Unitarians, the other denomination that figures in the narrative, with just five local congregations, had an importance beyond their numbers, partly because of the high profile of the Revd Alfred Hall,[103] incumbent of the Upper Chapel, and partly by virtue of the venerableness and central position of this place of worship. Catholicism, on the other hand, because it was not an expression of a cohesive ethnicity, did not have a political influence in the city and did not involve itself with the peace movement. Nor was Anglican pacifism a strong component of the local situation. Amongst the clergy it was the dissenting tradition which was identified with pacifism. The three Quaker Meetings and the Attercliffe Adult School were an important element in the peace movement in Sheffield, both through the involvement of individual Friends and through the use of the Quaker Meeting House at Hartshead. Quakers did not, however, act generally as a group under a denominational label. There were also two synagogues in the city which had connections with the movement.

In attempting to analyse those points at which the history of the Sheffield peace movement appears to diverge from a national model, an understanding of the economic and social conditions of the city and its political and religious affiliations are clearly of key importance. There is a difference, however, between the consideration of these factors as the "soil" in which the Sheffield peace movement grew and the action of specific traditions of political and peace opinion on the views of the membership of peace

---

for weddings and 15% of respondents who never attended. Gallup, George H. (ed), The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain 1937 - 1975, Vol: One 1937 - 1964, New York, 1976, p13

[103] Biographical details of Hall have proved difficult to come by. He worked in Sheffield for the whole of the inter-war period and was, as will be seen, very active in the peace movement. Although Hall's son-in-law worked with Hall in Sheffield during the thirties, his autobiography devotes only a single paragraph to him. This offers no additional information to that available in the contemporary press. (McLachlan, H. John, The Wine of Life - Testimony to Vital Encounter, Sheffield, 1991, p64) Hall left Sheffield at the end of the period and no obituary of him appeared in the local press when he died in 1959. His reputation must have been a little more than local for he wrote a standard handbook on Unitarianism, The Beliefs of a Unitarian which was reprinted with revisions by his friend A.B. Downing and another of his son-in-laws, Arthur W. Vallance, for the third time in 1962, three years after his death.

organisations and the wider public. For the politically active the thirties was a highly ideological decade and while the cult of personality turned certain leaders on both Left and Right into ideological icons, there was, particularly on the Left, a scepticism about individual political leadership. This owed something to the Great War, in which the sacrifice of the soldiery was felt to have been squandered by poor leadership, something to the "Great Betrayal" of Snowden and MacDonald in 1931 and something to an ideological oeuvrierism. Although this is most easily identified with the Left, a similar scepticism as to whether the outcomes of the negotiations conducted by diplomats and national leaders were really in the best interest of those whom they represented underpinned attitudes within the peace movement. The effect of this impacted in Sheffield on the career of J.T. Murphy, ironically himself a proponent of this scepticism as it developed in the Shop Stewards' Movement during 1917. When Murphy resigned from the CPGB in 1932, the Sheffield aggregate of the Communist Party, for whom he had been working, voted by 74 to 2 for his expulsion from the party and this former hero of the Sheffield Labour movement found that a meeting called to allow him to explain his position had been broken up by his former comrades. This importantly suggests that in analysing the movement of peace opinion in the city it cannot be assumed that historical local loyalties were necessarily stronger than national ideological adherences.

A critique of the received view of the national peace movement cannot be derived from the history of its manifestation in one locality. Nevertheless, because a local history, of necessity, focuses on the extent to which popular opinion in the organisations involved in the peace movement and in the country as a whole was in agreement with the peace policies expounded by their titular leaders, its conclusions are bound to reflect on the nationally focussed debates about public opinion. Despite the fact that the period coincided with the first efforts to analyse the mass view, the quantification of public opinion, certainly as it evolved in the later thirties with regard to the European Crisis, has remained elusive. Confirmation that any of the different emphases discovered in Sheffield's peace movement have more than local significance must await the findings of other similar studies. In the meantime, Sheffield's deviations from the received view provide a commentary on the relationship between the policies of the leaderships of the movement and popular opinion, as portrayed in the national histories, which it cannot be assumed was always the product of peculiar local factors.

Chapter 2:
Do You Want Peace or War?
From the National Congress Against War and Fascism to the Peace Ballot
(August 1934 - May 1935)

Commemoration:

The twentieth anniversary of the declaration of war by Britain in August 1914 found peace groups in Sheffield offering a variety of policies which were not only uncoordinated but to an extent incoherent. The reason for this was that their policies, which had largely evolved during the 1920s as a response to the Great War, had not yet developed to reflect the new international situation after the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria, Hitler's accession to power in 1933, and the failure of the 1932 - 1934 Disarmament Conference.

To commemorate the anniversary The Independent printed an article by J.H. Freeborough, President of the Sheffield Liberal Federation and member of the Executive Committee of the Sheffield Branch of the League of Nations Union, entitled "The Curse of Militarism". Freeborough's nineteenth century creed was based on two of the well-springs of the peace movement, Christian ethics and Free Trade economics, two sets of principles between which, as his writing demonstrates, he had great difficulty in distinguishing. In reviewing the history of the last two decades, Freeborough demonstrated, however, a sensitivity to new political currents. He lamented the rise of the dictators in Europe with their "absolutely callous disregard for the sacredness of human life" and their destruction of freedom of expression. He found his contemporaries' responses wanting. The National Government had accepted rearmament which, in Freeborough's view, could only provoke another war. The two main Christian groups in the country, the Church of England and the Methodist Church, he wrote, only half-heartedly supported an alternative vision of peace. Freeborough found no more hope in the political opposition. The Labour Party, he averred, "has no definite principles upon the question of peace and free intercourse of nations". His own party was "by its own dissensions apparently rendered inoperative..." Freeborough's own response was, however, similarly undeveloped. A single line of his article was devoted to his own favoured solution, the adoption by the Liberal Party of disarmament as the central plank

of its policy. Pessimistically he concluded: "In August 1934, we are still in the deadly grip of the Military Mind".[1] The local Labour Party, in the shape of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council, shared his view that militarism remained a threat to peace. In June its monthly delegate meeting had unanimously passed a resolution, forwarded by the Workers' Educational League and proposed by Charles S. Darvill, condemning the compulsory attendance by school children at Military Tattoos and Air Displays.[2]

Four days after Freeborough, Frank Dawtry, Secretary of the Sheffield Branch of the No More War Movement, offered his own thoughts. Like Freeborough, Dawtry began his analysis with the recent murder of the Austrian Chancellor, Dolfuss, seeing in that event a possible conflict between Italy and Germany over Austria. Although Dawtry called on "Christians, Socialists and Pacifists" to resist what he described as "the growing tide of war fever", his letter was not concerned with conventional political activity. The NMWM's answer to the danger of entanglement in another war was simple: "Only determined refusal to take any part in war can keep our country from plunging again into the abyss; deeper far than we entered in 1914".[3]

Martin Ceadel writes that at the NMWM's 1932 Annual Conference in Sheffield the movement had adopted a revolutionary stance which "...defined pacifism in such a way as to exclude those who had best claim to use the word".[4] This move was in line with the views of the Independent Labour Party, with which the NMWM shared many members, which had in the same year disaffiliated from the Labour Party. The NMWM experienced a decline thereafter, which continued into 1934. Despite the 1932 decision, ascetic mysticism was much in evidence at Sheffield NMWM's main public meeting for 1934, held at the end of August. Miss Slade, "the English disciple of Gandhi", as the paper described her, addressed the meeting "in a very quiet but rather startling manner", on the sense of doom she felt hanging over England. "All the motor-cars and other aids to Western civilisation, she declared, were in a sense the things which were preparing for the destruction of that civilisation in the form of bombs and gasses".[5] She contrasted this with her own experience of India which she thought, if it could resist westernising

---

[1] "The Curse of Militarism", The Independent, 2.8.34., p6
[2] STLC Minute Books, 26.6.34.5.
[3] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 6.8.34., p6
[4] Ceadel, M, Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, The Defining of a Faith, Oxford, 1980, p119
[5] "Doom Said to be Hovering Over England", The Independent, 30.8.34., p7

influences, would in time "help Europe to found a civilisation which was not built on materialism". It was not until 16th October, when Dick Sheppard's letter appeared in Sheffield's newspapers, simplifying the first step into absolute pacifism to a message on a postcard and freeing it from the taints of both Eastern mysticism and revolutionary socialism, that the popular appeal of the NMWM's central idea was explored anew.[6]

Apart from Freeborough's article the LNU did not commemorate the anniversary of the declaration of the Great War; their annual report made no mention of it. The Churches too appear to have ignored the significance of 4th August 1934 and held their own services for the dead and injured of the conflict on the traditional occasion of Armistice Sunday. Indeed the anniversary of the declaration of war might well have been seen largely as a missed opportunity by peace groups within Sheffield but for the activities of a few younger members of the Communist and Independent Labour Parties.

The National Youth Congress Against War and Fascism and the Impact of the United Front:

The most striking commemoration of the anniversary in Sheffield was the arrival of delegates to the National Youth Congress Against War and Fascism which met over the weekend, 4th and 5th August 1934. Bill Moore, in his short summary of the anti-war movement in Sheffield during the inter-war years, gives the Congress considerable prominence but admits that its impact on the development of a wider peace movement was limited by objections within the Labour movement to cooperation with the Communist Party.[7]

The British Anti-War Movement, whose National Youth Council arranged the Congress, grew out of the World Anti-War Congress at Amsterdam on 27th - 29th

---

[6] Buzan traces the pledge idea back to the No Conscription Fellowship's "Statement of Faith" of the Great War. The NMWM, which in many ways succeeded the NCF, had an "Affirmation" signed by members and the popular appeal of this was broadened by Ponsonby's 1925 - 1927 Peace Letter Campaign which attracted, interestingly, almost exactly the same number of adherents, 130 000, as the Peace Pledge Union a decade later. H.R.L. Sheppard's innovations were to keep the declaration to the simple renunciation, thus widening the breadth of support, and, after 1936, turning the signatories into an organised group. Buzan, B.G., "The British Peace Movement from 1919 to 1939", Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, 1972 -1973, pp48 - 51

[7] Moore B., "The Anti-War Movement in Sheffield in the 1920's and 1930's", Sheffield Forward, September 1980, pp4 - 5

August 1932 organised by Willi Munzenberg under Comintern direction. In Sheffield, none of the Youth Movement's Officers were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain; rather they were from the ILP. Indeed the founding conference of the Movement at Bermondsey in March 1933 had attracted more ILP delegates, including Sheffield's own Frank Dawtry, than Communists.[8] This, says Ceadel, was very much in keeping with the tactics of the BAWM, which: "...liked to give the impression of being a democratic body", but in fact took instructions from the Comintern.[9]

Nationally, the ILP had entered into cooperation with the CPGB in May 1933 and thereafter the Communist Party sought to influence ILP policy so that the party would affiliate to the Communist International. It was an uneasy relationship with the CPGB interfering in the internal arguments of the ILP[10] and encouraging more radical members to leave the party and become communists. In Sheffield the ILP had enjoyed little popularity since before the Great War. Robert E. Dowse reports that the party's split with the Labour Party in 1932 resulted in nearly a third of branches closing and a sixty percent fall in membership in the following three years.[11] The national decline was even more pronounced in a city with a Labour majority on the council. There was little incentive for members to stay with the organisation and cast themselves into isolation. The ILP had no electoral base in Sheffield and made its last appearance on the hustings before the Second World War at the local elections of 1934.[12] Thereafter the main left-wing opposition to Labour in the city was the Communist Party. Dowse suggests that

---

[8] These facts were advanced to refute charges of dominance by the Communist Party of the local Anti-War Movement by W.S. Whigham in "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 15.10.34., p6

[9] Ceadel, M., "The First Communist 'Peace Society': The British Anti-War Movement, 1932 - 1935", Twentieth Century British History, 1 (1990)

[10] "ILP Guild Resolution", The Daily Worker, 16.10.34., p3 reported, for example, a resolution in favour of affiliation to the Young Communist League by the Sheffield ILP Guild of Youth in defiance of pressure from the National Administrative Council of the ILP.

[11] Dowse, R.E., Left in the Centre - The Independent Labour Party 1893 - 1940, London, 1966, pp185 - 193

[12] At the local elections of 1933 in Manor. Mrs F. Williams, who had been the sitting councillor when the ILP disaffiliated, polled 438 votes in a three cornered contest with the Labour and Communist Parties. Labour won and the Communists came second with 1 283 votes. In 1934 Stuart Friedensen in St Philips was the only ILP candidate and came last with 161 votes.

this too was a national trend.[13]

The ILP Guild of Youth was, however, very prominent in the short period 1934 - 1935 in United Front campaigns with the Communist Party. The Communists encouraged sympathetic members of the ILP to lead these activities to provide a spearhead to win the cooperation of other larger parties. The extent of the influence of the local Communist Party on the Youth Congress can be judged from the fact that William Joss, leader of the Sheffield Branch of the CPGB, wrote in an article some months later for The Daily Worker that the branch, in pursuit of a United Front and to overcome structural weaknesses within its organisation, had set itself the task of recruiting 200 local delegates for the Congress.[14] This was about a third of those attending.

The Independent, never very sympathetic towards left-wing politics, highlighted the Congress's political affiliations: "...those responsible for this movement are opportunists, seeing in the present concern about the possibility of war, the chance to further Communistic propaganda, and laud the Soviet Union".[15] Its first report of the event offered a belittling satirical piece in mock-heroic style describing the verbal battles on the eve of the Congress between literature sellers from the Anti-War Movement and a group of Blackshirts.[16]

The Labour Party had stepped up its efforts to isolate the CPGB "or organisations ancillary or subsidiary thereto" in May 1934, and announced that it would seek "full disciplinary powers" from the Annual Conference against those who associated with proscribed organisations like the BAWM. In Sheffield during mid-1934 the Labour Party was firmly in the hands of those who supported the leadership's policy[17] and it was their fear of entanglement with organisations connected with Communist Party that was to prevent the formation of a broad-based peace movement in the city for the next eighteen months. Unfortunately for the organisers of the Congress, its planning stages

---

[13] Dowse, *op cit*, pp 193 -194

[14] Joss, W., "We Must Educate Our Membership", The Daily Worker, 12.12.34., p3

[15] "General Topics", The Independent, 6.8.34., p6

[16] "Anti-War 'Fans' Meet Fascists", *ibid*, 4.8.34., p1

[17] "Far too many of our efforts are, in some measure, nullified by our supporters being influenced by appeals from organisations to link up to a united front with the Communist Party and other organisations which are hostile to the great movement of which we are so proud." "Executive Committee Report", Sheffield Trades and Labour Council 15th Annual Report for year ended 31st December1934, Sheffield 1935, p12

coincided with a purge by the Executive of the STLC on Communist Party membership among its delegates. Only five days before the Congress opened a delegate from the Transport and General Workers Union was expelled when a motion confirming his expulsion from the previous Monthly Delegate meeting was passed by 54 votes to 15.[18] Another delegate from No 6 Branch, Amalgamated Engineering Union, was expelled by the Executive Committee just over a fortnight later for having admitted, during the discussion, that he too was a member of the Communist Party.[19]

The STLC leadership's insistence on party discipline reflected in part the precarious nature of their hold on the monthly delegate meeting. On the question of cooperation with the communists the leadership's majority was by no means assured. When, at the end of August, Head Office added the "Relief Committee for the Victims of German Fascism", another of Munzenberg's creations, and the "Railwaymen's Vigilance Movement" to their list of banned organisations, the STLC Delegate meeting voted to send back a protest resolution. When the TUC "Black Circular" was issued in October 1934, threatening to withdraw recognition from trades councils who permitted Communist delegates to attend, it attracted heavy criticism. A.E. Hobson, the chairman, had to rule a resolution to lay the circular on the table out of order and a motion to close an acrimonious discussion was only successful by a small majority.[20]

The minutes of the STLC's Executive Committee reveal considerable correspondence from Labour Party Headquarters on the subject of banned organisations. In this atmosphere groups within the orbit of the Labour Party proved reluctant to identify themselves with the Congress. The STLC Executive were themselves urged on two occasions to send delegates and in both cases "next business" was successfully moved.[21] The Cooperative Party Executive Committee merely noted the contents of their invitation[22] while William Asbury, Secretary of the Brightside Divisional Party, pre-empted the Congress by warning all organisations within the Division not to take part in

---

[18] STLC Minute Books, 26.6.34. & 31.7.34., "Communist Barred", The Independent, 1.8.34., p7.
[19] STLC Minute Books, 14.8.34.
[20] The majority in each case was only 10 votes. Firstly 41 - 31 against the leadership's policies and in the second ballot 50 - 40 in favour of them. STLC Minute Books, 28.8.34. & 27.11.34.22.
[21] *Ibid*, 17.7.34. & 27.7.34.
[22] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Minute Book, 5.7.34.

the activities of the Sheffield Anti-War Committee.[23]

The high political profile of the Congress was unhelpful too in recruiting delegates from non-political organisations. When a member of the Sheffield and District Ramblers' Federation, whose younger members so reminded The Independent of the Congress's delegates,[24] attempted to involve that organisation the chairman, G.H.B. Ward, ruled that such an action would be against their constitution.[25]

Nevertheless, the Congress was attended by 625 delegates,[26] a third of whom were from the Sheffield area.[27] Bill Moore lists those organisations attending the Congress from the district as including the AEU, whose District Committee sent fraternal greetings to the conference, the ETU, ASLEF, NAFTA, the Foundry Workers, the Unemployed Workers' Council, the ILP and its Guild of Youth, the University Socialist Society, the Woodcraft Folk, the Workers' Educational Association and the local Esperantists.[28] The list is quite impressive and conceals how isolated the Congress was from the wider Labour Movement. Contemporary Communist Party reports of meetings are obsessive about giving attendance registers in this form because it suggested a wider influence within the established Labour Movement than the party in fact enjoyed. In this case, while the delegates from the Woodcraft Folk, WEA, and Esperantists may well have represented some broadening of support for the Anti-War Movement in Sheffield, many of the delegates from the other organisations were probably already members of either the ILP or the Communist Party. It was branches of the AEU and ETU which had unsuccessfully urged the STLC to send delegates to the Congress.[29] The National Unemployed Workers' Movement (to which the Unemployed Workers' Council was presumably affiliated) was also a proscribed organisation as far as

---

[23] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 20.6.34.

[24] "General Topics", *op cit*. The connections were real enough. Bill Furniss of the Young Communist League and Youth Peace Council was also on the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers' Committee. Sheffield Clarion Ramblers' Annual Syllabus 1939 - 1940, p56

[25] Sheffield and District Ramblers' Federation Minute Book, 23.5.34. Ward was expressing a procedural view here. As his writings in the Clarion Ramblers' syllabuses make clear, he was an anti-fascist himself, particularly after Franco's uprising in Spain.

[26] R. Bishop, "Youth Congress Supports Fight to Free Colonies", The Daily Worker, 7.8.34., p2

[27] Joss, *op cit*. Joss also claimed that 42% of trade union delegates at the conference were local.

[28] Moore, *op cit*.

[29] STLC Minute Books, 17.7.34. & 24.7.34.

Labour Party members were concerned and the Sheffield University Anti-War Club which appears to have been more active than the Socialist Society mentioned by Bill Moore was not only already affiliated to the BAWM but shared the aim, attributed by Joss to a Communist Party initiative, of electing 200 delegates from the district.[30]

Reports of the conference indicate that the Congress's isolation was not entirely externally imposed. The CPGB was in the process of changing its attitude to social-democratic organisations in line with a recommendation from the Communist International's Executive Committee, issued on 5th March 1933 under the impact of the Nazi victory in Germany, to formulate joint plans of action against fascism and the capitalist offensive. However, the process was far from complete by August 1934 and attitudes that made the creation of a united peace front difficult lingered among Communist Party members right up to the highest levels.[31]

Harry Pollitt's speech at the Congress stressed the need for a United Front, but primarily "among the working class" and antagonistic to the leadership of social democratic parties. These attitudes were hardly likely to encourage either the leadership of working-class organisations or the membership of any group that did not share the assumptions of the CPGB to cooperate in a peace programme. This narrow sectarian concept of the United Front was evident in the Congress organisers' failure to contact local churches.

The "United Front" was not a precise term and was not used with a consistent intention by its proponents. It could mean anything from a hostile takeover of another organisation's membership and policy goals under a facade of cooperation (as was taking place to some extent with the ILP) to a loose confederation of organisations with similar short term aims, more properly described as the "Popular Front". Within ten days of the end of the Congress a Daily Worker Supplement offered a wider definition of the social class and political affiliations of those with whom the CPGB were willing to work:

---

[30] "Sheffield University Anti-War Club", The Arrows, No7 June 1934, p46

[31] Raji Palme Dutt, who was responsible for many of the CPGB's policy statements at this time vacillated between open hostility to and a desire for cooperation with social democratic parties. c.f. J Fyrth (ed), "Introduction: In the Thirties", Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front, 1985, p13. In Sheffield it is difficult to know whether even the rhetoric of the Communist Party had changed significantly from the class-against class period. J.T. Murphy's highly sectarian 1932 pamphlet "Handrags of 'Law and Order'" includes, alongside very personal attacks on the local Labour leadership of Asbury, Thraves and Rowlinson, a stirring call to: "Organise united action..."

> This mass front against Fascism and war must embrace, not only the working class organisations as the central core, but all unorganised workers, and all elements of the petty bourgeoisie, employers, small traders, technicians, professionals, intellectuals, students and even bourgeois Liberal elements that are prepared to enter into the common fight against Fascism and war under the leadership of the working class.[32]

The adoption of this new more widely defined Popular Front by the Seventh Congress of the Comintern was to have a profound impact on the Sheffield peace movement.

Attitudes to the League of Nations:

The formation of a "peace front" depended, of course, on more than the participating bodies' attitudes to the creation of a united front. There were substantive differences of attitude that made even short term cooperation difficult. Perhaps foremost among these was a disagreement about the centrality of the League of Nations. Although the great hopes which had once been entertained of that organisation were dented by 1934, the Parliamentary Labour Party had not only remained loyal to the concept of the League, but had also developed its view of the function of the League from the utopianism of the 1920s.[33] The antagonism of some pacifists and left-wing groups to the League was a barrier to the formation of a "peace front". The League of Nations Union had more individual members than all other peace groups put together, both locally and nationally, and far more members than minority parties like the CPGB or ILP.

Communists, those on the left of the Labour Party and members of the ILP were committed to the belief that the League of Nations was not only irretrievably tarnished by its association with the unjust settlement imposed after the Great War but also that only the world-wide overthrow of capitalism could bring lasting peace. "War", said John Gollan, quoting Lenin at the conference, "is only a continuation of capitalist policies by other means".[34] This view, that conflict between capitalist countries was the result of competition for raw materials and markets, was central to both left wing and liberal

---

[32] "The Fight for the United Front Against Fascism and War", Supplement to The Daily Worker, 15.8.34.

[33] John F. Naylor writes of the party in 1933: "...once the League took the initiative against Japan, Labour supported the imposition of economic sanctions consistently, if infrequently". Naylor, J.F., Labour's International Policy - The Labour Party in the 1930s, London, 1969, p33

[34] "Most Important Youth Congress Ever Held in Britain", *ibid*, 7.8.34., p237.

thought on the causes of war. Most left-wing political organisations, taking their cue from the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, believed that at the outbreak of war the proletariat, who had nothing to gain from such conflict, should call a general strike. At the Congress not only John Gollan but also Mrs Despard, "the veteran suffragist" (and incidentally sister of General French), Dorothy Woodman of the Union for Democratic Control, and Percy Williams of the Sheffield ILP all repeated the call for such action in the event of war.[35] Ceadel credits the BAWM nationally, because of its opposition to both pacifism and the League of Nations, with playing "...a considerable part in explaining to a confused public the difference between war resistance and both pacifism and collective security".[36] It was in pursuit of the ability to call a strike that would effectively halt a war that the Congress was keen to welcome delegates from heavy industrial and chemical plants where war materials were being produced.[37] Indeed, this was undoubtedly the reason for Sheffield being chosen as venue for the Congress.

Since, as John Strachey's speech at the conference made clear,[38] fascism was generally regarded on the left as a militant form of capitalism[39] towards which most capitalist countries, including Britain, were moving, there was no faith that the League of Nations could, or would want to, limit fascist expansion. Indeed the League of Nations was regarded as an instrument of capitalist hegemony, in Lenin's words (actually used by Williams of the ILP at the Congress) "a thieves' kitchen". The Soviet Union's application to join the League of Nations in September 1934 changed these attitudes among communists in the wake of the Congress. Hostility to the League lingered, however, and the stirring call for a general strike in the event of a capitalist war was

---

[35] "90 Year-Old Woman's Spirited Call to Youth", The Independent, 6.8.34., p7

[36] Ceadel, "The First Communist 'Peace Society'" , *op cit*, p86

[37] "He [Gollan] told of his visit to the great chemical factory at Billingham, on Teeside, where for 24 hours a day war production is being carried out. 'It is a great victory for us,' he said amid strong applause, 'to have a delegate from that plant here today'." "Most Important Youth Congress Ever Held in Britain", *op cit*

[38] "Great Mobilisation of Fighters Against War - The Great Youth Congress", The Daily Worker, 6.8.34., p1

[39] "Stripped of its shirts, slogans and salutes, it [Fascism] is simply the old sweating British employer of a century ago, unscrupulously jealous of anything that threatens his power and his profits." The Sheffield Cooperator, No 122 October 1934, p7 reprinted from the national Cooperative News. The Comintern changed its view from the summer of 1934, says Noreen Branson, recognising "the qualitative differences between fascism and other dictatorships". Branson, N., History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927 - 1941, London, 1985, pp125 - 126

unwillingly relinquished. The national party continued to take a close interest in the activities of the Sheffield peace movement long after it had officially abandoned the policy of stopping a war by promoting industrial action in armaments centres.[40]

It was equally important for the burgeoning of a new spirit of cooperation among those interested in peace that members on the left of the Labour Party and in the ILP should view the League of Nations in a more sympathetic light. Among what communists described as the "leftist" and later "Trotskyist" elements of the ILP no reconciliation with League ideals took place,[41] but such individuals were thin on the ground in Sheffield. Within the left of the Labour Party something analogous to the CPGB's change of heart towards the League of Nations did occur.[42]

The supersession of the Labour Party's commitment to a general strike against war, enshrined in a resolution of the 1933 Hastings Conference, by a new commitment to a coordinated international policy through the League, embodied in the 1934 Southport Conference's document For Socialism and Peace and the special report War and Peace, has generally been seen as a victory by the right of the party over the left. The Socialist League mounted not only a broad offensive against For Socialism and Peace, proposing 75 amendments to it at the Southport Conference, but also a specific attack on War and Peace. Where that document sought to point out the impracticability of the reciprocation of a general strike in the event of war by countries without a free labour movement and to opt instead for collective security through the League of Nations, the Socialist League offered a Marxist critique of that body coming down in favour of an alternative system of

---

[40] At a Labour Monthly conference the following May, George Allison, who was to become leader of Sheffield's communists at a later date was still saying: "We must be absolutely clear that under no circumstances can we support any kind of war that is waged by British imperialism. Even if circumstances force British imperialism into going to war alongside the Soviet Union, this would not alter the fact that British imperialism was waging a war to defend its Empire..." quoted in Pierce, B., "From 'Social-Fascism' to 'People's Front'", Woodhouse, M. & Pierce B. (eds), Essays on the History of Communism in Britain, London, 1975

[41] Tony Atienza reviewing the United Front in Britain through various newspapers quotes the ILP New Leader 2nd August 1935: "...For the working class the duty of uncompromising opposition to all Capitalist Governments and the Capitalist League of Nations remains undiminished, despite the change in policy of the Soviet Union." Atienza, T., "What the Papers Said", in J. Fyrth (ed) *op cit*, p64

[42] Pierce believes that the adoption of a pro-League sanctionist policy at the October 1935 Labour Conference was the result of "...a tacit alliance of the Right with those who took their line from the Communist Party." Pierce B., *op cit*, p214

alliances, once Labour was in power, with other socialist countries namely, of course, the Soviet Union.[43] The interest generated by the subsequent turbulent history of the relationship between the Socialist League and the Labour Party at national level has obscured the fact that in areas like Sheffield left-wing Labour activists looked directly to the Communist Party on policy matters and the Socialist League had only an intermittent presence. Many in the Sheffield party, like their colleagues in the CPGB, began to revise their opinion once the Soviet Union became an active League member.[44]

At this early stage, however, doubts about the wisdom of this change of policy were not confined to the Socialist League. The STLC resolution to the Southport Conference had called for a follow up to the Hastings decision with the framing of a plan for total unilateral disarmament by the next Labour government.[45] Although the meeting that passed this resolution occurred two months before the draft of For Socialism and Peace was issued in July (and it was not therefore put in direct contradiction of suggested Party policy), it is noteworthy that the disarmament motion was forwarded unanimously.

Those in the Labour Party who were interested in foreign policy conceived of it, for the most part, in internationalist terms. Even under the growing realization of the threat posed by fascism in Europe, it proved difficult for them to exchange the rejection of all war as a capitalist nightmare for the concept of a just war.[46] The issue was complicated by the fact that until the next Labour Government was elected the national decision as to what constituted such a war was in the hands of men who many on the Left suspected of what Stafford Cripps described as "country gentleman's Fascism".[47]

---

[43] G.D.H. Cole, The History of the Labour Party from 1914, 1948 pp 295 - 300. Cole is generally unsympathetic to the Socialist League's role as a mouthpiece for the Labour Left. He had severed his own ties with the League as early as 1933 and "...had no part in the unfortunate later history of the Socialist League". (p284) His accounts are sympathetic to For Socialism and Peace which he describes in a later book as "...by no means a reactionary document". Socialism and Fascism 1931 - 1939, 1969, p73

[44] Some members of the Socialist League were, however, closer in outlook to the ILP. Sir Stafford Cripps himself was still calling for "mass resistance to war" in June 1935. Atienza, *op cit*, p66

[45] STLC Minute Books, 29.5.34.

[46] A.J.P. Taylor charted this change of heart in his The Troublemakers, Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792 - 1939, London, 1957. It is too much a history of intellectual opinion to be directly applicable to the broader movement in Sheffield.

[47] Miliband, R., Parliamentary Socialism, London, 1961, pp219 - 220

Acceptance of this foreign policy change was particularly difficult at this moment because it came as part of a package which many constituency activists found unsympathetic. When the conference was discussed after the report by Tom Eaton, the Secretary at the STLC's December Delegate Meeting, the minutes reported merely "a lengthy discussion" and that "numerous questions were asked".[48] The Daily Worker, however, ever keen to exploit the Labour leadership's difficulties with its membership, reported that the meeting's response was "highly critical", although interestingly none of the points of criticism specifically detailed by the paper concern Labour's peace policy.[49]

The strike against war had provided some superficial common ground between non-pacifist members of the Labour, Communist and Independent Labour Parties and the small pacifist peace groups. The Labour Party's greater enthusiasm for the League of Nations increased the scope for cooperation between two of the largest constituents of a wider peace movement. This had the added benefit, as far as the Labour Party leadership were concerned, that involvement with the LNU held none of the dangers that were perceived in the formulation of a common peace policy with other political parties.[50]

The Aftermath of the Congress:

Although local supporters gained some momentum from the holding of the National Youth Congress Against War and Fascism, the movement did not grow in Sheffield. There were two reasons for this. The CPGB's adoption of a more inclusive united front strategy was not reciprocated by any lessening of hostility on the part of the Labour leadership and the local movement's activities remained uncompromisingly sectarian. After March 1934 the BAWM's impetus had become more strongly directed against domestic fascism. Jacob Miller, signatory of the short article on the Peace Club's preparations for the Congress which had appeared in the Sheffield University students' magazine, The Arrows, was quite seriously injured at Mosley's June 1934 Olympia meeting,[51] the violence of which isolated the British Union of Fascists from mainstream

---

[48] STLC Minute Books, 18.12.34.
[49] "Laughter at Sheffield Trades Council", The Daily Worker, 22.12.34., p3
[50] Some of the links between the LNU and Labour Party in Sheffield pre-dated this period, of course. Councillor J.H. Bingham was treasurer of the Sheffield Branch of the LNU throughout the period.
[51] Miller's ordeal is described in S. Scaffardi, Fire Under the Carpet, 1986, pp 66 - 67. When the subject of Miller's injuries was raised by Isaac Foot MP in the House of

political support.[52] There had been a large counter demonstration in Sheffield when Mosley had taken the City Hall in July[53] and a contingent from the Anti-War Committee attended the demonstration against a BUF parade in Hyde Park in September.[54]

Anti-fascism spilled over locally into an acrimonious dispute between George F. Lyon, BUF member, and A. Walstow and Bill Furniss[55] of the "St Philip's Area Group of the Sheffield Youth Anti-War and Anti-Fascist Committee" which surfaced in the letter columns of The Independent. While no significant acts of violence between left-wingers and their fascist enemies were reported, the marking of a man's house with letters 18 inches high advertising a meeting to take place outside his front gate, intended to run him out of the district, was not the kind of act likely to encourage the cooperation of peace activists.[56]

The local group also became involved in wider anti-fascist activity after four delegates appointed by the Youth Congress to go to Germany to gain access to Ernst Thaelman, the German Communist leader who was in a Nazi prison, were imprisoned and deported. One of the delegates, Ronald Fanning, a young steelworker, who was living in Sheffield,[57] addressed an open-air meeting on his return. The Youth Anti-War Committee were angered not only by the actions of the German Government but also by the lack of help he had received from the British Foreign Office.[58] This support fell short

---

Commons, C.F. Pike intervened in order to point up Miller's political affiliations which no doubt leant colour to the accusation that Pike was pro-Fascist. *Ibid*, p72. Miller later took a scholarship to study in the Soviet Union. Photograph, The Independent, 22.2.38., p6

[52] Interestingly, because it suggests a greater awareness of what was going on in Germany than has sometimes been suggested, a contemporary in Sheffield attributed Mosley's failure to gain support to the aversion felt at the "Night of the Long Knives". C.W.K., "The Way of the World", The Manor and Woodthorpe Review, October 1934, p67

[53] Bill Moore wrongly states that this meeting was in October and that the response to it put a stop to Mosley's meetings in the city. Moore, *op cit*

[54] "Activities in the Localities", The Daily Worker, 1.9.34., p2

[55] *Ibid*, 5.9.34., p6, 14.9.34., p8 & 18.9.34., p6

[56] Lyon claimed that the intimidation had taken a more directly physical form but this is impossible to corroborate: "This is the culmination of a plan of intimidation which started when a local Communist tried to strangle me." "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 11.9.34., p4

[57] "Arrested 'Reds' Freed", *ibid*, 30.8.34., p1

[58] "Letter Protest to Germans", *ibid*, 1.9.34., p7. The Daily Worker, 6.9.34., p2, mentions Fanning addressing a rally on "International Youth Day", but it is not clear

of the action taken when some Metro-Vickers engineers had been arrested for spying in the Soviet Union in March 1933. On that occasion trade links with the USSR had been severed by an indignant British Government.[59] When Cecil F. Pike, Conservative MP for Attercliffe (who owed his position ironically to the intervention of the Communist candidate, George Fletcher, in the election of 1931[60]) criticised Fanning's activities[61] a number of letters appeared from those associated with the BAWM accusing both Pike and the National Government of pro-fascist attitudes.[62]

Although disapproval of German persecution was to cement peace groups at a later stage, mutual intolerance was a stronger factor at this point. W.S. Whigham of the Youth Committee became embroiled in a further exchange of letters with Freeborough on the relationship between class-war and international peace[63] which succeeded in concealing the fact that there would be a number of short term proposals for pacification upon which an elderly Free Trade Liberal and a young Marxist might agree.[64] Fears of communist entryism were reinforced by a correspondence Whigham conducted with the virulently anti-communist Canon Talbot-Easter,[65] vicar of St Paul's, who wrote in to condemn the Anti-War Committee's efforts to invite a group of Scouts and Guides to

---

whether this is the same meeting or one later in the week.

[59] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 6.9.34., p6, 7.9.34., p6 and 8.9.34., p6. Two of the six engineers were imprisoned but released on 1st July 1933. cf F.S Northedge and Audrey Wells, Britain and Soviet Communism - The Impact of a Revolution, 1982, p53

[60] Pike's majority was only 165 votes and Fletcher received 2 790 votes.

[61] "Hear All sides", The Independent, 5.9.34., p6

[62] Martin Pugh believes, after examining speeches, including Pike's, made in the House of Commons after the Olympia Rally, that there was more pro-fascist sympathy in the Conservative Party at this time than has generally been realised. In part he thinks that this reflected a need to counter the BUF in working-class constituencies like Attercliffe, newly won by the Conservatives in 1931, where they were believed to pose an electoral threat. Underlying this he finds, however, a genuine sympathy with fascist views and a shared anti-communism which was expressed particularly virulently against left-wing hecklers who disrupted both right wing parties' political meetings. Pugh, M., "The British Union of Fascists and the Olympia Debate", Historical Journal, Vol 41 No2, June 1998

[63] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 8.9.34., p8 & 12.9.34., p8

[64] There was a convergence of agreement between J.A. Hobson and Lenin that competition for raw materials and markets was the underlying cause of wars, although they did not agree as to whether this was endemic to capitalism. On a practical political level the relationship was strengthened by the activities of the Council for Action which, from a Liberal perspective, paralleled the coordinating aims of United Front organisations.

[65] "Church of England Notes", The Independent, 21.9.34., p6

attend a peace meeting.[66]

Efforts to widen the influence of the local BAWM were not successful. Sheffield ILP issued a call for a counter demonstration to Sir John Gilmour's meeting in the City Hall on 16th October to which the Youth Anti-War Committee added its support.[67] As initiator of the repressive Incitement to Disaffection Bill, Gilmour was a particular target of those who detected a growing fascism within Government policy.[68] The counter demonstration attracted a crowd of only 70 people[69] exactly the same number as The Independent had reported as the total of delegates sent to the Congress from the Anti-War Committee in Sheffield in August.[70] Despite two month's activity, the Congress' organisers had failed to increase their support.[71]

Efforts to demonstrate the effectiveness of a united front were similarly thwarted. At the local elections in November the Communist Party offered to withdraw Herbert Howarth from Burngreave Ward (which only had a small Labour majority) if the Labour election committee would agree to certain points of policy appearing in Frank Womersley's Labour manifesto.[72] Although the Labour Party insisted that they would not deal with communists,[73] Howarth withdrew anyway. What followed illustrated some of the local Labour leaders' worst fears. Despite letters to the press from E.G.

---

[66] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 12.10.34., p3

[67] "Sir John Gilmour Meeting Fracas", *ibid*, 11.10.34., p7

[68] Many on the Left were concerned that Britain might be developing its own form of Fascism. The STLC Monthly Delegate Meeting had passed a protest motion against the arrest of Harry Pollitt and Tom Mann under the Act on 24th May.

[69] "Home Secretary on Betting Among Women and Children", The Independent, 17.10.34., p7. Basil Barker records, however, that on the occasion of just such a Conservative-organised meeting in the City Hall, unfortunately he does not say when, he and a number of other communist organisers were picked up by the police and temporarily detained until the meeting was over. Basil Barker and Lynda Staker, Free but not Easy, Derbyshire County Council, 1989, pp56 - 57

[70] Letter from H. Elliott, "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 11.9.34., p4

[71] The Daily Worker's local circulation was regarded as a measure of the party's influence and the paper was sharply critical on this score of Sheffield members: "In Sheffield, although canvassing efforts, where carried out, show splendid results, time after time the results are frittered away due to organisational weakness, and no real progress has been made". "What Has Happened in the Districts", The Daily Worker, 19.10.34., p4

[72] This tactic is reported by Branson to have been a national initiative. Branson, *op cit*, p146

[73] "'Reds' United Front Move", The Independent, 26.10.34., p5. Womersley himself was "not unsympathetic" writes Moore. Moore, *op cit*, p7

Rowlinson, Labour leader of the council, Councillors Yorke and Asbury, Tom Eaton and Womersley himself,[74] the Progressives capitalised on the Communist withdrawal by publishing a "red peril" leaflet. "General Topics" of The Independent described Sheffield City Council as "Socialist-Communist".[75]

Stung by the rejection of their overtures, the communists appealed over the heads of the leadership. A letter from "Thirty Rank and File Members of the Burngreave Labour Party" claimed that there was already an agreement between members of Burngreave Labour Party and the Communist Party. They expected the United Front to "...clean from our ranks those dictators who have got control of the workers' movement and expelled from our ranks some of our best fighters".[76]

Meanwhile George Fletcher continued as Communist candidate for Manor Ward. His manifesto displayed the ambivalence that Communists felt about cooperation with Labour, for while Fletcher called "for a wide united front against Fascism and War", most of his election address was directed against the Labour Party. In language harking back to the class against class period, he accused Labour of "Mondism and support of capitalist rule" and of protecting Mosley from the wrath of Sheffield workers.[77] The Daily Worker covered Fletcher's campaign, but made no mention of the conciliatory attitude adopted in Burngreave.[78] Womersley won comfortably enough for Howarth's withdrawal to appear irrelevant and, although Fletcher polled 1426 votes in Manor, making him the most successful Communist candidate in Britain at these municipal elections, he was easily beaten by Labour. The election ensured that local Labour leaders would continue to thwart efforts to create a unified peace movement. It provided no incentive for them to challenge national policy towards the CPGB since it had made plain, not only how disruptive a united front could be, but also that electorally the Communists had nothing to offer the Labour Party.

The Peace Ballot:

(a) Preparations: It is ironic that while organisations committed to the United Front in

---

[74] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 29.10.34., p6
[75] "General Topics", *ibid*, 27.10.34., p6
[76] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 30.10.34., p6
[77] "Fighting Where Labour Rules", The Daily Worker, 26.10.34., p3
[78] The Daily Worker also claimed in their "Municipal Election Issue" (1.11.34.) that: "The united front is in full swing in... Woodseats, Sheffield." p1

Sheffield were having little success, a *de facto* peace front should have been created by a body regarded by left-wing activists as hopelessly out of touch with political realities.[79] Viscount Cecil, President of the General Council of the League of Nations Union had been impressed by the results of ballots held in some localities. In March 1934 he proposed a more general referendum on the League and by the end of the month a conference had been held involving 38 societies. A National Declaration Committee was formed and by June a set of five questions was ready for discussion by the General Council.[80] In Sheffield the first preliminary meeting was held on 21st August. From the beginning Sheffield and Hallam Branches of the LNU tried to gain as broad an involvement as possible. The STLC, Brightside and Hallam Divisional Labour Parties and the Sheffield and Eccleshall Cooperative Society all record being asked to attend the initial conference.[81]

A second larger meeting was called by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Fred Marshall, on 28th September at the Town Hall. The first meeting had gone unnoticed by the press, but there was a short report of Marshall's address to this second meeting in which he stressed the dangers of another war.[82] A provisional committee appointed a full-time organiser, Selkirk Chapman, and an assistant using funds donated by private individuals.[83] A third meeting on 9th November formed a National Declaration Committee for Sheffield from well-known names active on behalf of the LNU. After this meeting work began in earnest to recruit the 2500 volunteers required to distribute ballot papers to everyone aged 18 years and over, and to raise money to meet the committee's expenses.[84]

The great strengths of the Peace Ballot in bringing those interested in peace

---

[79] The LNU was regarded as anodyne not only because of its establishment attitudes and non-political stance, but also because its membership was believed to be hopelessly inert. c.f. Vera Brittain's account of addressing her first LNU meeting in Testament of Youth, 1933, pp382 - 383

[80] Donald S, Birn, The League of Nations Union, 1918 - 1945, Oxford, 1981, pp144 - 145

[81] STLC Minute Books, 14.8.34., Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 15.8.34., Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 10.9.34., and Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 6.9.34.

[82] "Ballot for Peace Starts", The Independent, 29.9.34., p7

[83] Annual Report, League of Nations Union, Sheffield Central Branch, 1934, Sheffield 1935, np. The Independent announced Chapman's appointment on 27.10.34., p7

[84] "Do You Want Peace or War", The Independent, 10.11.34., p7

issues into cooperation with each other were: Firstly, almost no organisation active within a wider peace movement, except certain sections of the ILP and Socialist League, was, by this date, so opposed to the League of Nations that they refused to participate. Secondly, the organisers asked merely for "sympathisers"; no commitment to any particular set of peace ideals was expected. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the legwork involved in being a collector allowed volunteers to feel that they were doing something practical for the cause of peace. The memory of tramping Sheffield's back streets distributing and collecting ballot forms remained vividly with the young volunteers for more than half a century.[85]

The appeal for volunteers went out to churches both within and without the Corporate Membership of the LNU.[86] The response from religious organisations was generally positive, although it did not always produce active support. Political organisations too generally responded favourably. The Labour Party's response, in particular, was in marked contrast to their attitude to the BAWM Congress.

The STLC Executive refused to commit itself to participating after its representative had attended the initial meeting[87] but September's delegate meeting committed the council to support the undertaking.[88] The executive allowed Chapman to address the November meeting which passed a resolution recommending that affiliated organisations render every possible assistance.[89] In fact Divisional Labour Parties appear to have done very little. Hallam DLP decided to put the onus on the wards and recorded that Broomhill had sent five volunteers.[90] Brightside sent representatives to the conference in September but took no action to secure collectors.[91] A lack of enthusiasm among Labour Party committee members was not important; their endorsement was

---

[85] Interview with Bill Moore.
[86] c.f. Cemetery Road Congregational Church Meeting Minute Book, Deacons' Meeting, 12.12.34. (Corporate Member of LNU), Birley Carr Annual Meeting 12.12.34., Ann's Road Primitive Methodist Church Council Minute Book, Leaders' Quarterly Meeting, 20.11.34. and Petre Street Methodist Church Minute Book, Special Leaders' Meeting, 20.11.34.
[87] STLC Minute Books, 4.9.34.
[88] *Ibid*, 25.9.34.
[89] *Ibid*, 27.11.34.
[90] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 3.12.34.
[91] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 19.12.34.

enough for it allowed volunteers from Labour's ranks to come forward.[92]

The Liberal Party too played its part. While it offered no comment on the views that the ballot sought to endorse, it asked members to offer their services "...if only to secure the definite opinion of the city".[93] The Cooperative Party Council in Sheffield after initially expressing doubts about the practicalities of the scheme,[94] was sufficiently convinced by November to allow the names of their Chairman and Secretary to be used as supporters.[95] The Cooperative Party also opened the columns of its newspaper, The Sheffield Cooperator, to articles by the ballot's supporters. In the first of these E.G.G. Lyon, Sheffield LNU's Branch Secretary revealed the extent to which his organisation was campaigning for a "yes" vote. Blaming the League's failure to restrain Japan on the armaments manufacturers, he accused opponents of first obstructing the League's work and then criticising it for failing. He attacked "men of the old school" who wanted to reply to new insecurities by an increase in armaments. Stressing the new role of the bombing plane, he finished with an emotional vision of Sheffield's new municipal buildings crammed with wounded children after an air raid.[96]

(b) Political Reactions: It was Conservative opposition to the Peace Ballot which turned the event, in Ceadel's words, into an "anti-government crusade" and produced what he describes as: "the nearest thing in the interwar period to a true 'Popular Front'".[97] Nationally, as early as July, the Conservative Party had wrung from the LNU's General Council permission to distribute their own leaflet with the ballot paper which urged voters to consider a "no" answer to the ban on the private production of arms. On

---

[92] e.g. Two women's sections recorded that their activities during January had been dominated by the Peace Ballot. "Cooperative Party Notes", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 126, March 1935, p3 & "Manor Labour Party (Women's Section) Secretary's Annual Report", The Manor and Woodthorpe Review, March 1935, p98

[93] The Sheffield Liberal, No2, 1934, np

[94] Cooperative Party Executive Committee Minute Book, 6.9.34.

[95] *Ibid*, 15.11.34.

[96] Lyon, E.G.G., "Collective Peace or Catastrophe", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 121, September 1934, p1. Ceadel believes that the humanitarian sensitivities which promoted pacifism were strengthened in the thirties by the conjunction of the awareness of the suffering of the Great War portrayed in the memoirs published 1928 - 1930 with "...the horrific visions of a future air gas war depicted in the pro-Disarmament propaganda of 1931 - 2". Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain, *op cit*, p102

[97] M. Ceadel, "The First British Referendum: the Peace Ballot 1934 - 5", The English Historical Review, 95, 1980, p828

23rd November Baldwin, the Prime Minister, not only criticised the Peace Ballot and warned against the politicisation of the LNU but also declared a collective peace system "perfectly impracticable".[98]

Conservatives in Sheffield had refused from the first to be involved in the ballot.[99] Pike said on 21st November that he would have nothing to do with the Peace Ballot and was surprised that other well-known citizens had associated themselves with it.[100] On the day of Baldwin's speech the Sheffield Branch of the National Council for Women refused its support by 31 votes to 26. Mrs E. Baker, in opposing the ballot, laid stress on the practical difficulties raised by Question Four: "Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by international agreements?" This brought a swift reply from "Another Woman" who pointedly asked "...why the one [question] on the manufacturer of arms for private profit should loom so largely in her mind and Why are certain people so afraid of this Ballot?"[101] Seven members of the Sheffield branch wrote offering their personal endorsement of the ballot and added that the National Executive of the National Council for Women and the Sheffield Branch of the Federation of University Women had both given their support.[102]

After Baldwin's speech, local Conservatives launched a sustained attack. Sir Samuel Roberts, Conservative MP for Eccleshall, attacked the ballot for containing the "wicked implication" that the Government was not in favour of the League.[103] Pike had three further letters in the local press. Like Mrs Baker, Pike devoted most space to the prohibition of the private sale and manufacture of arms. He ignored ethical and economic arguments in favour of such a ban in order to dispute the practicalities of its implementation. He dismissed the Royal Commission on the Manufacture of Armaments as a propaganda tool for the opposition.[104] W.W. Boulton, Conservative MP for the

---

[98] Birn, *op cit*, p148

[99] Eccleshall Divisional Conservative Association Executive Committee Minute Book, 24.9.34.

[100] "Mr Pike Attacks Peace Ballot", The Independent, 21.11.34., p7

[101] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 26.11.34., p7

[102] "Public Can Judge Issue", *ibid*, 3.12.34., p5

[103] "Sheffield MP Attacks Ballot", *ibid*, 24.11.34., p8

[104] David Anderson writes that, on the contrary, "...this commission was created by the government as merely a sop to the public outcry against the 'evils' of the arms industry." Anderson, D.G., "British Rearmament and the 'Merchants of Death': The 1935 -1936 Royal Commission on the Manufacture of and Trade in Armaments", Journal of

Central Division, made a speech echoing Baldwin's view that the ballot politicised the peace issue.[105] Finally, at the year's end Louis W. Smith, Conservative MP for Hallam, defended Sheffield's business from the charge that they were becoming too dependent upon arms orders.[106] The Conservative local paper, The Telegraph belittled the ballot. Commenting on a correspondent who had urged it to "...warn all Conservatives against taking any part in the alleged Peace or War Ballot", it wrote: "But we don't know. It seems to be taking this preposterous business rather tragically. We do not anticipate that many Conservatives will trouble to fill in the paper".[107]

Supporters of the ballot were not quiescent in the face of this onslaught. Selkirk Chapman wrote:

> An instance of misunderstanding which can only be deliberate is the criticism which says the ballot is silly and unnecessary because it merely asks people whether they want war or peace and everybody knows the answer. The trouble is that there are a few people who would say "Yes" to that question and "No" to all the questions on the ballot paper![108]

Pike's initial communication was described as "a disgusting and insulting letter" by Douglas E. Moore, Secretary of the local Liberal Federation and a member of the local National Declaration Committee.[109] Nationally Conservatives felt themselves to have been wrong-footed by the ballot but in Sheffield, with so many leading Conservatives involved in the armaments industry, their criticism appeared to be a matter of self-interest.

Despite his highly coloured language, Conservative criticism of the Peace Ballot, as voiced in Pike's letters, has largely been endorsed by historians. Ceadel writes of the Peace Ballot that: "It increased the incoherence of public debate about foreign affairs and the cynicism of the government about this debate".[110] Birn explains that this was because it "...confirmed the popular impression that collective security represented an alternative

---

Contemporary History, 29 (1994), p29

[105] "Peace Point", The Independent, 6.12.34., p4

[106] Daily Independent Industrial Supplement, 28.12.34.

[107] "Current Topics", The Telegraph, 26.11.34., p6

[108] S. Chapman, "The Truth About the Peace Ballot", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 124, December 1934, p1

[109] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 20.11.34., p6

[110] M. Ceadel, "The First British Referendum", *op cit*, p839

to war"[111] and appears to imply that the LNU still believed at this date that even the expression of world disapproval would be sufficient to restrain an aggressor. Ceadel agrees that the ballot's organisers did not really believe that military sanctions would ever be required. They were of the opinion that effective economic sanctions would be enough and that collective security was, therefore, compatible with disarmament in line with what was felt to be the overriding lesson of the Great War. While Pike offered no comment on Question One: "Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?" of Question Two: "Are you in favour of an all round reduction in armaments by international agreement?" he wrote that: "It is dishonest because it fails to intimate that whatever the view of Great Britain, the remaining Nations of the world cannot be compelled to follow our example". Collective security, he said, was not compatible with further British disarmament. Question Three: "Are you in favour of the all round abolition of military and naval aircraft by international agreement?" was similarly criticised by Pike as worthless unless all nations were members of the League. Of Question Five: "Do you consider that if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by - (a) economic and non-military measures? (b) if necessary military measures?" which Pike described as "...perhaps the most dishonest of all the questions", he asked why the promoters of the ballot had not made it clear whether economic sanctions would include food and whether "military measures" would include combined military action, and therefore war, by members of the League.[112]

Conservative criticisms of the ballot were not free of contradictions. Pike claimed that a "yes" vote on the ballot's five questions would be used by its promoters to infer "...that in the Event of War these people would not take up arms in defence of their country".[113] In fact Parts (a) and (b) of Question Five which committed the respondent to support economic and military sanctions were rejected by pacifists otherwise in support of the poll. On Pike's own side isolationists took the same view. "Current Topics" in The Telegraph, wrote that if he were to fill in a ballot paper he "...might put a double sized 'No' to that. We are absolutely opposed to war in all its forms".[114]

---

[111] Birn, *op cit*, p152
[112] "Mr C.F. Pike Explains Ballot Attack", The Independent, 26.11.34., p7
[113] "Mr Pike Returns to the Attack", *ibid*, 27.11.34., p4
[114] "Current Topics", The Telegraph, 28.11.34., p6

The Peace Ballot was not an objective survey of public opinion but an attempt to force the government to eschew a retreat into isolationism following the withdrawal of Germany from the Disarmament Conference. Since, as the future was to demonstrate, the National Government did not share the LNU's commitment to collective security within a League framework, its spokesmen were right to be chary of efforts to increase public support for those ideals. The frontal assault mounted by the Conservatives on the Peace Ballot was a tactical error, however, because its significance became political rather than ideological. Its intellectual incoherence allowed it to act as a focus for those who perceived the need to unify those interested in peace. Under the impetus of government antagonism the two most dynamic and committed elements among peace groups, the absolute pacifists and the left-wing internationalists, dropped their objections to aspects of the ballot in order to ensure its success.

Pacifist support for the Peace Ballot was reiterated after the Prime Minister's attack. Cecil H. Wilson, prospective Labour candidate for the Attercliffe Division, acknowledged the difficulty that pacifists had with League sanctions. Wilson wrote with some authority since he and his sister, Dr Helen Wilson, were representatives of a family pacifist tradition which went back before the days of the Boer War. It was significant therefore, that while the central portion of Wilson's letter explained pacifist objections to coercive economic sanctions and the use of military force, it began and ended with a plea for public and pacifist support for the ballot.[115]

The Communist Party made no such public pronouncements but, as Ceadel has pointed out, it was precisely because the Communist Party had not provided the ballot's ideological framework that it attracted widespread support.[116] The official CPGB attitude to the ballot made it clear that such support as it was giving was prompted by government attacks.[117] William Rust found himself able to offer a half-hearted "yes" to the first four ballot questions, notwithstanding the lack of faith he and his colleagues had in the League of Nations. Even the membership of the Soviet Union, they felt, could not purify such a gathering of "militaristic and imperialist rulers". Rust thought that Communists, like pacifists, could not give their assent to the two parts of Question Five which sanctioned economic and military action against an aggressor nation. Communists

---

115 "Mr Cecil Wilson and the Peace Ballot", The Independent, 26.11.34., p7
116 Ceadel, "The First British Referendum", *op cit*, p829
117 W. Rust, "How We Answered the Peace Ballot", The Daily Worker, 12.12.34., p3

were worried that the label "aggressor nation" might be misapplied to the Soviet Union and that a war in defence of capitalism might be fought under League auspices.

The suspicion with which left-wing activists still viewed the League of Nations was best illustrated by an article by Mabel Bottomley in The Sentinel. This hand-written magazine, edited by Joe Albaya, circulated among young friends of various left-wing parties and none who met at the Sheffield Educational Settlement, precisely the sort of people who might distribute the ballot papers. Bottomley's article castigated the Big Powers at the League of Nations for their bad faith in allowing the Disarmament Conference to fail. She contrasted Litvinov's proposals with the attitude of other delegates and averred that only one country, the USSR, was really in favour of peace. She concluded: "Let all who desire Peace follow the lead of Litvinov. Let us expose the League. Let us appeal to the commonsense of the ordinary man in the street".[118]

Bottomley did not mention the Peace Ballot but the dilemma that she and others found themselves in was clearly presented. The Peace Ballot offered the chance to appeal directly to "the commonsense of the ordinary man in the street" and yet did so in order to endorse an organisation which Bottomley regarded as at best worthless. In the space provided for comments on the ballot paper Rust said that he would write that he favoured a very different appeal to the ordinary man. His overriding method of war-resistance remained the general strike and he contrasted this with the "...danger of a passive trust in the League of Nations". Rust dismissed "...the casting of this vote as only one limited and isolated step in the struggle against war". This was reflected in Sheffield where the CPGB had prioritised building for a campaign of united action against changes in the employment legislation in the new year.[119] What Rust neglected in failing to encourage readers to participate in the ballot was that communist influence in the localities depended as much on the practical vanguardism of its members' involvement in street level campaigning as it did upon the provision of a clearly formulated ideal by

---

[118] J. Albaya (ed), The Sentinel, Vol 1 No 4, November 1934, pp3 - 5

[119] Kevin Morgan believes that historians have over-emphasized the extent to which the CPGB was preoccupied with questions of foreign policy. "Running parallel with and deeper than the CP's vacillating attitude to international affairs was its commitment to a popular mobilisation against the many and various injustices of capitalism." These struggles, he adds, "...had their own justification quite independent of the CP's wider political aims." Morgan, Kevin, Against Fascism and War, Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935 - 1941, Manchester, 1989, p296

which others' policies could be judged. With hindsight, left-wingers who put aside their suspicions of the League in order to "appeal to the commonsense of the ordinary man" as ballot volunteers, came to see their involvement as the start of a broadly based peace movement.

Mainstream opposition politicians, too, were not going to pass up the opportunities that Conservative attacks on a peace referendum offered them. Douglas E. Moore replying to Pike after a delay caused by a slight illness "...aggravated by the recurrence of a malady contracted in Flanders" (both he and Pike made some play of their wartime service), pointed up the democratic impulse which lay behind the ballot's principles and contrasted this with the elitist and undemocratic attitudes which led Pike to conclude that the public could not be trusted to answer the questions intelligently.[120] Ceadel believes that the detachment of Liberals who had voted for the National Government in 1931 from that allegiance because of a their tradition of dissenting foreign policy was crucial to the ballot's success.[121] In Sheffield Conservative paranoia may have partly originated in concerns about the Peace Ballot's effect on the 28 000 ex-Liberal voters who it was presumed had mostly switched to the Conservatives in 1931.

A.V. Alexander, prospective Cooperative candidate for the Hillsborough Constituency, hinted at the self-interest suggested by Conservatives' objections: "It was never quite so easy in such a centre to get unanimous support for disarmament".[122] His diffidence reflected the different emphasis that he placed on the peace question from that of the pacifist Labour leadership. Alexander, who had been First Lord of the Admiralty in the second Labour Government, favoured the erection of a framework of international law which would provide objective and binding jurisdiction on bilateral disputes. His vision of a strengthened League, along with some coded criticism of the leadership, had been reported by The Sheffield Cooperator the previous July. Alexander did not shy away from punitive League of Nations sanctions. He urged cooperation with the LNU "where necessary" and also "the study of such questions as sanctions and international

---

[120] "Public Can Judge Issue", The Independent, 3.12.34., p5

[121] Ceadel, "The First British Referendum", *op cit*, p829

[122] "Rt. Hon. A.V. Alexander on Constructive Peace Measures", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 124, December 1934, p4 & "Sheffield Attitude to Arms", The Independent, 1.12.34., p7

police forces".[123] Alexander regarded the stress laid on disarmament as mistaken, believing that further disarmament would only be possible once an international court had engendered a sense of security amongst nations. Although his private views were to remain ahead of party policy, they were in accordance with the direction taken by the new Labour leadership after October 1935. However, as the history of the next few years was to demonstrate, the influence that the parliamentary leadership's opinions exerted on activists in Sheffield's constituency parties and the TLC was practically nil. It was precisely the stress laid upon disarmament and the control of arms manufacture in the ballot that attracted Labour activists, otherwise sceptical about the League of Nations, to work for the ballot.

Irritation with governmental attitudes towards the Peace Ballot was also felt in the local LNU. Lyon was reported to have said: "Even in this Government there must be many people who secretly rejoice that in this country there are voluntary workers for the cause of peace, distributing these ballot sheets".[124] This increased the cohesive impact of the ballot as the movement of those on the left and centre towards the LNU was reciprocated by the LNU adopting a more openly oppositional stance, a trend which was to become increasingly obvious as the decade progressed.

(c) Reactions in the Churches: By the beginning of January 1935 the Sheffield National Declaration Committee were able to claim the support of "over 150 religious, political and social organisations".[125] The two main Christian denominations in the city, the Church of England and the Methodists, urged members to cooperate with the forthcoming ballot. The Bishop of Sheffield, while voicing some reservations, suggested that the ballot was "...well worth a fair and unbiased trial".[126] The President of the Free Church Council in a similar message viewed the ballot as a religious undertaking: "There is no need to enter into a long exhortation; the work should commend itself to all as a piece of real service for the Kingdom of God in our days".[127] By the end of January most

---

[123] "Brotherhood and Citizenship", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 120, July 1934, pp1 - 2
[124] "Work for Peace", The Independent, 12.12.34., p5
[125] St George's Parish Magazine, January 1935, np
[126] "The Bishop's Letter", Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXI No 1, January 1935, p4
[127] "The Peace Ballot - A Message from the President of the Free Church Council", The Sheffield Methodist Mission Messenger, No 476 February 1935, p13.

churchgoers in Sheffield were not only aware of the ballot but had also been urged to participate.[128] After the ballot was ended The Independent suggested that "...in so far as the Ballot has succeeded the main credit is due to the enthusiasm and hard work both of clergy and laity in practically all denominations". This reflected the fact that the churches, through the corporate membership scheme, enjoyed a special relationship with the LNU from which political organisations in general held aloof.

The Revd Alfred Hall, Unitarian Minister of Upper Chapel, stressed that the ballot offered a democratic opportunity to choose between "isolation and collectivism". He spoke of the Ballot in educational terms and saw it as a countermeasure to what he described as the "definite education along the lines of war", going on in Germany:

> The ballot would have the effect of educating the people to take greater interest in international policies. It was also intended to let the government know that in every venture it made for peace it would have the people behind it. A third point was that it was intended to let the people of the world know that the people of England were in favour of peace.[129]

Hall, like the Secretary (Dr Helen Wilson) and the Chairman (R.B. Graham, headmaster of Edward VII Grammar School) of the Sheffield District Council National Declaration Committee on the League and Armaments, was himself a pacifist. Ceadel notes that in the late twenties: "far more pacifists joined the LNU than joined the explicitly pacifist societies".[130] The Peace Ballot organisers in Sheffield made strong efforts to keep such members on board:

> Some voters are anxious to show with regard to question 5 that while they condemn a policy of isolation, they are opposed to the use of force. Such voters should answer "Christian pacifist" or "pacifist" to question 5b or to 5a and 5b.[131]

Chapman described the recourse to sanctions as "...the adoption of the mean between

---

[128] St George's Parish Magazine, *op cit*, & The Sharrovian (St Andrew's Church, Sharrow), January 1935, np, printed the committee's appeal in full. Nonconformist churches' records also reveal discussion: e.g. Carver Street Methodist Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book, 29.1.35. & Darnall Congregational Church Deacons' Meeting Minute Book, 15.1.35.

[129] "Britain's Lead to the World", The Independent, 15.1.35., p7

[130] Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, *op cit*, p63

[131] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 31.1.35., p6

two extremes: one extreme is self-defence, with as many armaments as a nation can afford, the other is to regard war as a greater horror and disaster than passive resistance and to refuse to fight at all". He described the latter "extreme", however, as "...an ideal which may be realized in the future and sanctions as a policy for the transitional present".

Wilson played down the necessity for the League of Nations to resort to armed force after the failure of economic sanctions:

> But if they failed then the League might call on its members to use armed force against this "mad-dog" nation. According to the Covenant such a call could only be made if the decision of the League were unanimous. Britain could not be called upon except by her own consent.

The two conditions attached to this were intended to reassure voters and even the admission that "No doubt difficult questions of method are involved in all this..." was tempered by reassuring words from the Anglican endorsement of the Ballot that "...the statesmen of the world will find the appropriate methods".[132]

Inclusivity was the watchword of the ballot's promoters in the last days before polling began and disagreements with the Conservatives were played down. Disingenuously Chapman proved to his own satisfaction that, since the government were committed to arms export licences and further international disarmament, the controlled and contracted market for arms that this implied would inevitably lead to reduced arms profits and thus the elimination of the manufacture of arms for profit. Wilson sought to reassure both steelworkers and their bosses by advocating that those involved with arms production made redundant by such a measure should receive special treatment and either be compensated or paid their former wages until redeployed. The ballot was portrayed as helping the National Government: "It will strengthen the hands of the Government in their pursuit of a policy of peace."[133]

(d) The Results: 2 300 volunteers each distributed ballot papers to fifty houses. The Independent suggested that "some individual Conservatives and Progressives" participated. The Committee distributed, on demand, both the green leaflet, which explained the majority on the LNU Ruling Council's opinion as to how the voter should respond, and the blue leaflet which had been produced by Sir Austen Chamberlain and a

---

[132] "What is This Peace Ballot?", *ibid.* 21.1.35., p6
[133] St George's Parish Magazine, *op cit.*

Conservative minority which explained their reservations about the ballot. The ballot was secret with separate papers issued for servants, lodgers and, on request, married sons and daughters living with their parents. The ballot workers were "...impressed that they are not to canvas for the questions to be answered in any specific way. They are simply to urge people to answer the questions."[134]

The count started in the Sheffield and Ecclesall Cooperative Society Institute by 19th February. Three days later Chapman appealed for extra volunteers to cover streets that had been overlooked and asked for any uncollected forms to be returned to his office.[135] The count continued into March and the results were published on the 28th of that month.

In Sheffield 42.9% of the electorate answered the ballot questions. (See Appendix, p103) This was considerably lower than the 60% that the organisers had hoped for, but about the average response for a large industrial town. The collection of 149 347 completed questionnaires represented a considerable achievement. A further 23 320 papers were collected either blank or spoilt. This represented only 15.6% of the ballot papers collected or less than 7% of the total electorate. Despite Government opposition to the ballot and the hostility of elements of the national and regional press, the number of electors who actively opposed the referendum was small. The size of the response in the country as a whole was a considerable boost to those active in the peace movement and, it has been suggested, the cause of a change in the rhetoric, if not the policy, of the National Government. Nevertheless care must be taken in using these figures to represent public opinion either nationally or locally. In Sheffield, for instance, the total papers collected, completed, blank and spoilt, accounts for slightly less than half of the city's electorate.

If the ballot did not show that there was a "peace majority" in the country it did demonstrate that there was a substantial body of opinion which desired the Government to retain a commitment to the League of Nations. The majorities of those in favour of the first four questions and of the first part of question five were large enough both locally and nationally to suggest that there was widespread support for a more effective League, the limitation of arms manufacture and disarmament. The lower acceptance (just under

---

134 "Secrecy of Peace Ballot", The Independent, 9.1.35., p4
135 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 22.2.35., p6

60% in Sheffield and elsewhere) of Britain's involvement in military sanctions demonstrated that many supporters of the League did not accept the full implications of the *pacificist* method. Sheffield's position as an armaments centre had little effect on either the number of those voting or on the type of responses received. Conservative opponents of the Ballot, who had expressed such vehement opposition to the question on the private manufacture of arms, had miscalculated if they had believed that steelworkers and their families might follow the lead of their employers and reject the referendum.

The effect of Sheffield's manufacturing base on voting patterns increased as each of the first four questions was answered. The difference between the number of those in Sheffield who favoured continued membership of the League of Nations and those in the country as whole was insignificant. To Question Two, on disarmament, 2% less of Sheffield's voters responded favourably. Question Three, on the abolition of military aircraft was endorsed by about 3.5% less people in Sheffield than in Britain. In answer to Question Four, which asked the key question about the banning of the private manufacture of arms, approximately 5.5% less of the local electorate were in favour of the proposal. On the two parts of the most contentious Question Five, which asked about the use of non-military and military sanctions, the local and national responses were more closely allied. About 3% less of Sheffield's respondents were in favour of economic sanctions but approximately the same number locally as nationally were prepared to countenance military action on behalf of the League.

The Independent published a table comparing voting figures from a predominantly working-class division in the East End, Attercliffe, with a predominantly middle-class division in the west of the city, Ecclesall. Ecclesall, one of the strongholds of Conservatism in the city, had the third highest poll of any district in Sheffield at 51%, far higher than Attercliffe with 42%. Another sign that some individual Conservative voters did not feel the antipathy to the Ballot that Conservative Party officials maintained. The primary difference in voting patterns between classes would seem to have been a greater apathy amongst working class voters. Although logistical difficulties were reported and it was noted that "...the old crowded parts of the city were the worst districts from this point of view", Park Division, in which slum clearance was underway, recorded an abysmal 28.9% vote.

There were no significant differences between Ecclesall and Attercliffe's answers

to Question One, on remaining within the League of Nations, to Question Two, on disarmament, and more surprisingly to Question 5b, on the application of military sanctions to an aggressor, which was to become a key policy difference between the Labour and Conservative Parties. Both divisions recorded the city's average vote on this question of just below 60%. Amongst those voting, the Conservative area showed less enthusiasm for the demilitarisation of the air (6.84% less), the banning of the private manufacture of arms (5.36% less) and the application of economic sanctions (8.37% less). Although in the voting on these three issues Ecclesall revealed that Sheffield's position as an armaments centre had more influence on Conservative than on Labour voters, the results nevertheless suggested that Conservative voters in the city supported the *pacificist* ideals of the League of Nations to a greater extent than their leaders.

In view of this, continued Conservative attacks on the Peace Ballot after the publication of the results appeared unwise. As late as 10th April Sir Ronald Matthews attacked the ballot at the annual meeting of the Central Conservative and Unionist Association:

> The Peace Ballot had not been, in Sheffield, the unqualified success its promoters expected and that was perhaps because the people were too much realists to commit themselves to answering questions which were idealistic.[136]

The fact that Attercliffe's response was more favourable to the League of Nations in every case than Ecclesall's suggests that political affiliation was more important than place of employment in determining the answers given. In Attercliffe, where much of Sheffield's steel plant was sited, the percentage of those in favour of the banning of the private manufacture of arms was actually slightly greater than in the country as a whole. Memories of government attempts to break national wage agreements and undermine working practices in the munitions work of the Great War remained vivid in the minds of local union leaders and some of their members.[137] One of the figureheads of their resistance, J.T. Murphy, addressed a meeting of the Socialist League in April.[138] While the White Paper on Rearmament issued on 5th March was welcomed by the local press, the STLC, which included both industrial and political

---

136 "Sir R. Matthews", *ibid*, 11.4.35., p7
137 "Sheffield Engineers Protest Over Dilution of Labour", *ibid*, 11.3.35., p5
138 "Labour's New Deal", *ibid*, 15.4.35., p5

delegates, was unanimous in its condemnation.[139] Indeed, it was No 15 Branch of the local Engineers' Union who were the first to ask the S.T.L.C. for the peace conference which was eventually held under the Council's auspices in the City Hall on 14th September.[140]

Although the Peace Ballot has been accused of confusing, rather than clarifying, the issues of peace, there can be no doubt that it raised the public profile of peace questions. It was unusual among peace activities because it was an initiative, rather than a response, and while other events at home and abroad raised issues of foreign policy, the League and armaments, the Peace Ballot itself was partly responsible for the fact that peace rather than economics and unemployment took centre stage in the political arena after 1935.

The Sheffield Disturbance and the United Front

Nothing better illustrates the crossroads at which the peace movement found itself than the Sheffield Disturbance. Unconnected with any peace issue, the event nevertheless demonstrated that the change in the Left's political priorities, which was to be witnessed at this mid-point of the decade,[141] was by no means complete in the city by the early months of 1935. The first years of the decade had been dominated by the problems created by economic depression and mass unemployment. After 1935, while these problems were never absent from the political agenda, the increasingly threatening international situation shifted the focus away from the domestic arena. The disturbance illustrated the unfinished metamorphosis of the Communist Party from unrelenting critic of democratic socialism to benign promoter of left-wing unity. While the liberal inheritors of what A.J.P. Taylor has described as the tradition of dissent were organising the unifying Peace Ballot, the new dissenters of the Left, the most vociferous proponents of unity, were tearing into their potential left-wing allies with ill-disguised gusto. There

---

[139] STLC Minute Books, 5.3.35.

[140] The conference made a 30 shillings loss, suggesting that the Labour Party could not guarantee good participation in peace-related activities at this point. *Ibid*, 7.5.35. & 24.9.35.

[141] G.D.H. Cole agrees with the dating of this shift of interest, but cites the Abyssinian War and the Spanish War sequentially as foci for the new stress on international affairs, implying a slower changeover of priorities than was witnessed in Sheffield. Cole, G.D.H., Socialism and Fascism 1931 - 1939, London, 1969, p71

was a contradiction between this antagonistic rhetoric, which set back unity by several months, and the untrumpeted communal action that built the bridges that later created a unified peace movement.

On 7th January 1935 Part Two of the Unemployment Assistance Act came into force, standardising benefits paid by local authorities' Public Assistance Committees and increasing the stringency of the Means Testing of households. In Sheffield with a Labour Council already paying as much as was allowed under existing PAC arrangements, the legislation lowered payments to many families and removed some individuals from benefit altogether. The Sheffield Communist Party began to prepare its own protests as early as June 1934[142] but the real organisational effort began in December. Sympathetic members of the ILP were once again encouraged to take the lead and it was Stuart Friedensen of that organisation who was arrested as leader of the 6th February demonstration.[143] Unemployment benefit cuts proved to be a more potent force than had peace and disarmament for encouraging Labour Party members to defy their leadership and cooperate with the communists.

On 28th December 1934 it was reported that members of the Handsworth Ward Labour Party had resolved to convene a special conference to support the demonstration:

> This Ward Labour Party, believing that the time is now ripe declares in favour of a united working-class demonstration in Sheffield against Fascism and reaction, and resolves to take the initiative in organising such a demonstration under the auspices of the Labour movement.
> It further expresses the hope that this demonstration will pave the way to unity among the different working class organisations at present at war with each other in Sheffield.[144]

Although Tom Eaton, Secretary of the STLC, dismissed the importance of the resolution, insisting that "the Party had simply ignored it",[145] another ward meeting was

---

[142] B. Moore, All Out! - The Dramatic Story of the Sheffield Demonstration Against Dole Cuts on February 6th 1935, Sheffield, 1985, pp 9 - 10

[143] The involvement of Friedensen is a good example of the difficulties of disentangling the affiliations of those involved in the united front. Friedensen, who is described by Branson as industrial editor of the ILP's New Leader, officially joined the Communist Party just eight months later on 31st October 1935. Branson, N., *op cit*, p142

[144] "Labour Members Fight for Unity", The Daily Worker, 28.12.34., p3

[145] "Repudiation of Conference", The Independent, 16.1.35., p3

hastily convened to repudiate it.

The most active of the conference promoters was A.J. (Jack) Murray. A graduate of private means, Murray had appeared in Sheffield some months earlier on a mission to throw in his lot with the underprivileged. Moore has indicated that Murray had dual membership of the Labour and Communist Parties but his background made him a figure of suspicion to working class activists in Sheffield.[146] Moore believes that he may have been an *agent provocateur*. Murray was, however, extremely useful to promoters of the United Front. The conference was a key stage in the organisation of the demonstration attracting the participation of: "11 trade union branches, six Cooperative organisations and 15 political and other organisations".[147] The United Action Committee changed its name at the conference to the Sheffield Workers' Unity Committee. Local branches existed in Attercliffe and Burngreave[148] and possibly also in Manor, Heeley and Upperthorpe. With 54 000 people dependent upon Public Assistance in Sheffield, the political stakes were high. There was spontaneous anger among the unemployed as an impromptu demonstration at a chapel meeting addressed by J. Gurney Braithwaite, Conservative MP for Hillsborough,[149] and the threat to hold a meeting outside the house of Attercliffe's Conservative MP demonstrated.[150]

The Daily Worker claimed that Labour Party activities in Sheffield during January were intended: "to dampen down the revolts of Labour Party Workers against the Act".[151] The perception of the demonstration as a contest between factions of the Left was heightened by events. Threatened with major disturbances throughout the United Kingdom, the Government allowed the act to collapse on 5th February. An

---

[146] Moore, *op cit*, p58. The clandestine habits of the dual members are suggested by Noreen Branson: "...their party cards were held for them, sometimes at 16 King Street, more commonly by the District Secretaries for the area in which they lived." In Sheffield, however, the sympathy for communist views of certain well-known Labour members was an open secret. Branson, N., History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927 - 1941, London, 1985, p157

[147] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 23.1.35., p6, "Ward Labour Party Lead", The Daily Worker, 21.1.35., p1 said "76 delegates from 30 organisations."

[148] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 5.2.35., p5 & 12.2.35., p6

[149] "Threat to Stop Meeting", *ibid*, 23.1.35., p7

[150] "Mr. Pike Staggers Reds", *ibid*, 1.2.35., p7

[151] "Sheffield Workers Against Scale", The Daily Worker, 4.1.35., p1. The same issue also reported, however, that Brightside DLP had organised a protest against the cuts ("Glasgow and Sheffield Act Against New Scales", p3). Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 19.12.34

announcement promised that no one should suffer loss of benefits under the act and that arrears to 7th January would be paid. On the morning of the demonstration, therefore, nobody was publicly supporting the implementation of the act. The Progressive Group on the City Council had abandoned hope of defending the provisions and was prepared to support the Labour resolution welcoming its abandonment even if their own face-saving amendment was rejected.[152] Len Youle, local leader of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement[153] contacted the NUWM's headquarters on 5th February to ask whether to call off the demonstration. He was told to proceed and demand the restoration of the cuts.[154]

Since the Labour majority on the Council effectively controlled the local Public Assistance Committee, the United Front demonstration was now not against the Government but against the Labour Council. Murray was one of the five-man deputation to the City Council from the demonstration and this emphasized the significance of the event as a confrontation between the Labour leadership and the United Front. The violence and arrests that followed exacerbated ill feeling.[155] Labour leaders' hurriedly arranged trip to London to ask for permission to pay back the arrears as quickly as possible made the demonstration even more divisive because both sides claimed credit for the early repayment. The interpretation of these events became the battleground for an ideological debate between constitutionalist and revolutionary wings of the Left.

The controversy reopened the wounds of the class against class period in the city. In December 1934, The Daily Worker had accused Asbury, Labour leader of Sheffield PAC and member of the Royal Commission on Unemployment, of being responsible for the new regulations,[156] despite the fact that he had written a dissenting minority report which had urged fairer treatment of the unemployed.[157] After an earlier demonstration in

---

[152] The Progressives were to ask, at first privately and later in an amendment if they were unsuccessful, that in the statement: "the allowances had not in any single case met the needs of the person affected" that "every" be substituted for "any single". Even if this was not accepted it was agreed that they would vote for the resolution and that those who felt unable to do so should abstain. Minutes of the Citizens' Group, 6.2.35.

[153] "Len Youle", Sheffield Forward, No 303, Jan/Feb 1972, p3

[154] Moore, *op cit*, p20

[155] "Sheffield Disturbance", The Independent, 7.2.35., p1

[156] "Sheffield PAC Chairman on Dole Swindle", The Daily Worker, 17.12.34., p3

[157] Moore acknowledges this and prints the Minority Report as "Appendix E" of his account.

October 1931 Asbury had been similarly unfairly identified with cuts in unemployment benefit imposed on local authorities by the National Government. No love was lost between Asbury and Youle, whose NUWM paper had characterised Asbury as "Your P.A.C. Pooh-bah".[158] Following the Disturbance The Daily Worker carried an accusation that Asbury was the cause of the batoning in the Town Hall Square.[159] The new generation of dissidents was no more enamoured. Murray described Asbury and other Labour leaders as "little Hitlers".[160] Moore distances the Communist Party from personal attacks on Asbury but it is hardly surprising that he remained an implacable foe of both Communist Party and Leftist Labour groupings. This impacted heavily upon the subsequent history of the Sheffield peace movement.

Kevin Morgan has argued that the Communist Party's ability to achieve limited reformist goals through street level organisation in the later 1930s was compromised both by its revolutionary rhetoric and its external direction by the Comintern.[161] In Sheffield the disturbance demonstrated both that there was a reluctance amongst communists to move to a more cooperative strategy and the extent to which the legacy of the class against class period hampered its implementation. The Labour leadership redoubled the vigour of their counter-attack on united front organisations. Eaton circulated a letter to affiliated organisations intimating that the SWUC was subject to the ban imposed by the Southport Conference.[162] The Cooperative Party Council issued instructions in the following month to their Hillsborough Divisional Party to debar two STLC delegates who were known to be associated with the SWUC.[163]

Renewed acrimony on the Left undoubtedly delayed the formation of a coordinating peace committee but there was a counterbalancing view that the disturbance demonstrated to peace activists the potential of cross party organisation. At a Communist Party meeting in March S. Saklatvala, the former Communist MP, offered a triumphal assertion of the demonstration's importance:

---

[158] "An Open letter to Members of the City Council", Sheffield Unemployed News, No 4, 30.1.32., p3
[159] "Sheffield Baton Charge Sequel", The Daily Worker, 2.3.35., p7
[160] "Left Wing Bodies Fall Out", The Independent, 22.2.35.
[161] Morgan, *op cit*, pp308 - 309
[162] "Left Wing Bodies Fall Out", *op cit* & Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 11.3.35.
[163] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 23.2.35. & 7.3.35.

> I feel very proud to come to speak to you after your great demonstration. The fact that you have very nearly made history by this attack against the National Government is well known to you. You here in Sheffield contributed your historical quota in a demonstration against a Government which, in Parliamentary language, was unshakeable. You shook the Government to its very bones.[164]

The claim that the demonstration was effective proof that popular action could override the constitutional process, coupled with the fact that activists had broken ranks with the Labour leadership in order to pursue common goals with the communists was an important boost for those promoting the united front. There was considerable ill feeling against the Labour Party Group on the Council in general, and Asbury in particular, at Labour meetings during late February.[165]

The Sheffield Workers' Unity Committee's May Day resolution pointed up the connections between unemployment and peace. It pledged those present:

> ...To combat the war danger by organising powerful protest demonstrations unifying the whole of the working class; to demand that the tremendous sums being spent for war should be used to find work for the unemployed by engaging them in useful work, such as extensive slum clearance and the building of new houses at low rents and to agitate and organise for the complete withdrawal of the Unemployed Assistance Act.[166]

The number present at that demonstration suggested, however, that the fortunes of the united front organisations that had organised the February march were already on the wane.[167] Whatever encouragement those in the peace movement may have derived from the unemployed demonstration, its methods did not provide a pattern for subsequent peace activities and the antagonism it provoked in the Labour Party leadership hindered the coalescence of a united peace movement.

---

[164] "Communist Claim", The Independent, 25.3.35., p8

[165] ASLEF Branch 1(B) Minute Book, 17.2.35. & "Sheffield Baton Charges Sequel", *op cit.*

[166] "May Day Plans", The Independent, 22.4.35., p7 Ben Pimlott argues that in the 1980s peace became a working class issue partly as a result of unemployment: "...the argument that money spent on American weapons might be spent on creating employment carries conviction." Pimlott, B., "Trade Unions and the Second Coming of CND", in Pimlott, B., & Cook, C (eds), Trade Unions in British Politics, London, 1982, p234

[167] "Merely Pink?", The Independent, 2.5.35., p5 & "Loyalty to the Workers and the Revolution", The Daily Worker, 3.5.35., p3

The announcement, in a letter of 5th February from J.E. Ashford, of the formation in Sheffield of an Adult Anti-War Committee by those associated with the BAWM, who had organised the Youth Congress, was an effort to apply a united front methodology to the popular agitation for peace.[168] Jim Ashford, a member of the University Peace Society, Cosmopolitan and Socialist Clubs, had been a member of the University since October 1933.[169] His interest in the creation of a coordinating committee pre-dated the Peace Ballot although the Peace Society had run its own Ballot within the University.[170] His language, as he encouraged students from a broader spectrum of opinion to join the University Peace Society, encompassed the broader definition of the united front, espoused by the CPGB in the latter part of 1934, which, in its developed "Popular Front" form, was successful in making the Communist Party an integral part of the peace movement's political dynamic:

> Some will oppose war because it denies all that appeals to their intellect, their sense of culture; some, because it is unethical, or forbidden by their religion; some because it is fought by the many, the working class, for the few, collectively dubbed the ruling classes; Some because it denies them the possibility of the quiet life they crave. It would be a tremendous task to weld this homogeneous mass into a united impulse to avert war, but with the hideous prospect of this war before us, cannot we realize that to attempt to achieve this aim is imperative, vital to us if we are to think ourselves progressive, human? Nobody, neither worker nor student can say that this is no concern of theirs. We have had one war to learn that from. Nobody can justly shrink because of the magnitude of the task.[171]

Ashford described himself as joint secretary of the preliminary committee with W.S. Whigham. They hoped to put together a larger, more widely supported committee by Saturday 16th February when the National Adult Anti-War Committee was meeting in Sheffield (coincidentally the weekend on which the Peace Ballot canvas ended in the city). On the Sunday they organised a public meeting at which Professor E. Soermus, a Russian violinist, and his wife, both refugees from Nazi Germany, played excerpts of classical music interspersed with their own pleas for peace.[172]

In the atmosphere promoted by the Disturbance, however, efforts to unify the

---

168 "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 5.2.35., p6
169 Letter from Jim Ashford to writer, 22.11.90
170 "Peace Society", The Arrows, No 19 March 1935, p50
171 "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, No 18 December 1934, p23
172 "His Words and Music for Peace", The Independent, 18.2.35., p7

peace movement under a banner so readily identifiable with the Communist Party and the ILP were doomed to failure. Apart from one letter to the press in July, signed by Whigham, informing readers that the committee had written to ex-servicemen's organisations asking them not to take part in a "peace" delegation to Germany suggested by the Prince of Wales, there is no indication that the Adult Anti-War Committee continued to exist after 17th February.[173] The Comintern's winding down the British Anti-War movement after their 7th Congress in August 1935, as part of a drive to enter into cooperation with more genuinely independent peace organisations,[174] was a tacit recognition that the tactics with regard to the peace movement embodied in this intermediate phase of the united front policy had failed. Two letters to the press from Whigham in September also dealing with peace matters failed to make any mention of the body.[175]

Summary:

From the beginning of the period covered by this thesis the fact that the CPGB had more influence in Sheffield than in most parts of Britain impacted upon the development of the peace movement. In 1934, however, this influence was exerted in tandem with its allies in the "united front" the ILP, who to an extent acted as cover for CPGB direction. While the local strength of the Communist Party was great enough to allow it to mobilise sufficient manpower to mount high profile events, the party, which was confined in its official relations to organisations not affiliated to the Labour Party, did not have sufficient influence within the Labour movement to determine the shape of local debate. This was exacerbated by a strong local antagonism which had grown up between the Labour leadership and the Communist Party over the issue of unemployment in the "class-against-class" period. Unemployment and related problems remained the primary issue in Sheffield and attitudes on both sides were a continuation of previous conflicts rooted in the divide between reformist and revolutionary orientations.

The CPGB's interest in peace policy reflected not only a new urgency imparted by growing international tensions, the new line being developed by the Comintern in response to events on the European mainland and the needs of Soviet foreign policy but

---

173 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 10.7.35., p6
174 Ceadel M., "The First Communist 'Peace Society', *op cit.*
175 "Our Readers' Views", The Independent, 3.9.35. & 25.9.35.

also a related domestic concern to decrease the isolation of the CPGB from the Labour and trade union movement. The CPGB used members of the ILP, a spent force in local politics, to spearhead vanguardist attempts to create unity movements in both the fields of domestic and foreign policy. Its efforts to lead a peace movement in Sheffield were thwarted by its own tactics, which were based on a narrow definition of the United Front aiming at domination of the policy of the movement, and the continuing antagonism of the local Labour leadership. The local Labour movement itself, however, was characterised by a political tolerance towards the Left and national efforts to maintain and increase the isolation of the CPGB were unsuccessful.

Although the holding of BAWM youth conference in Sheffield was a sign of the changing priorities of the CPGB, the attitudes demonstrated there were not yet themselves a product of the recognition of changes in the international situation. This was true at this point of the views of most elements of what was to become the peace movement. The universal support at the conference for war resistance looked back to the genesis of the Russian Revolution. This reflected a view held on the non-constitutionalist Left that the Depression after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the consequential split in the Labour Government in 1931 had heralded a revolutionary phase in British politics. This encouraged a continuing rejection of the liberal internationalist League of Nations which increased the isolation of the non-reformist Left from other elements of the nascent peace movement who had at least some affinity with the aims of that organisation.

The local LNU were far more successful in encouraging other groups interested in the peace issue in entering into cooperation with it to conduct the Peace Ballot. This cooperation was instrumental in bringing groups interested in peace into renewed contact. It became the inclusive non-directional model upon which efforts to coordinate the local peace movement were later based. Although participation in the local Peace Ballot was insufficiently wide for its results to be conclusive, it appears to vindicate Pollard's view that the local Labour movement was characterised by a generalised "pacifism". This is in contrast to the findings in other localities where historians have suggested that economic interest in armaments production influenced working class voting patterns in favour of pro-armaments parties and candidates.

Ceadel's view that Conservative opposition galvanised those groups who would later become associated with the peace movement into support for the ballot is certainly

true of Sheffield. This was true, not only of the Left, but also of the pacifists whose growing concerns about the application of sanctions within a *pacificist* model were directly challenged by Question 5. This loyalty to the LNU reflected once again the continuation at this point of attitudes across the movement prevalent in the peaceful interlude of the twenties.

The tenor of Question 4, which suggested interference with the commercial production of armaments, set the Conservative leadership in the city more firmly against the wider peace movement at this moment of its genesis than in other localities. Conservative areas in the city did not reflect this outright opposition, although they did demonstrate a voting pattern which reflected the economic influence of armaments production in the city. The almost total alienation of the local Conservative leadership from the peace movement was to produce one of the greatest dissimilarities between Sheffield and the national situation. Local involvement in armaments production ensured that there would be no *rapprochement* between defencist local Conservative opponents of appeasement and *pacificist* internationalists in the LNU, Labour and Liberal Parties.

Chapter 2, Appendix: Peace Ballot Results

Total number of People Voting:

Nationally:	11 559 165
Sheffield:	149 347
Attercliffe:	16 932
Ecclesall:	21 800

Question 1:

Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?

	Yes	No	Doubtful/No Answer
Nationally:	11 090 387 (95.94%)	355 883 (3.06%)	112 895 (0.98%)
Sheffield:	143 016 (95.76%)	574 (3.06%)	1 755 (1.18%)
Attercliffe:	16 357 (96.60%)	422 (2.49%)	153 (0.94%)
Ecclesall:	20 731 (95.10%)	734 (3.37%)	335 (1.54%)

Question 2:

Are you in favour of an all round reduction in armaments by international agreement?

	Yes	No	Doubtful/No Answer
Nationally:	10 470 489 (90.58%)	862 775 (7.46%)	225 901 (1.95%)
Sheffield:	132 406 (88.66%)	13 710 (9.18%)	3 231 (2.16%)
Attercliffe:	15 040 (88.83%)	1 556 (9.19%)	336 (1.98%)
Ecclesall:	19 082 (87.53%)	2 144 (9.83%)	574 (2.63%)

Question 3:

Are you in favour of the all round abolition of military, and naval aircraft by international agreement?

	Yes	No	Doubtful/No Answer
Nationally:	9 533 558 (82.48%)	1 689 786 (14.62%)	335 815 (2.91%)
Sheffield:	117 899 (78.94%)	16 630 (17.83%)	4 818 (3.23%)
Attercliffe:	13 780 (81.38%)	2 645 (15.62%	507 (2.33%)
Ecclesall:	16 251 (74.54%)	4 673 (21.44%)	876 (4.02%)

Question 4:

Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by international agreements?

	Yes	No	Doubtful/No Answer
Nationally:	10 417 329 (90.12%)	775 415 (6.71%)	366 421 (3.17%)
Sheffield:	126 268 (84.55%)	16 525 (11.06%)	6 554 (4.39%)
Attercliffe:	14 582 (86.12%)	1 602 (9.46%)	748 (4.42%)
Ecclesall:	17 605 (80.76%)	2 900 (13.30%)	1 295 (7.64%)

Question 5:

Do you consider that if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by -

(a) economic and non-military measures?

	Yes	No	Doubtful/No Answer
Nationally:	10 027 608 (86.75%)	635 074 (5.49%)	882 332 (7.63%)
	Christian Pacifist	14 121 (0.12%)	
Sheffield:	125 238 (83.86%)	8 755 (5.86%)	14 782 (9.90%)
	Christian Pacifist	572 (0.38%)	
Attercliffe:	15 326 (90.52%)	974 (5.75%)	632 (3.73%)
Ecclesall:	17 908 (82.15%)	1 278 (5.86%)	2 614 (11.99%)

(b) if necessary military measures?

	Yes	No	Doubtful/No Answer
Nationally:	6 784 368 (58.69%)	2 351 981 (20.35%)	2 405 334 (20.81%)
	Christian Pacifist	17 482 (0.15%)	
Sheffield:	87 127 (58.33%)	28 582 (19.14%)	32 910 (22.04%)
	Christian Pacifist	728 (0.49%)	
Attercliffe:	10 071 (59.48%)	2 925 (17.27%)	3 936 (23.25%)
Ecclesall:	12 797 (58.70%)	4 187 (19.21%)	4 816 (22.09%)

Sources: Branson, N, and Heinemann, M, Britain in the Nineteen Thirties, (1971) and The Independent 28.3.35, p7.

Chapter 3

Towards a United Peace Movement
From the Sheffield Esperantists' Peace Council
to Reactions to the Hoare-Laval Plan
(June 1935 - January 1936)

The extent to which the United Front controversy discouraged unity in the peace movement should not be exaggerated. The construction of a "Peace Front" was the common aim of almost all peace organisations. There was a shared belief that cooperation between peace groups expressed a quintessential common ground that those of differing ideological backgrounds could work in harmony. This was a liberal vision, which not all activists shared. There was a dichotomy in Communist intentions, for instance, between peaceful cooperation and revolutionary vanguardism through leadership by stealth. Unable to subscribe to a vision of harmony, some Left-wingers viewed cooperation as a political expedient, positively in the case of the Communists and their sympathisers, and negatively on the part of their opponents in the Labour Party. Most peace activists, however, accepted the need for coordinated action. Opponents of unity were able to thwart the creation of a coordinated peace movement because of their organisational roles within the Labour Party rather than within peace groups.

The success of the Peace Ballot encouraged other organisations, even those initially unenthusiastic about it, to take a more popular view of peace agitation. At the 13th CPGB Congress, held at the beginning of February, a speaker had suggested that the party must try to appeal "...to the millions now showing their passionate hatred of war in the Peace Ballot".[1] However, it was not simply the Peace Ballot that was responsible for this reinvigoration of the Peace Movement. Pressure came from the consolidation of the Hitler regime in Germany, the tensions between Italy and Abyssinia, the renewed skirmishing between China and Japan and the announcement in the Armaments White Paper of 5th March that Britain intended to rearm to counter these threats. In many of the politically conscious there began that sense of impending doom succinctly satirized by William Empson in "Just a Smack at Auden".

What was said by Marx, boys,

---

[1] "Congress Ends in Blaze of Enthusiasm", *ibid*, 6.2.35., p1

What did he perpend?
No good being sparks, boys, waiting for the end.
Treason of the clerks, boys,
Curtains that descend,
Lights becoming darks, boys, waiting for the end.

Several coordinating bodies emanating from different sections of the movement attempted to unify peace activists during 1935. Disapproval from the local Labour leadership ensured that they led an ephemeral existence but they had a lasting importance in convincing that leadership that the forces of cooperation, which they embodied, were irresistible.

(a) Sheffield and Eccleshall Cooperative Society Education Committee and the Sheffield Esperantists: During May 1935 the Sheffield and Eccleshall Cooperative Society Education Committee organised a joint conference for Saturday 1st June "...to support peace, oppose Fascism, and show that Esperanto does both".[2] The meeting was presided over by Councillor J.H. Bingham[3] and the speakers included George W. Roome and Horace J. Clayton. Two resolutions were passed unanimously. The first reflected the new urgency felt by peace activists following the Government's announcement of its plans for rearmament on 5th March and Germany's announcement on 16th March that it was to reintroduce conscription. It was internationalist in tone and condemned war preparations and rearmament by Britain and other countries. It pledged those at the conference to resist these developments and, picking up a theme that was to become an important plank of the peace policy of the time, to refuse to participate in the anti-gas drills which were the mainstay of civil defence preparations.[4] Like many others on the Left, the proposers viewed this renewed militarism with alarm and condemned what they

---

[2] "Sheffield Cooperators and Fascism", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 130 July 1935, p4

[3] Bingham, a former accountant victimised for his socialist principles who became a WEA lecturer, is credited by Pollard with an important role in the growth of left-wing adult education in Sheffield through his founding of Hillsborough Cooperative Fellowship in 1921. Pollard, S., The History of Labour in Sheffield, Liverpool, 1959, p263

[4] "Anti-Gas Drill Refusal", The Independent, 3.6.35., p4. Precautions were seen as inherently fascist: "Fascism represents the stage of development where all machinery of the state has to be overhauled and people disciplined to handle the terrific fighting apparatus and to suffer stoically the awful results necessary to successfully prosecute a modern war". "The Disarmament Conference", The Manor and Woodthorpe Review - The Organ of the Manor Community Association, July 1934, p42

saw as the fascist tendencies evident in the Government's attitude to civil and political liberties. Finally they regretted the money spent on armaments rather than on "social and educational needs" and pledged themselves to try and interest "the organised workers of Sheffield" in opposition to such war preparations.

The second resolution, headed "Esperanto and Peace", stressed their view of the centrality of "...the widest learning and use of Esperanto amongst the workers, in order to spread international thought and action as against the present nationalistic reaction". Limited educational opportunities for working-class men and women restricted access to foreign language teaching and made direct contact with individuals whose first language was not English difficult. Before the dominance of American culture made English the second language of many continents, learning Esperanto offered an opportunity to converse with like-minded individuals anywhere in the world. The ideological appeal to those committed to an internationalist perspective is clear:

> Harry Bramwell, Transportman, is to be found in every part of the world's surface. My hopes, ambitions and ideas are repeated in the persons of black, brown, yellow, and white workers, and in-so-far as my correspondence and travels have informed me, their problems are mine and their disability is the same system of society in varying degrees of intensity.[5]

It was a common theme of peace activists that personal contact between individuals could circumvent international tensions between nation states. To many working-class autodidacts Esperanto was, therefore, the embodiment of the internationalist peace movement.

Horace J. Clayton was one such individual. Conscripted into the cavalry during the Great War, he remained active within the Esperanto movement in Sheffield all his life and even in his nineties was on the Executive Committee of the Sheffield Esperanto Society.[6] Clayton worked in the Sheffield Corporation Transport Department where the Esperanto movement was particularly strong[7] and taught an Esperanto class for the Cooperative Education Committee. Clayton's views put him on the left of the Cooperative Party. The conference's suggestion that a coordinating Peace Council

---

[5] "Am I Proud to be an Englishman?", The Sheffield Transportman, October 1939, p13
[6] Interview with Horace Clayton, 26.3.87.
[7] The Sheffield Transportman had a lesson in Esperanto in each issue.

should be formed was treated with the same suspicion by those within the Labour establishment as had been the efforts of the BAWM. The Sheffield Cooperator was careful to distance itself from the sentiments expressed but only the report in The Daily Worker makes it clear why Clayton met with such discouragement. Not only was William Joss, Communist Party leader in Sheffield, at the conference but also "the vigorous member of the Youth Movement" who urged the formation of such a council was none other than Murray, who had caused the Handsworth Ward Labour Party such trouble only six months before.[8] Clayton's letter to the STLC asking the Executive to receive Bingham, Roome and C.W. Evison to discuss the formation of a Central Peace Council could not, however, be ignored in the way similar appeals had been the previous year.[9] Clayton was working within an organisation already under the Labour umbrella.

Clayton remembered the atmosphere of this meeting as being hostile and the Cooperative Party Executive Committee minutes of two days later are unenthusiastic. The committee asked Evison to: "hold a watching brief in the development of the Council on behalf of the Executive".[10] The previous withdrawal of Bingham may reflect his position as a Councillor. STLC delegates were sent to meetings organised by Sheffield Esperantists in late July[11] and by Clayton on 31st August to discuss the same subject.[12] The STLC received a letter from the Cooperative Society announcing the formation of the committee on 5th November. The only evidence that such a committee actually came into being was a resolution published in December criticizing the Hoare Laval plan.[13] The Labour Party leadership's refusal to endorse the council was its undoing; it did not last into 1936. Although Clayton's efforts did not achieve much in themselves, they kept the name and the idea of the Sheffield Peace Council alive during 1935 and prompted an unwilling STLC Executive to recognise that the only way to reduce the threat that a Peace Council dominated by a United Front strategy posed to the Labour Party was for the STLC to take an initiative on the issue.

(b) Sheffield Youth Peace Council: Attempts to coordinate the youth and women's

---

[8] "Sheffield Has Big Anti-War Conference", The Daily Worker, 3.6.35., p2
[9] STLC Minute Books, 2.7.35.
[10] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minutes, 18.7.35.
[11] STLC Minute Books, 23.7.35.
[12] *Ibid*, 13.8.35.
[13] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 16.12.35., p6

peace organisations were more successful. Both sections held Armistice Day celebrations which attracted considerable notice. The political marginalisation of these groups allowed their cooperation across party and religious differences to appear less threatening to political establishments dominated by middle-aged men. Both the Labour League of Youth and the ILP Guild of Youth were, however, under scrutiny at this time because of the unorthodoxy of their views.

As with other coordinating bodies the inception of the Sheffield Youth Peace Council is difficult to trace. Although the University Peace Society may have provided the driving force, the letter advertising the 11th November meeting was signed by John W. Worrall for the Free Churches, D.J. Urquhart for the LNU Youth Group and W. Furniss of the Young Communist League.[14] The Daily Worker's report also mentioned the Cooperative Guilds.[15] Sheffield Youth Peace Council was formed after the city's free churches organised a youth peace rally at Brunswick Chapel on 31st May.[16] On 24th May the Young Communist League and Youth Front Movement, who had adopted a wider definition of the United Front, announced that they would join this rally. They were not particularly welcome[17] but enough common ground was discovered to allow the organisation of the November meeting. The rally received some welcome extra press coverage (welcome at least to the non-religious sections of the youth peace movement) when F. Lincoln Ralphs, the main speaker, was asked to leave the pulpit after declaring that: "...the statement that it was in the nature of man to fight was a damned lie".[18]

The Armistice Night meeting was preceded by two marches and wreath laying ceremonies, one by the main body of the meeting and one by the University Peace Society, which had already held a successful meeting within the University during the

---

[14] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 8.11.35., p6
[15] "Peace Meetings", The Daily Worker, 14.11.35., p2
[16] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 30.5.35., p6
[17] "Shock from the Pulpit", *ibid*, 31.5.35., p7
[18] Lincoln Ralphs was Sheffield's most famous ex-student, having become president and foreign secretary of the National Union of Students. Lincoln Ralphs did not hold conventional left-wing views. He had met Mussolini ("Mussolini Wants another Roman Empire", *ibid*, 8.10.35., p6) and while not favourably impressed he believed that conciliation was possible with Germany ("Germany Wants Our Friendship", *ibid*, 18.11.35., p4). He moved on to become a figure in the international student movement but remained occasionally active in the Sheffield peace movement.

morning.[19] The evening youth meeting was presided over by Mrs J. McLachlan, pacifist wife of a Unitarian minister and daughter of Revd Alfred Hall.[20] Despite the successful organisation of this meeting, the Youth Peace Council had to be reformed under new chairmanship the following year.[21]

(c) The Women's Peace Rally: Sensibly, in view of other committee's failures of continuity, women's peace organisations concentrated their efforts on a single event rather than on the formation of a coordinating body. The decision to organise a Women's Peace Rally had been taken in March immediately after the Peace Ballot and Dr Maude Royden was booked to speak.[22] The Ballot and the Rally were not, however, the only occasions in 1935 on which women acted collectively upon the matter of peace.

Women's sections of opposition political parties regularly discussed peace matters. Peace was viewed as a "women's issue" partly because it related to the education and upbringing of children and partly because developments in aeroplane technology had increased the threat to the civilian population. The Yorkshire Women's Liberal Federation Spring Conference met in Sheffield in April 1935. Not only was the Stresa Conference, at which, following the abortive Nazi coup in Austria, Britain and France had hoped to reach an understanding with Italy, one of the main talking points but the treasurer of the Federation, Mrs S. Ingham, made a speech questioning the militaristic nature of the Jubilee festivities.[23]

The National Labour Women's Conference held in Sheffield in May also discussed peace issues. Grace Coleman, prospective Labour candidate for the Hallam Division, urged support for the League of Nations Covenant. The Daily Worker had already reported that three resolutions on the peace question had been removed from the agenda because they contravened the rule that resolutions discussed at conference within the last three years could not be reconsidered.[24] It also reported loud protests when the

---

[19] "University Notes", *ibid*, 5.11.35. & "Peace Society", The Arrows, No 21 December 1935, p51
[20] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 8.11.35., p6
[21] *Ibid*, 4.4.36., p6
[22] *Ibid*, 14.10.35., p6
[23] "Women Cry Out For Peace", *ibid*, 11.4.35., p4
[24] "Labour Women Want Unity", The Daily Worker, 4.5.35., p6

"chairman" [sic] ruled that no discussion be allowed.[25] The Independent's report that one delegate had shouted that there ought to be a general strike in the event of war reflected the fact that many constituency activists had not accepted the Southport Conference decision.[26]

An emergency resolution was moved protesting against the Government's air-raid precaution proposals. Labour women were particularly concerned about the introduction of air raid and gas drills into schools which they viewed as an attempt to "create a war mentality in children". They believed that the process was part of Government efforts: "...to work up a war scare to secure support for the increased Air Force". Underlying their concerns was the fear that these drills were part of a creeping fascism. The mover of the resolution said that: "...if their babies were accustomed to think such things were necessary they would become necessary".[27]

By the time the Women's Peace Rally took place in November the brave hopes which had existed in the aftermath of the Peace Ballot had disappeared. Divisions within and between the various women's organisations caused the Women's Peace Rally organising committee to renounce the idea of passing a resolution advocating any particular peace policy from the platform. Their press announcement acknowledged these divergent opinions and stressed that the rally was not in answer to the Italo-Abyssinian crisis but had been planned long before.[28] Eighteen organisations helped to arrange the meeting. The list included: the National Council for Women, Sheffield Labour Women's Council, The Federation of University Women, the Women's Cooperative Guild, Sheffield Women Liberals, the Catholic Women's League, Sheffield District Unitarian Women's League, Toc H, League of Women Helpers, Girls' Life Brigade, Girl Guides and the Federation of Girls' Clubs.[29] The stress laid upon the meeting's non-political nature was successful in holding together this disparate group. By 18th October the Victoria Hall was fully booked and an overflow meeting had been arranged at Nether Chapel to which the proceedings would be relayed.[30] Like the youth

---

[25] "Labour Women in Conference", *ibid*, 16.5.35., p4
[26] "Labour Women's Conference", *ibid*, 16.5.35., p5
[27] "Protest Against Air Raid Drills", The Independent, 17.5.35., p5
[28] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 14.10.35., p6
[29] "Round of Sheffield", *ibid*, 2.11.35., p8
[30] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 18.10.35., p6

meeting in the evening, the rally was judged a success[31] but the organising committee disbanded as planned and the next major women's event, a peace march, was organised by a different group and was more oppositional in character.[32]

(d) The Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction: If the three locally generated efforts to coordinate the peace organisations could hardly be described as unmitigated successes, this one national effort had little impact. Lloyd George's plan for a Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction was announced in the spring of 1935 and the national conference to discuss the idea was heralded with much joy by The Independent who saw in it hopes of a Liberal revival. It was not, however, until the autumn that anything actually happened in Sheffield.

On 1st October it was announced that Harry Briggs had been appointed area organiser for the East Riding, for some reason with offices in Sheffield. Briggs' only intervention in public debate during the previous year had been a strongly anti-socialist letter[33] and, given that the only support the initiative enjoyed outside the rump of a fragmented Liberal Party came from elements within the Labour Party, the wisdom of his appointment is open to question. The Council's efforts to influence the General Election in November by endorsing candidates who accepted the Council's plans, caused offence nationally both to Free Churchmen, who had offered their support on the understanding that the initiative was non-party, and to the Labour Party who disliked any interference in their internal affairs. Locally both Alexander and Hoffman received the Council's endorsement.[34] Briggs defended the Council's actions: "The Council of Action was formed for two definite purposes only! To give practical expression to the anti-war spirit and publicly to acknowledge the responsibility of society for its less fortunate members".[35]

On 7th January 1936 area conferences were announced to reorganise the Council's work. Sheffield was not included and "General Topics" explained ruefully that this reflected lack of support from the area. The initiative survived into 1936 with a branch attempting to be started in Hillsborough in the summer, seemingly with the

---

31 "Hunger Bred Wars", *ibid*, 12.11.35., p4
32 "Sheffield Women's Peace March", *ibid*, 30.4.36., p5
33 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 17.12.34., p6
34 "Three Sheffield Adoptions", *ibid*, 4.11.35., p4
35 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 2.12.35., p6

support of Alexander despite the suspicions of the Executive of his local Cooperative Party.[36] The Council had little discernible influence on the local situation although efforts continued to form a branch in Sheffield.[37]

(e) The STLC Peace Committee: The attitudes of local Labour Party officials to peace questions were more complicated than their endorsement of the new national leadership after October 1935 suggested. Many of them held personal opinions in contradiction to the increasingly *pacificist* direction that the party was to take. Their attitudes were dominated, however, by a concern for party discipline and their preferred response was to avoid further embroilment with the peace movement[38] because it raised the spectre of a united front. Pressure from their membership ensured, however, that this was not an option open to them.

The demand for a peace conference, first made by AEU Branch 15 in a letter dealt with by the Executive on 7th May,[39] was repeated by the local branch of the Socialist League in June[40] and repeated again by Handsworth Ward Labour Party in a letter read to the Executive Committee on 16th July.[41] That same evening, having rejected Clayton's invitation to join Sheffield Peace Council, the STLC took their first decisive action on the issue of peace in the period and adopted Handsworth's suggestion to hold a conference.

The realigning of Labour's peace policy from war resistance to collective security did not meet with the approval of all constituency party and union activists. S. Sharrard, a delegate for the Transport Workers, expressed his own opposition in a public condemnation of both the national policy and the STLC conference:

> I would venture to enquire how much longer the National Labour Party is going to be allowed to halt between two or more opinions on the grave and vital matter of peace and war, and how much longer definiteness, decision, and direction be denied the ordinary rank and file members who are seeking guidance and relying upon a leadership which back conviction

---

[36] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 4.6.35. & 2.7.35.
[37] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 4.6.37., p6 & "Primate's Ruling on ARP", *ibid*, 16.7.38., p15
[38] STLC Minute Books 25.2.36.
[39] *Ibid*, 7.5.35.
[40] *Ibid*, 18.6.35.
[41] *Ibid*, 16.7.35.

> with courage and rates ideals and principle above political expediency and practice.[42]

Sharrard claimed that many delegates were disgusted at the "hesitancy and evasion" with which the Labour Party had treated this issue. Reflecting the local strength of feeling, the conference passed, alongside the obligatory motion deploring war and pledging delegates to try and prevent it, a resolution calling for the formation of a peace committee of 12 members under the auspices of the STLC.[43] It was the election in the following year of the proposer of this motion, Charles Darvill, as President of the Trades Council, which brought the council's policy more into line with Sharrard's views and increasingly into conflict with the policies of the national leadership.

Discussion on the formation of a peace committee at the September delegates' meeting revealed a serious split. An attempt to refer the matter back to the Executive succeeded by one vote.[44] The Executive decided that: "...in the light of the recent decision on War and Peace made at the Brighton Conference" it would be better not to form such a committee. There was one dissentient vote, probably F. Green who had seconded Darvill's motion at the conference and had been involved in the discussions with Clayton.[45] The decision not to proceed was accepted by the delegates' meeting in October.[46]

The issue, however, refused to go away. Once again fear of losing the initiative to other organisations prompted the Executive to reopen discussions. The trigger in this case was the letter from the Cooperative Society announcing the formation of Clayton's Peace Council. Darvill was invited to visit the Executive on 3rd December and explain his idea of an STLC Peace Sub-Committee. He succeeded in persuading them to accept his view. The decision to form such a committee was formally passed the following week[47] and announced to the delegates at their December meeting.[48] By this time peace matters had taken on greater urgency with the leaking little more than a week before of the Hoare-Laval plan, whose appeasement of Italian designs on Abyssinia had offended

---

[42] "Our Readers' Views", The Independent, 18.9.35., p10
[43] STLC Minute Books, 17.9.35.
[44] *Ibid*, 24.9.35.
[45] *Ibid*, 8.10.35.
[46] *Ibid*, 22.10.35.
[47] *Ibid*, 10.12.35.
[48] *Ibid*, 17.12.35.

all sections of *pacificist* opinion. The first Peace Committee of the STLC was elected at the Annual Meeting in February 1936, significantly the same meeting that elected Charles Darvill President.

While these attempts to promote united action in pursuit of peace were an expression of political tensions within Sheffield, particularly on the Left, the development of the peace movement in the city during the second half of 1935 cannot be understood without reference to attitudes within the peace movement to the Abyssinian War, the introduction of air raid precautions and the impact of the peace issue on the General Election.

The War in Abyssinia:

The threatened attack by Italy on Abyssinia hung over all the events of 1935. The incident manufactured by the Italians to excuse their intervention in Abyssinia occurred on 5th December 1934 and the actual invasion began on 3rd October 1935. During the first part of the crisis in the early months of the new year the threat of war in Africa helped to build up both the numbers and the effectiveness of those working for peace. However, once the League of Nation's role as arbiter between the two parties had failed and the focus of world attention had become the means by which the Covenant could be enforced upon a belligerent Italy, the crisis highlighted underlying divisions between *pacificists* and their pacifist allies in Sheffield, as elsewhere. This was a defining moment for the peace movement for the worsening international situation also limited its ability to take initiatives and forced it increasingly into a reactive role.

The official League of Nations Union position was plain. In seeking to uphold the validity of the League ideal, the Union had to support sanctions against a transgressor. The vicar of St George's Parish Church, Rev B. Fountain Hinde expressed the view that he: "...would rather see the League attempt to apply moral and economic sanctions and be smashed in the attempt than do nothing. Better to die honourably than to fade out as effete and useless".[49] Branch officials of the LNU were painfully aware, however, of the gulf that the Peace Ballot had revealed between support for the general aims of the League and support for specific economic and military sanctions. Lyon, Secretary of and the most active speaker for the Sheffield LNU, wrote:

---

[49] "Vicar's Letter", St George's Parish Magazine, August 1935, n.p.

> "I am inclined to think that some kind of sanctions must be employed when a nation defies the collective authority of the League of Nations," he said, "but do not let us mistake this system of sanctions for the building of world peace. You cannot build world peace on sanctions. The success of the League will be the infrequency with which sanctions are imposed."[50]

Other LNU speakers were less gentle with those harbouring doubts about sanctions. Captain Philip Mumford, addressed Hallam and Sheffield Branches on 26th October: "It is illogical and immoral for people to say they are in favour of the League of Nations and then oppose action against Mussolini."[51] Mumford's choice of the word "immoral" targeted the churches for it was among them, at least in Sheffield, that the outcry against sanctions from within the Union was greatest.

Anglican ministers, traditionally amenable to the concept of a "just war", did not find themselves in difficulty over this issue. The Bishop wrote in October:

> We must abide by the covenants we have made; otherwise all chance of avoiding war in the future will disappear. If to attain this end other measures are necessary, I shall support them if taken by the League of Nations as a whole, though I cannot support any action taken by our country alone.[52]

This was the Government's position and, since France was extremely concerned about its relationship with Italy,[53] there was no chance that Britain would be called upon to participate in punitive action. Dr Burrows' support for the League did not, however, rule out the use of force. In refusing to support Sheffield Peace Week the following year on the grounds that he was not opposed to rearmament, he continued to take a pro-Government line but, despite the increasing antagonism of the Government to the League, he remained president of the LNU's Firth Park Branch (which was formed in

---

[50] "Not Foundations of Peace", The Independent, 11.11.35., p7

[51] "The 'Brigand'", *Ibid*, 26.10.35., p7

[52] "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXI No 10, October 1935, p3

[53] The French Government had in fact signed a secret military agreement with Mussolini during the negotiations which Mussolini believed gave him virtually a free hand in Abyssinia in return for the demilitarisation of the Franco-Italian border. Medlicott, N., "The Hoare Laval Pact Reconsidered" in David Dilks (ed), Retreat from Power, Studies in Britain's Foreign Policy of the Twentieth Century, Vol 1, 1906 - 1939, London, 1981

1935) throughout the period.

Many within the Nonconformist community were also prepared to accept the *pacificist* concept of a "just war" even if they could not accept that the Italo-Abyssinian War constituted sufficient cause.[54] There was, however, a vociferous minority, headed in this crisis by nine Unitarian ministers, who were: "opposed to the application of military sanctions and to war under any circumstances".[55] According to the Peace Ballot results in Sheffield about 80% of pacifists opposed economic sanctions as well, since they inflicted hurt on the innocent within an aggressor country. The local NMWM's letter on the subject of the war restated this belief.[56]

It was to become obvious by the end of the decade that these views tended towards an extreme isolationism since they precluded any action that might influence events. Although Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence combined pacifism with pragmatic political action, both admiration and criticism of him was coloured in Britain by the particularities of the situation in India.[57] Richard B. Gregg's book The Power of Non-Violence which applied Gandhi's methods in a Western context had appeared in September 1935 and was to become influential in pacifist circles.[58] Gandhi's views were discussed at a meeting about Abyssinia in December but Sheffield's pacifists do not appear to have offered a practical alternative to the application of sanctions.

Pacifist speakers preferred to concentrate on long-term panaceas which had little practical application. The Revd Alfred Hall, one of the signatories of the pacifist letter, having assigned to Mussolini the very practical motive of distracting the Italian people from their own economic problems by his invasion of Abyssinia, concluded his sermon

---

[54] "Free Church Notes", The Independent, 27.8.35., p11

[55] "Hear All Sides" , *ibid*, 22.10.35., p6

[56] *Ibid*, 21.10.35. p6

[57] "Gandhi has greater power in India today than has Great Britain, and his power is not the power of Imperialism, but is much more akin to the power of that evangelism which is of Christ." Benson Perkins, E., "Imperialism or Evangelism", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 492 June 1936, p13

[58] Ceadel writes that non-violence had achieved a brief prominence in 1931 - 2 following reports of Gandhi's campaign in India but that it did not achieve real popularity until 1936 after Gregg's book had been published and "...disarmament and collective security had both been seen to fail". (p101) Gregg's thesis was that a trained corps of resistors could inhibit and embarrass the soldiers ordered to deal with them, writes Ceadel. Gregg had considerable influence on the PPU during 1936 - 37. Ceadel. M.. Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, The Defining of a Faith, Oxford, 1980, pp250 - 251

on the crisis with the plea that: "Nations must be lifted out of the economic morass up to the moral level".[59] The Free Churches were the LNU's main constituency for corporate membership and this opposition to sanctions presented considerable problems. Five corporate members of the Sheffield Branch of the LNU failed to renew their subscriptions in this year and while no record remains of why these organisations left, this was the largest number of corporate resignations in any year during the period.[60] Not all members, either individual or corporate, who opposed the use of sanctions resigned or indeed were encouraged to do so. Lyon wrote to the press after the Abyssinians had been conquered to stress that disagreements over sanctions had not changed the LNU's commitment to inclusivity: "Pacifists who find themselves in disagreement with the official sanctions policy are earnestly invited to continue their activities in the Union and to concentrate, as in past times, on the constructive aspects of the Covenant".[61]

In Sheffield most of the leadership of the local Labour Movement accepted the change of policy from war resistance to collective security. President of the 1935 TUC Margate Conference was William Kean, a Sheffielder and Secretary of the small Gold, Silver and Allied Metal Workers' Union. Kean earned considerable opprobrium in the national press for a presidential address which indicated that support for collective security under the League of Nations demanded a willingness to contemplate collective military action to prevent Italian aggression.[62] Before the upheavals at Brighton local officials lower down the hierarchy were wavering between the policies of war resistance and collective security. A.E. Hobson, STLC President, revealed his own confusion:

> Mr Hobson described war in any circumstances as futile and rotten. Within the last few weeks, he said, they had had men within their own party who had become feverish. He thanked God there had been little response from the rank and file.
> The Labour Party stood by the League of Nations because it was the only machine whereby nations of the world could discuss international disputes. It realized the League had made grave errors, that it was a most ineffective machine and that capitalist psychology pervaded its relations.
> He believed that Christianity and war were incompatible. War was a concentration of all the horrors, crimes and sufferings of which human nature was capable.

---

[59] "The War Mind", The Independent, 26.8.35., p7
[60] Annual Report of Sheffield Branch of the League of Nations Union, 1935 & 1936
[61] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 13.7.36., p6
[62] "Mussolini's Rapacious Assault on Abyssinia", The Independent, 3.9.35., p4

> Within the next few weeks they would have to make up their minds where they stood. If they did not stand by their principles Socialists would destroy all the noblest and best for which they stood.[63]

Once the party's decision to stand by collective security was re-affirmed at the 1935 Conference, however, the STLC Executive loyally attempted to keep the party behind it. Fred Cartwright, one of Sheffield's delegates to the Labour Party conference, writing to The Independent before leaving for Brighton to re-state his support for a general strike against war,[64] indicated that not all members shared the Executive's commitment to unity above policy.

The full implication of war resistance was an acceptance of revolutionary defeatism. The date given by F. Atkins, a communist, for his conversion to war resistance was significant:

> War means that the people of my class, the workers, are asked to become cannon fodder. Well there was a Peace Ballot: 11,000,000 said "No" and voted against war. I said that in 1917 and meant it. No more war for me.[65]

Revolutionary defeatism had, however, been discredited by the destruction of left-wing institutions by the Nazi Party after 1933. To be effective war resistance demanded that the actions of the workers of one of the belligerent countries would be reciprocated by those of the other. The Left underestimated not only the level of support which the Fascist dictators enjoyed in their own countries, but also the deleterious effect that the destruction of democratic institutions had wrought on the ability of internal forces opposed to fascism to resist. Miliband, in his highly critical account of the Socialist League's opposition to the move away from war resistance, highlights the fact that this point was made in the TUC's justification of the new policy War and Peace.[66] War resistors' analyses of the Italo-Abyssinian War were unrealistic:

> The workers of these countries [Italy, France and Great Britain] can rely on their own power for peace, as the British dockers did when they refused to load ammunition for Poland in 1920; and that such action

---

[63] "Work in Armaments", *ibid*, 16.9.35., p5
[64] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 19.9.35., p6
[65] *Ibid*, 26.8.35., p6
[66] Ralph Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism, A study in the Politics of Labour, London, 1961, p221

> would have an immediate response, towards strengthening opposition to war, within Italy itself can be confidently estimated in view of such events as the mutinies in the barracks of Milan, Venice and Sulmona... mass desertions in Julian, Venetia and Eritrea; fights between regulars and Fascist militiamen; peasant revolts; demonstrations at railway stations and docks; fraternisation between Italian artillery men and Abyssinians.[67]

The colonial nature of the Italo-Abyssinian War compounded the difficulties of the Left in producing a coherent response. Labour Party proponents of collective security like Kean, viewed the Abyssinian problem in a pragmatic light:

> Italy's aggression if it goes unchecked, will have graver consequences; it will destroy the foundations of the League system; it will intensify the dangerous tensions that exist in Europe, and in the Far East; and it will give Fascism a fresh lease of life.[68]

A.J.P. Taylor has described the discussions within the Labour Party as: "the most savage controversy ever known within the ranks of the Left".[69] Whilst this may have been true amongst intellectuals, in Sheffield neither party records nor press coverage bear this out. Sheffield's Labour Left looked ideologically towards the Communist Party who had defined the Abyssinian War not as an imperialist war between capitalist states, but as a colonial conflict. The issue did not thus raise the thorny problem of the supersession of war resistance by collective security because support for the Abyssinians, despite the unpalatable nature of their regime, was an act of solidarity with an oppressed people.[70]

Those on the left who viewed the Italian invasion of Abyssinia as an "imperialist" war saw no moral grounds for the intervention of other capitalist powers since such a view rendered the apparent moralism of the League's position no more than the self-interest of a satiate cartel:

> ...We also realize that if Italy were prevented by any means from carrying out her plans for the conquest of Abyssinia, other capitalist nations - France and Great Britain - would be ready to step in and "colonise"

---

[67] "Our Readers' Views", The Independent, 25.9.35., p10
[68] "Mussolini's Rapacious Assault on Abyssinia", *op cit.*
[69] A.J.P. Taylor, The Troublemakers, Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792 - 1939, London, 1957, p188
[70] Branson, N., *op cit*, p139

Abyssinia themselves.[71]

This view was shared by political and Christian pacifists. Frank Dawtry of the NMWM wrote that his organisation: "...considers the definition of an 'aggressor' to be an entirely false one when every Power holding Empire by force is equally guilty of aggression".[72] While Joan McLachlan, expressing the views of Nonconformist pacifists, added: "The present crisis, with its gangster dictators occurred because the member states of the League did not take seriously their primary task of seeking justice and fair play, but worked first for national and selfish ends".[73] It was within the ranks of the pacifist ILP, therefore, that the Abyssinian War caused the greatest chaos and after 1935 the ILP was not listed in The Sheffield Yearbook as having Branches in the city. The secretary of the local Socialist League (which also opposed the sanctionist viewpoint) lived in Rotherham until Percy Hargreaves took over the role in the last months of the group's existence. While a "Monthly Open Forum" planned for March 1936[74] suggests that this organisation did keep some kind of local presence, neither it nor the ILP had a separate political identity outside of the communist-inspired agitation for a united front. Indeed, the activities of both groups in Sheffield at this date may be an indication of Communist manipulation. Friedensen's public support for sanctions against Italy in a speech in Stepney, prominently reported in The Daily Worker less than ten days before it was announced that he had joined the CPGB, can hardly be see in any other light.[75]

Once the invasion of Abyssinia began on 3rd October, there was little renewal in Sheffield of protests made vociferously in August and September. There was a reluctance in the peace movement to argue in favour of war. Grace Colman, prospective Labour parliamentary candidate for Hallam, did voice the full implications of Labour's policy contending that Britain should be prepared with other League of Nations countries to use force to stop Italy attacking Abyssinia.[76] Colman illustrates, however, what opponents saw as the inherent contradiction in the Left's *pacificism* for she was also a strong opponent of rearmament and had attacked the Government's armaments

---

[71] "Our Readers' Views", The Independent, 3.9.35., p10
[72] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 21.10.35., p6
[73] *Ibid*, 6.4.36., p6
[74] "What's On", The Daily Worker, 19.3.36., p8
[75] "ILPer Defends Sanctions", *ibid*, 21.10.35., p2
[76] "Women's Notes", The Sheffield Cooperator, Oct 1935 No 132, p5

policy in April and June. The Bishop of Sheffield fulminated against the perfidy of Italy but was careful not to commit himself to direct action ahead of the National Government.[77]

The leaking of the Hoare-Laval plan attracted a few protesting letters to the local press and condemnatory resolutions from the STLC[78] and Clayton's Peace Council.[79] Dr L. du Garde Peach, speaking in Sheffield at the Painted Fabrics premises, a sheltered employment scheme for the disabled of the Great War, found hope in the strength of public reaction against Hoare-Laval and in favour of the League's principles: "In Europe during the last 24 hours two Governments in two of the strongest nations in the world have tottered. It would have been an incredible thing before the last war."[80]

The plight of the Abyssinians, however, raised none of the intense excitement generated by the war in Spain a few months later. George Fell, a regular Liberal correspondent to The Independent's letter column pointed up the latent racialism which European attitudes to African affairs conveyed:

> We have been in the habit of loosely referring to these nations as "coloured" - black, brown or yellow - and not only of not taking them seriously but also of overriding them without the least compunction as soon as their interests conflict with ours. Italy's attitude to Abyssinia is a typical case in point.[81]

An unconscious racial superiority allowed peace-activists to retreat into isolationism. G.R. Mitchisson, main speaker at the Sheffield Labour Conference on peace in September and prospective candidate for one of the Birmingham constituencies, was reported as saying: "This time there was a possibility they were going to be asked to fight again for a principle. It was not called democracy. It was called collective security. It was not gallant little Belgium; it was dingy little Abyssinia".[82] Those in the peace movement might question whether Abyssinia's autocratic and ramshackle government was worth defending but Abyssinia's "dinginess" was a matter of colour and its

---

77 "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXI Nos 11 & 12, November and December 1935, p3
78 STLC Minute Books, 17.12.35. & "A Sinister Power Behind France?", The Independent, 18.12.35., p7
79 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 16.12.35., p6
80 "Brought Hope of Fame", *ibid*, 20.12.35., p5
81 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 15.10.35., p6 & 30.7.35., p6
82 "Work in Armaments", *ibid*, 16.9.35., p5

remoteness from Britain was measured not in miles but in empathy. Even the LNU headquarters' Alec Wilson remarked that: "It would not perhaps have mattered so much what happened in Africa but for the fact that there was the principle of the League at stake".[83] Councillor W. G. Robinson at a Cooperative Party meeting about Abyssinia in August commented on the lack of interest in international affairs. Only the Reverend Charles Peveril Pitt of Nether Congregational Church attempted to organise any practical aid for the Abyssinians.[84] The Independent's concern that not even the meagre sanctions proposed by the League should damage Sheffield's trade had its counterpart within the peace movement. The coincidence of self-interest and the requirements of peaceful co-existence, namely a willingness to sacrifice other people's interests to the desires of aggressor nations, much commented on after Munich, began in Manchuria and continued in Abyssinia.

The issues that divided Sheffield's pacificist Left, however, both internally and from its *pacificist* allies were not in general raised by its responses to the Abyssinian War. It is necessary to turn to the issue of Government instructions on Air Raid Precautions to local authorities in July to find the seeds of the conflict within *pacificism* between ideological and pragmatic considerations.

Air Raid Precautions:

Fears of mass air raids using high explosives, gas and bacteriological warfare techniques were widespread as a leaflet from the NMWM. in September[85] and letters to the press from Alderman Thraves in July[86] and L.W. Henderson of the Woodcraft Folk in August, reveal.[87] Early attempts by the Government to provide Civil Defence measures against air attack, however, met with considerable opposition from within the Labour Movement. Sheffield's Labour Party leaders were faced with reconciling their opposition to war preparations with the need to ensure the safety of the city's population. While Alderman E.G. Rowlinson, Labour Leader of the City Council, expressed doubts about the efficacy

---

83 "The League and War Danger", *ibid*, 24.1.36., p7
84 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 30.4.36., p6
85 "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 3.9.35., p6
86 *Ibid*, 9.7.35., p6
87 "Horror of Gas Bombs", *ibid*, 30.8.35., p10

of anti-gas training for civilians after his own wartime experiences[88] (attracting the unwelcome support of local Communist Party leader, William Joss[89]), the Labour Group on the Council opted for a pragmatic approach in sending delegates to a conference at Leeds on ARP in November.[90]

Other sectors of the Labour Party took an opposing view. An apocalyptic vision of air warfare, assiduously cultivated by the peace movement, encouraged the view that ARP was, as Tom Eaton said to the Brighton Conference, expensive to implement and futile once carried out.[91] Ideological objections were grouped around the belief that ARP was a symptom of capitalism's movement towards a fascist phase. Hoffman, Labour candidate for the Sheffield Central Division, stressed that encroachments on individual liberty might in the end lead to conscription. The STLC had put forward an amendment to a resolution on air raid precautions for the Brighton Conference even before the Government's circular was issued. Within a fortnight of the circular coming out Norton Ward Labour Party asked that a resolution be put calling upon the Labour Group on the City Council to refuse to implement the air raid circular.[92] The first Delegates' meeting after the circular passed such a motion unanimously. The resolution was moved by Mrs Green and seconded by C.S. Darvill.[93] In August the STLC received a circular from the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party recommending that local authorities should give effect to the Home Office's suggestions. The STLC refused to accept this advice and passed a resolution to City Council's Labour Group explaining their decision. By the next meeting of the Executive Labour's Head Office

---

[88] "Plan a Ghastly Farce", *ibid*, 11.7.35., p1. Accounts of Rowlinson's war service were a repeated feature of contemporary biographical notes. The pride both he and his colleagues felt in his service record (volunteered 1914, twice wounded and gassed severely enough to permanently damage his health) reflected an older left-wing tradition, going back to the French Revolution, of service in a citizen army. This was to make something of a comeback in the propaganda of the Second World War but was another indication of the gulf between the local Labour leadership and the young, anti-militarist radicals during the later inter-war years.

[89] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 12.7.35., p6

[90] Parliamentary and General Purposes Committee, Sheffield City Council Minute Books, 25.9.35.

[91] Brightside DLP stressed that while "...not opposed to proper precautions being taken" they insisted "...that no action be taken on Air Raid Drill, being convinced of its utter futility." Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 18.9.35.

[92] STLC Minute Books, 23.7.35.

[93] *Ibid*, 30.7.35.

had replied: "...that the Government's policy had rendered air raids a possibility. and it was foolish to take any other view and local representatives must have some consideration for people in their charge".[94]

This attempt to ally criticism of the National government with acceptance of its instructions failed to placate the STLC and on 27th August the Delegates' meeting supported the Executive's reiteration of their belief that the Labour Group should not cooperate with the Home Office on ARP.[95] The Trades Council's hope that Annual Conference would support the Sheffield Party's view was not fulfilled. Its amendment was defeated leaving the local party in conflict with national policy.[96] This division, promoted in part by the Left's prioritisation of domestic opposition to the National Government over pragmatic defence considerations, was to be repeated and continued over rearmament, National Service, conscription and, to an extent, the war itself.

The General Election:

Sheffield LNU's own effort to maintain the momentum of the Peace Ballot was a Summer Campaign, organised to coincide with the declaration of the national results on 28th June and encompassing eleven meetings during the fortnight from 24th June to the 7th July.[97] The campaign was not, however, the success that the organisers had hoped for and did not help to stem the loss of LNU membership which continued into 1936. The Reverend P.M. Medcraft, presiding over the final meeting in the Victoria Hall, regretted the small audience,[98] while the Bishop of Sheffield bemoaned the inadequate support that the LNU was receiving from Sheffield's Christian community.[99]

Although the campaign was not well organised,[100] the greatest handicap was externally imposed. The dispute between Abyssinia and Italy was reaching crisis point and it had become obvious that, as Colonel J.E.M. Forty, Area Organiser for the LNU,

---

[94] "New Labour Protests at Raid Drill Plans", The Independent, 28.8.35., p7
[95] STLC Minute Books, 27.8.35.
[96] "Air Raid Plans: Sheffield Protest", The Independent, 3.10.5., p7
[97] "General Topics", The Independent, 9.7.35., p6
[98] "Summer Peace Campaign", *ibid*, 8.7.35., p7
[99] "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXI No 5, May 1935. p4
[100] Information arrived late at the churches and it was questioned whether weekday, indoor, evening meetings were likely to succeed in the summertime. "Free Church Notes", The Independent, 25.6.35., p4

pointed out, strong action was required if the ideal of collective security was to be maintained.[101] The use of military forces under League of Nations' auspices had been the least popular option in the Peace Ballot. Just five months later, the LNU was already paying the price for its failure, in the interest of inclusivity, to promote its own *pacificist* approach. The Independent revealed its own fears about the consequences of Britain and other League powers acting against Mussolini's war preparations.[102]

After one of the meetings[103] Labour Alderman Frank Thraves, District Secretary of the TGWU, ex-President of the STLC and future Lord Mayor contrasted the space given over in the local press to militaristic celebrations of George V's Jubilee with the little space devoted to peace meetings.[104] He was voicing peace groups' concerns that children and adults were being fed a diet of militarism through the press, cinema and schools and that this bore disturbing similarities to the culture of fascist states. It was a shrewd thrust. The Independent had organised a readers' trip to Duckworth Air Display and, despite its Liberal traditions, had been indulgently reporting reviews of both the Navy and Royal Air Force. "General Topics" blustered indignantly about newsworthiness and public interest, but his reply revealed that the paper was no longer editorially in sympathy with the aims of the LNU on either disarmament or collective security.[105]

As a bid to influence both Governmental and public attitudes to the League of Nations, the Peace Ballot's biggest test was the General Election which took place some nine months later on 14th November 1935. With four of the Conservative's seven seats back in the hands of Labour, The Independent expressed the view that the Conservatives had done worse in Sheffield than in the country as a whole. Was this the result of the local Conservative Party's opposition to the Peace Ballot?

In fact the Conservative vote in Sheffield was only 1.9% lower than in the country as a whole (see Appendix, p135). The 1929 General Election had suggested that five seats were natural Labour territory (they missed regaining the fifth of these seats in 1935 by only 420 votes) but Sheffield's Conservatives still captured over half of all votes

---

101 "Strong Action Needed", *ibid*, 27.6.35., p7
102 "General Topics", *ibid*, 2.7.35., p6
103 "General Topics", *ibid*, 8.7.35., p6
104 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 9.7.35., p6
105 "General Topics", *ibid*, 9.7.35., p6

cast in 1935. It was the distribution of these votes which allowed the Labour Party to take more seats. Given the strength of the Labour movement in the city, the result was, from a Conservative viewpoint, a creditable performance.

The city's peace organisations found it difficult to intervene in the General Election. Divisions over the Abyssinian crisis, which had deepened after Italy's invasion, ensured that there was no political consensus amongst peace activists. Labour Party support for sanctions against Italy created problems for pacifists to whom the party had been a home. The non-party status of the LNU, the largest peace group within the city, prevented its direct intervention and other organisations involved with the peace movement were too small to have an impact. Nevertheless, it was inevitable, with war in Africa and the National Government's initiatives on rearmament and air-raid precautions, that the fear of war would be used by both sides as an electioneering weapon:

> We are told day in and day out that a vote for the National Government means war, for the Government desires to "repair the gaps" in our forces and such action, it is held, must lead to a further arms race and inevitable war.
> We are told day in and day out that a vote for a Socialist candidate means a vote for War, for the Labour Party would endeavour to close the Suez Canal, an act which must lead to war with Italy, a war, it is asserted, which would soon involve the whole of Europe.[106]

The Labour Party's problems at the election were exacerbated both by the impression of confusion over international affairs given by the shake out of the pacifist leadership of Lord Ponsonby and George Lansbury which had occurred only weeks before, and by the apparently tough stance taken by the Government at Geneva against Italy's Abyssinian adventure. Only after the disclosure of the Hoare-Laval plan a month later did it become obvious that the new leadership of the Labour Party was rather more serious about the idea of collective security than was the Government. During the election campaign the differences between the parties' policies were less than clear. The electoral effect of the Peace Ballot was, therefore, the temporary adoption by the Conservatives of a pro-League stance for the duration of the campaign. A.V. Alexander commented ruefully on this theft of Labour's clothes:

"If it had not been for the Peace Ballot and a complete change of the

---

106 *Ibid*, 11.11.35., p6

> Government policy at Geneva, I don't know where we should have been," he said. "We should possibly have been sitting back allowing Abyssinia to be gobbled up by Mussolini and finally have found that we were only paving the way for another dictator to cause trouble.
> It is during the last few weeks, and then only, that the Government have adopted the resolutions of the Labour Party Conferences year after year since 1919."[107]

Alexander was the Labour movement candidate in Sheffield most concerned with defence. He attacked the Government's rearmament plans and accused them of having allowed the international situation to deteriorate.[108] The Anglo-German Naval Agreement, announced on 19th June 1935, had bilaterally defied the Versailles Treaty and allowed Germany to build submarines again. Although not yet using the word "appeasement", Alexander accused the government of encouraging Italy: "...Britain making a separate agreement on naval matters with Germany had led to Italy thinking it could act as it had done".

Conservatives stressed the pacific intentions of rearmament and expressed moderate approval of economic sanctions while dismissing the need for military action.[109] They attacked the Labour Party for being willing to risk a war with Italy and yet not being willing to countenance rearmament.[110]

The local LNU intervened in the contest using the Peace Ballot method by sending out a questionnaire asking candidates about their attitudes to League of Nations' issues:[111]

> 1. Will you support the use of the whole collective force of the League to put an end to the Italian aggression in Abyssinia?
>
> 2. When the Italo-Abyssinian crisis is over,
> (a) Do you agree that the all-round reduction and limitation of armaments by international agreement, including the abolition of "aggressive weapons" should still be the aim of British policy, and will you urge his Majesty's Government to put forward proposals to this end for acceptance by other nations?
> (b) As part of the disarmament plan to be put forward by his Majesty's

---

107 "New Stampede", *ibid*, 14.10.35., p7
108 "Blank Cheque Again", *ibid*, 1.11.35., p7
109 "Modern not Swollen Armaments", *ibid*, 30.10.35., p7
110 "Three Sheffield Adoptions", *ibid*, 4.11.35., p4
111 This was part of a national intervention by the LNU in the General Election. Waley, D., British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War, London, 1975. p41

Government, will you support proposals for the total abolition of the military and naval air forces of all nations in conjunction with international control of civil aviation?

3. (I) Are you in favour:
(a) of the elimination of private profit from the production of armaments, or
(b) of removing the evil effects attendant upon private manufacture of armaments by measures of public control?

(II) Will you urge his Majesty's Government to use the machinery of the League of Nations for the purpose of securing agreement to remove or reduce national restrictions upon international trade, and to promote international economic cooperation in order to eliminate potential causes of war?

(III) Will you urge his Majesty's Government to use all their influence to promote social justice and improve conditions of labour through the International Labour Organisation in all parts of the world?

Each of the seats was a straight Conservative-Labour contest and the replies, which were printed without comment on 12th November, revealed that the apparent measure of agreement concealed considerable differences of opinion. Of seven Labour candidates, six answered "yes" to all questions. Some amplified their replies. George Lathan (Park) reminded readers that he was a member of Sheffield LNU. Grace Colman (Hallam) and P.C. Hoffman (Central) pointed out that all these policies were consistent with Labour policy.[112]

The exception on the Labour Party side was C.H. Wilson (Attercliffe) who replied to Lyon's questionnaire with his own pacifist opinions rather than those of his party.

"The use of the whole of the collective force of the League" involves the use of (a) military force, and (b) the possible infliction of great suffering upon wholly innocent men, women and children.
I am opposed to the use of military force under any circumstances and for any purpose whatever. Once such use begins no one can tell to what it will grow.
I am opposed to the deliberate infliction of suffering on innocent people. I support the withholding of all financial assistance and of all material useable for military purposes.

---

112 "League Union Questions", *ibid.* 12.11.35., p3

Wilson was one of several ex-Liberals who had joined the Labour Party after the Great War whose attitudes remained radical rather than social-democratic. He quoted Gladstone without embarrassment[113] and his enemies described him, as they had described his father, as a "Little Englander".[114] The moralism of Wilson's attitude to foreign affairs was highlighted by his answer to the first question:

> I find it very difficult to disentangle the Abyssinian question from Article 13 of the Treaty with Italy of 26th April 1915, and from the far wider question of the partition of Africa, whereby about 96 per cent of its area was before Italian aggression to all intents and purposes under white control and to too large an extent, exploitation.

The unfairness of the post war settlement, particularly with regard to Germany, had been one of the main strands of Labour Party foreign policy since the Versailles Treaty of 1919. However, irrefutable allegations of brutality and repression against Germany and Italy after their fascist governments had come to power, and especially their suppression of trade unions, had left both countries with few sympathisers on the left by 1935. Wilson like other pacifists, however, tended to see the immorality of Versailles more clearly than he perceived the immorality of Hitler and Mussolini. Wilson viewed imperialism from a eurocentric perspective and while pointing to Britain's untenable moral position with regard to colonies,[115] failed to perceive that the solution he appeared to advocate, the redistribution of African colonies in favour of Germany and Italy, was from the point of view of the indigenous peoples an equally immoral response. The handing over of a black population to a brutal regime with a theory of racial superiority should have been repugnant to someone whose pacifism rested upon moral idealism. That it did not was due in part to Wilson's germanophilia and in part to the fact that Wilson's eurocentricity was based upon an unconscious sense of racial superiority. Defending Germany from the strong criticism provoked by Hitler's announcement of conscription on 18th March, Wilson asked readers of The Independent to put themselves in Germany's place:

> Let us suppose that we had been defeated in the Great War, and had been compelled to sign the Treaty of Versailles. That Treaty signed not only by

---

113 "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 19.3.35., p6
114 *Ibid*, 21.3.35., p6
115 "Mr C.H. Wilson", *ibid*, 19.9.35., p7

> the great nations but by Chinese, Cubans, Peruvians, Liberians, Nicaraguans and many others, compelled Germany to admit that she alone was responsible for the war, and in effect that her people were the outcasts of civilization.[116]

In Sheffield it is difficult to discern the influence that either peace issues generally or the LNU's intervention had on voting patterns. Stevenson and Cook find that in constituencies either with a high percentage of military voters or dependent on steel and susceptible to rearmament orders the swing to Labour was below the national average.[117] In Sheffield, however, Labour, which had attracted seven percentage points more support at the 1931 election than the national figure, improved on this at the 1935 election to record a ten per cent lead over an improved national vote. It is difficult to relate this to specific peace issues. Wilson, with views totally at variance with official Labour Party policy, secured the largest majority while Alexander, the most "warlike" of Labour's candidates achieved the second highest. Of the other successful Labour candidates, George Lathan took a directly opposed view of Germany to Wilson and was the Labour Representation Committee's member of the World Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi Council.[118] Within the Sheffield party none of these three positions enjoyed great popularity.[119] The only close contest, that in Central Division, went the Conservative way although Hoffman, the defeated Labour candidate, had on several occasions demonstrated an interest in foreign affairs and was a mainstream supporter of Labour's League policy.

The Conservative Party candidates' replies reveal that, despite the National Government's tough line in the Geneva discussions, the League of Nations had only conditional support among sitting Conservative MPs. All candidates expressed

---

[116] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 19.3.35., p6

[117] Stevenson, J., & Cook, C., The Slump, London, 1977, p255

[118] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 7.5.35., p6. Formed in November 1934, the Council presaged two of the directions in which anti-fascist activity would move. It was an early example, in Sharon Gerwitz words of, "...a united front representing religious and labour organisations from 13 different countries", and also a pattern for the manner in which the originally exclusively Jewish response to Nazi anti-Semitism would be taken up by non-Jewish groups. Gerwitz, S., "Anglo-Jewish Responses to Nazi Germany, 1933 - 1939: The Anti-Nazi Boycott and the Board of Deputies of British Jews", Journal of Contemporary History, 26 (1991), p262

[119] e.g. The STLC Executive resolved on at least two occasions during 1935 to do nothing to further the boycott of German goods with which Lathan was associated. STLC Minute Books, 8.1.35. & 4.6.35.

opposition to the principle underlying question 3(I)a on the private manufacture of arms and most had reservations about the further restriction of the arms trade under 3(I)b. Excepting Pike (Attercliffe) and Sir Arthur Shirley Benn (Park), the candidates were unwilling to go further than economic sanctions against Italy. Although all but Pike appear to have been in favour of the demilitarisation of the air, neither Shirley Benn nor Louis Smith (Hallam) provided answers that can be entirely related to the wording of individual questions.

Historians are agreed that the National Government's apparent commitment to the League did the Conservative vote no harm.[120] Similarly, some historians have suggested that the Labour Party's policy on peace which combined a recent commitment to collective security with a continued opposition to increased armaments expenditure was unhelpful to their electoral chances.[121] Nationally the Peace Ballot had the opposite effect to that intended by its organisers. In alerting the Conservative Party to the popular support which the League enjoyed, it prevented debate about the differences between the attitudes of the two major parties to collective security.[122] At the same time its inconclusiveness failed to commit the National Government to collective *pacificist* ideals.

Summary:

The local legacy of the Peace Ballot lay outside of parliamentary politics. The effect of its demonstration of successful cooperation across ideological divides was to promote a largely locally-based activism. This reflected an increasingly urgent response to external events augmented by an impetus towards inclusivity common to groups promoting peaceful co-existence which coincided amongst sections of the Left with a diminishing antagonism towards those of their political opponents prepared to adopt a

---

[120] "The Labour Party might complain... but since they could offer little choice on the chosen issue, which was dominating public attention, a victory for the National Government was almost a foregone conclusion." Thompson, N., The Anti-Appeasers, Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s, London, 1971, p85.

[121] John F. Naylor believes that the Labour Party would have been in greater difficulties during the election had Baldwin not chosen, against Chamberlain's advice, to soft-pedal the rearmament issue. Naylor, J. F., *op cit*, p116

[122] David Waley writes that rumours were rife in the run up to the election that the Conservatives only intended to be tough on Italy until the voting was over. Waley, *op cit*, p42

policy of joint action to counter the threat from fascism. The antagonism of the Labour leadership ensured that *ad hoc* efforts at coordination were most successful on the periphery of the movement. The impetus for joint action was, however, too powerful for the Sheffield Labour Party to resist and under pressure from its membership it made its own bid for leadership through coordination by forming a peace sub-committee. As the leadership feared, this was to promote the views of those in disagreement with national party on a range of issues that went much wider than foreign policy.

Almost simultaneously responses to the Abyssinian War revealed the fundamental policy divide within the coalescing peace movement between pacifists and *pacificists*. The concentration in the work of a number of historians on the divisions within the Left over this issue, which at a national level led to the emergence of a new *pacificist* Labour leadership, was not reflected in Sheffield despite the local prominence of C.H. Wilson as a pacifist Labour MP. This was because the local dissident Labour Left was influenced by the sanctionist views of the communist party rather than the anti-sanctionist policies of the ILP or Socialist League. The divisions within the Left, which were being highlighted by the new issues such as the introduction of ARP, reflected tensions between a pragmatic gradualist outlook and a more ideological activism. Within the peace movement it was among the membership of the LNU, and particularly by Nonconformist clergy, that objections to sanctions were best publicised. Since the Conservatively inclined press were also unenthusiastic about measures against Italy, this presaged difficulties for the local LNU which was attempting to retain both its right-wing and its pacifist membership.

Britain's position as an imperial power undoubtedly strengthened pacifists' moral objections to the imposition of sanctions but also engendered the racial attitudes which resulted in a lack of empathy with the Abyssinians. This was to stand in marked contrast to the passionate reaction to the plight of the Spanish Republicans. *Pacificists* combined, therefore, a largely unenthusiastic endorsement of both the Abyssinians' cause and the sanctions that would have promoted it with an unwillingness to alienate those opposed to sanctions by the promotion of an effective vision of collective security. This very much mirrored attitudes delineated by Birn within the national LNU Executive a couple of years earlier during the Japanese incursions into Manchuria.

In Sheffield, the failure of nerve on the part of the pro-League sanctionists, who preferred to concentrate on the creation of an inclusive peace movement, was to

encourage the production of policies which amounted to little more than generalised statements of good intent. This ensured that the inclusive coalition for peace, which was to grow up during the early months of 1936, was cemented together by nothing more concrete than the undemanding precepts that war was bad and that those who engaged in it should not be allowed to prosper from it. This reflected the wider experience of organisations such as the National Peace Council that were attempting to unify the peace movement nationally at this point.

Despite the key role that the debate on foreign policy played in the General Election of 1935 it is difficult to substantiate the view that the peace movement in Sheffield contributed significantly to its outcome. Thanks to the complete disappearance of the Liberal Party as an electoral force, the Conservative vote held up relatively well although the local party's antagonism to the peace movement had been thrown into sharp relief during the Peace Ballot. Meanwhile the Labour Party recorded a performance considerable better than in the nation as a whole, notwithstanding an obvious division between local Labour candidates on the peace issue and the threat that the election of the party would pose to armaments orders. No discernible similarity of attitude to the peace issue unites candidates who did well in Sheffield in the election. It must be concluded therefore that while broad differences between the parties' attitudes to foreign policy, partially successfully obscured by Conservative rhetoric, played a part in voters' choices, the selection of individual candidates on the basis of their views on the peace issue, which the LNU attempted to promote through their questionnaire, was not a significant feature of the election.

Chapter 3, Appendix: General Election Results in Sheffield and Nationally:

Sheffield General Election Results 1935: (72% Turnout)

Attercliffe:

Cecil H Wilson (Lab)	18 663
Cecil F. Pike (Nat Con)	11 034
Majority	7 629

Brightside:

Fred Marshall (Lab)	18 985
Hamer F. Russell (Nat Con)	13 467
Majority	5 518

Central:

W. W. Boulton (Nat Con)	13 828
P. C. Hoffman (Lab)	13 408
Majority	420

Ecclesall:

Sir R. Geoffrey Ellis (Nat Con)	22 819
Kenneth C. Brooks (Lab)	8 173
Majority	14 646

Hallam:

L. W. Smith (Nat Con)	21 289
Miss G. Colman (Lab)	10 346
Majority	10 952

Hillsborough:

A. V. Alexander: (Lab)	21 025
J.G. Braithwaite (Nat Con)	17 271
Majority	3 304

Park:

George Lathan (Lab)	21 153
Sir Arthur Sherley Benn (Nat Con)	19 947
Majority	1 206

Sheffield General Election Results 1931: (All Seats Conservative: 80% Turnout)

	Con	Lab	Communist	New Party
Attercliffe:	15 153	15 020	2 790	
Brightside:	20 270	15 528	1 571	847
Central:	21 589	13 213		
Ecclesall;	Uncontested			
Hallam	26 852	7 807		
Hillsborough:	23 819	17 319		
Park:	26 592	15 783		

Sheffield General Election Results 1929: (76% Turnout)

	Con	Lab	Lib	Communist	Winning Party
Attercliffe:	6 190	19 152	4 652	1 731	Lab
Brightside:	9 828	20 277	6 612		Lab
Central:	13 281	19 183			Lab
Ecclesall:	17 165	7 983	5 898		Con
Hallam:	18 920	12 133			Con
Hillsborough:	10 489	20 941	5 053		Lab
Park:	13 597	20 304	5 560		Lab

Percentage Votes by Party for General Elections 1929, 1931 and 1935:

	Con	Lab	Lib	Communist	New Party	Other
1929						
Sheffield:	37.4%	50.2%	11.6%	0.7%		
Nationally:	38.2%	37.1%	23.4%	0.3%		1.0%
1931						
Sheffield:	59.9%	37.8%		1.9%	0.4%	
Nationally:	55.2%	32.2%	10.7%	0.3%	0.2%	1.2%
		(1.6% Nat Gov)	(10.2% Nat Gov) - Total Nat Gov share 67%			
1935						
Sheffield:	51.8%	48.2%				
Nationally:	53.7%	37.9%	6.4%	0.1%		1.9%

Sources: The Independent 15.11.35., p7, & The Sheffield Year Book 1936

With the exception of Louis Smith who died in 1938, the successful candidates remained Sheffield's MPs throughout the period.

Chapter 4:

Bringing Everybody In

From Reactions to Rearmament to the First Phase of the Spanish War

(February - December 1936)

The complex questions raised by the Abyssinian War about what Britain's attitude should be to unprovoked aggression were a pattern for the dilemma of the peace movement during the rest of the thirties and the cause of a fundamental breach between pacifists and *pacificists*. Events in 1936 continued to draw attention to the division.

Addis Ababa fell to the Italians ironically during Sheffield's first Peace Week and the annexation of Abyssinia by Italy was reported on 6th May. Efforts by Conservative MPs to force the lifting of League sanctions on Italy, first reported in Sheffield just four days after Addis Ababa fell, rekindled the heat in the debate on both the League and sanctions. Although the majority in the peace movement was clear about the necessity to continue with sanctions, there was strong opposition both from the pacifists within the movement and Conservatives outside. The Independent called for the removal of sanctions as early as 11th May.[1] The LNU attempted to bring pressure on the government by a petition to the Foreign Secretary. In June it had a resolution asking that: "...the existing sanctions should be maintained or intensified" endorsed by League of Nations societies from 29 countries available for signatures in the Victoria Hall.[2] Politicisation of the sanctions issue encouraged comment from political parties. Sheffield Liberal Federation Executive, which was closely aligned with the LNU, unanimously passed a resolution expressing, in Freeborough's characteristic style: "...profound disappointment that the Government, having joined in the policy of sanctions, should now ruthlessly betray the League of Nations and surrender itself to the clamour of violence and aggression".[3]

At a joint Labour and Cooperative Party meeting held on 5th July A.V. Alexander continued an attack on those who wished to lift sanctions, which he had begun on 8th May.[4] Pacifist opposition to sanctions was highlighted, however, in

---

[1] "General Topics", The Independent, 11.5.36., p6
[2] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 12.6.36., p6
[3] "Liberals to Fight Sanctions Betrayal", *ibid*, 3.7.36., p7
[4] "Sheffield Labour Meeting Urges Government to Resign", *ibid*, 6.7.36., p7

advance of the meeting by C.H. Wilson's withdrawal from the platform.[5] C.F. Pike attempted to exacerbate Labour Party differences by demanding of Alexander after his 8th May speech: "If your party had been in power would you have closed the Suez Canal?"[6] There was, however, little division within the mainstream of the Sheffield party to be exploited. No opposition to Alexander's meeting was expressed in the STLC minute books. The only evidence of support for Wilson's position from within the party comes from the Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books. Crookesmoor Women's Section objected to the fact that letters criticising the removal of sanctions had been sent by an Executive Committee consisting of two members and the President. The Management Committee, however, endorsed the decision of the Executive. Not a single vote was cast in favour of the Women's Section's complaint.[7]

If, within the political parties, there was an appreciation of the centrality of the question of sanctions to the issue of peace, outside of their constituency the end of the Abyssinian War evoked little passion. Even within the political parties there was little sign of genuine concern. Despite the entry of Russia into the League of Nations the previous year and the CPGB's decision to take a sanctionist view on the conflict, The Independent's report on 18th May of a Communist Party meeting in the City Hall "to make clear the Communist attitude towards war" contains no mention of the Abyssinians' defeat.[8] More startlingly, Percy Hargreaves of the STLC speaking at a Sheffield Peace Council Rally in Barker's Pool on 4th August, three months after the fall of Addis Ababa and a fortnight after insurgents had started the Spanish War, declared: "The biggest menace to world peace today was British Imperialism".[9] The Leaders' Meetings minute books of Howard Road Methodist Church, a corporate member of the LNU, show that Viscount Cecil's letter about sanctions provoked not a single comment either for or against.[10] The letters page of The Independent was not awash with public

---

[5] "Sheffield M.P. Explains", *ibid*, 1.7.36., p9
[6] "Open Letter to Mr Alexander", *ibid*, 11.5.36., p4
[7] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, Management Committee, 10.8.36.
[8] "Communists Meet to Signify Attitude Towards War", *ibid*, 18.5.36., p7. Unusually, The Independent appears to have accorded this meeting more significance than the Communist Party. The Daily Worker announced it as an untitled "Mass Meeting" and did not report on it.
[9] "Peace Recipes Advocated", *ibid*, 5.8.36., p5
[10] Howard Road Methodist Church, Minutes of Leaders' Meetings, 5.6.36.

indignation. Only one letter from a member of the public appeared urging a private boycott of Italian imports.[11]

Within the peace movement the impetus towards unity could only continue if the ramifications of this fundamental division between pacifists and *pacificists* were ignored. The renewed peace movement began to coalesce, therefore, around a shared opposition to rearmament, which essentially looked backwards towards the conditions of the Great War, at a point at which the leadership of the most important constituencies of the peace movement were already reluctantly accepting that rearmament was an essential component of the ability to enforce sanctions as the punitive dimension of collective security.

The inclusive grouping that the disarmament issue engendered could only remain cohesive while the issue of sanctions was ducked. Although *pacificists* played down the issue of sanctions within coordinating bodies, the divisions revealed by the Abyssinian War and the lack of majority support for the anti-sanctionist view among groups traditionally allied to the peace movement hastened the secession of pacifists into their own distinct organisation. Meanwhile the outbreak of the Spanish War, which more than any other single issue or event of the thirties crystallised for the Left the essential *pacificist* truth that war could be just,[12] moved the Left closer to the *pacificist* Centre and into more direct opposition to the pacifists.

Reactions to Rearmament:

The first Statement on Defence, issued in 1935, gave notice that British rearmament had commenced. Thereafter rearmament became an annual issue when the defence estimates were published and then debated in the House of Commons during February and March. The National Government had accepted the recommendation of the Defence Requirements Committee that rearmament was desirable as early as 1934. The Defence White Paper for 1935 proposed an expenditure of £124 250 000, an increase

---

[11] Letter from J. Alec Schofield, "Hear All Sides" . The Independent, 23.7.36., p6

[12] A.J.P. Taylor writes: "The sons of those who had been pacifists in the First World War fought, some of them died, in Spain. That is why there were no pacifists in the Second World War as nearly makes no odds. But though the Spanish war taught the Dissenters to fight, it also made them more hostile than ever to the National government." Taylor, A.J.P., The Troublemakers, Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792 - 1939, London, 1957, p194

over 1934 - 1935 of 9.3%, approximately twice the rate of increase that had occurred in the previous two years. There was criticism of rearmament from the Labour Party,[13] the Liberal Party and the League of Nations Union but the unorganised state of the peace movement, coupled with the heavy involvement of many activists in the Peace Ballot, muted comment. The 1936 Defence White Paper proposed an expenditure of £158 000 000, a further increase of 21.4%. A more active Sheffield peace movement was bound to react.

It was almost universally accepted that the arms race which had preceded the First World War had in part precipitated it. Britain's Foreign Secretary in 1914, Lord Grey of Fallodon, had stated: "The enormous growth of armaments in Europe, the sense of insecurity and fear caused by them - it was these that made war inevitable".[14] The rearmament of the later thirties invited comparison. C.H. Wilson wrote: "It is instructive to compare the increasing Estimates of the five years preceding the Great War (when there was no Air Force) with those of the last five years and with the present figure".[15]

The victors of 1918, having disarmed a defeated Germany, had not delivered on their commitment to a long-term reduction in armaments. The failure of the Disarmament Conference was believed to have destabilised Europe. A.V. Alexander said in March 1936: "If all the leading countries had done what they could in disarmament he doubted to-day whether Hitler would be in power in Germany".[16] Many within the peace movement, even within the LNU, clung to a vision of international disarmament. At an LNU public meeting during the debate that followed the publication of the 1935 estimates Lord Lytton spoke confidently of another disarmament convention which: "Would be held before the end of this year".[17] The Hallam Divisional Labour Party endorsed a letter a year later from the People's Mandate Committee asking for the government to commit itself to working for international disarmament as if this were totally consistent with the policy of collective security adopted by Labour's National Conference the previous October.[18] There was a gaping hole in the logic of many of

---

[13] Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Minute Books, 5.3.35.
[14] Grey, Edward, Twenty-five Years, London, 1925, Vol 1, p92
[15] Wilson C.H., "Expenditure to Obtain Security", supplement to The Voice, Vol 1, No3, April 1936, np
[16] "If This Were 1914 -", The Independent, 14.3.36., p7
[17] "Hint of Another Arms Convention", *ibid*, 12.3.35., p7
[18] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, Management Committee, 9.3.36.

those within the peace movement who continued to press for collective security coupled with disarmament. At the STLC peace conference of September 1936, Sir Charles Trevelyan, having accused both Hitler and Mussolini of bad faith and lawlessness within international relations, nevertheless suggested: "He saw no reason why Hitler should not be taken at his word when he asked for a 25 year pact". Such a pact, Trevelyan argued, could provide security and disarmament:

> "Even at this late moment, ...if we called Hitler's bluff and required Germany to disarm if others did so, I do not believe that Hitler could stand out alone against a world offering to Germany equality and security, but demanding in return the renunciation of any force."[19]

The argument that an amoral disregard of the conventions of international diplomacy could be rectified by diplomatic and moral pressure allowed *pacificists* to avoid the obvious conclusion that collective security against nations that would not accept international arbitration could only exist in the context of rearmament.

Amongst those peace activists who accepted that armaments had a part to play in a *pacificist* policy there was concern at the British Government's failure to close the Suez Canal to Italian supply ships. "Cantab" writing in The Independent's "Church of England Notes" voiced *pacificists*' concern about rearmament: "...Peace lovers are prepared to fight for peace, whereas those who believe in war are not ready to give battle in order to bring about peace".[20] If Britain's rearmed forces were not to be used in the interests of collective security, what was Britain rearming for? "We ought not to provide any additional ship, plane, tank or trained man", had said Alexander, "until we are told that".[21] The communists and their sympathisers feared what The Daily Worker claimed to have detected in a speech by Lord Londonderry in Berlin in February 1936 that rearmament was for: "...Alliance with Hitler Germany against the Soviet Union".[22]

On the wider left there was concern that rearmament, like ARP, was a tool by which capitalists hoped to move the political agenda to the right: "...The National Government's war plans, involving the "cooperation" of the trade union movement, are

---

[19] "Hitler is Helping Spanish Rebels", The Independent, 14.9.36., p5
[20] "When Peace Lovers Are Ready to Fight", *ibid*, 25.4.36., p10
[21] "Critic of Arms Programme", *ibid*, 15.2.36., p5
[22] "Government Prepares to Issue National Conscription Plan", The Daily Worker, 24.2.36., p1

the first step from the veiled Fascism of the Marketing Boards etc., to the open Fascism by which alone to-day a war can be waged".[23] C.S. Darvill, had no difficulty in persuading the National Union of Teachers' West Yorkshire Council that: "...It seemed very significant that the question of physical training in schools should coincide with increased war preparations".[24]

Nor was it difficult to point to other services upon which armaments money could be spent: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer takes so much money from the nation's coffers for war purposes that we have to have such things, dreadful things such as means test etc., which means so many hungry bellies and haggard faces".[25] Even in a town that stood to benefit economically from rearmament, arms spending was viewed as against the interests of the working class. Thraves said: "I cannot understand how a man who professes to be a Christian can make an apology for an increase in armaments".[26] Almost as soon as the rearmament plans were announced, H.F. Walker, District Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union's Sheffield Executive sent a letter of protest to the union's headquarters[27] and the STLC received protests from individual branches of the union.[28] Vulcan, industrial correspondent of The Independent, protested that a resolution circulating among steelworkers was attempting to revive the Shop Stewards' Movement:

> This mass meeting of the English Steel Corporation's employees "resolves to resist" the expansion of armaments outlined in the Government White Paper, and to "seize the opportunity" to fight for the restoration of cuts in the Engineering industry, and to "establish greater control by the Shop Stewards' Movement," and, in effect, calls for the Amalgamated Engineering Union to get a move on by calling a meeting to act.[29]

---

[23] "Postbag", *ibid*, 2.3.36., p4

[24] "Teacher Protest", The Independent, 30.11.36., p4

[25] Barnes, P., "Class Members Forum", The Voice, Vol 1, no6, July 1936, p11. This view was not, of course confined to the Left. The Sheffield Congregational Yearbook for 1935 contained an insertion "paid for by a friend of the year Book who earnestly desires the peace of the world" which quoted from Charles Sumner: "Give me the money that has been spent in War, and I will clothe every man, woman and child in an attire of which Kings and Queens would be proud."

[26] "Alderman Thraves at Civic Service", The Independent, 4.1.37., p3

[27] "Sheffield Engineers Protest over Dilution of Labour", *ibid*, 11.3.36., p5

[28] Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Minute Books, 7.5.35. & 17.3.36.

[29] "Resist Propaganda on Armaments", The Independent, 21.3.36., p12

Although efforts to revive wartime protests had little practical result,[30] there was no support for rearmament amongst trade unionists in the city despite falling unemployment figures. Antipathy to arms work was reinforced by enquiries into the arms trade which had accused private manufacturers of:

> ...Soliciting orders; bribing Ministers and officials; selling arms in whatever market they could find; playing Governments off against each other; subsidising armaments propaganda; purchasing and otherwise influencing the Press; creating scares and panics that keep the peoples in a state of constant anxiety and alarm.[31]

It was not only the Left who held these views. The Liberal Freeborough's polemics against armaments profits during the debates of both 1935 and 1936 were sufficiently telling for Vulcan, to launch a counter offensive. Freeborough's uncompromising moral stance: "I regard the production and sale of armaments as a grave blot upon our modern civilisation"[32] was a challenge to the respectability of Sheffield's industrialists from someone who had been for: "...Half a century closely involved in commercial business" in the city.

There were pressures on peace activists to modify their opposition to rearmament. Labour's October 1936 Annual Conference in Edinburgh supported a resolution that the armed strength of countries loyal to the League of Nations must be conditioned by the armed strength of potential aggressors. The pacifist Peace News commented: "There is a feeling of sheer pessimism and disappointment among many of the Labour Party delegates - even those who are not pacifists. It is felt that one more, and perhaps the biggest, obstacle to militarism has given in".[33] The resolution had been carried by the block votes of the union leaders with the majority of the constituency parties voting against it. In Sheffield, Grace Colman addressing a Labour Women's Advisory Council conference expressed her dissatisfaction that the resolution stressed the need for rearmament which could not, by itself, produce peaceful conditions: "It was much more important to try to get rid of the real grievances between nations likely to

---

[30] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 14.9.36. - It is not clear whether this conference actually took place. Hallam declined their invitation and no other reference to the event has been found.
[31] Noel-Baker, P., The Private Manufacture of Armaments, London, 1936, p558
[32] "Letters Page", The Independent, 12.3.36., p6
[33] "Labour's 3 to 1 for Arms", Peace News, No17 10.10.36, p1

lead to war".[34] The STLC went much further:

> That this delegates meeting of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council wishes to express its opposition to the resolution on rearmament passed at the Edinburgh Conference and we pledge ourselves to work wholeheartedly to persuade the National Executive Council to rescind this decision.[35]

The militancy of the STLC reflected a disillusion with party leaders on the issues of Spain and the united front[36] which led even the moderate A.E. Hobson, now STLC Secretary, to declare, "I am not prepared to defend the vacillating policy of the Labour Party at the present time".[37] In fact the Spanish War was already changing attitudes to armaments. Following the Report of the Royal Commission on the Private Manufacture of Armaments at least one Labour Party ward meeting called for the nationalisation of armaments production. Although the president began by urging: "...The need for staunch adherence to Socialist pacifist principles", the motion which was debated, which he seconded and which was carried unanimously concluded by contemplating conditional rearmament: "Further we consider that if international relations demand greatly increased armaments they would be produced more efficiently and economically in Government factories".[38]

The difficulty of reconciling collective security or even anti-fascism with a long-standing commitment to disarmament was not only being experienced by Labour activists. A Methodist meeting on Remembrance Day 1936 did not demur at Labour MP, Noel-Baker's call for a new disarmament conference and "the settling of our present troubles".[39] In the same month a Sheffield Liberal Federation day-school entitled "League Failure - What Next?", heard P.M. Oliver, ex-Liberal MP for the Blackley Division of Manchester, say that: "Liberals had to impress on the world the folly of rearmament".[40] There was among peace activists an unwillingness to forsake the easier slogans of disarmament for the more complex questions of an armed peace. In Sheffield by the end

---

[34] "Labour Critic of Party's Attitude to Armaments", The Independent, 19.10.36., p5
[35] STLC Minute Books, 24.11.36
[36] "Marchers Swing into Sheffield like Soldiers", The Independent, 24.10.36., p7
[37] "Trades Council Ire over Labour Policy", *ibid*, 25.11.36., p7
[38] Hallam Ward Labour Party Minute Book, 14.10.36.
[39] "Sheffield Plea for World Peace Conference", The Independent, 12.11.36., p7
[40] "Liberal Plan to Ensure World Peace", *ibid*, 23.11.36., p5

of 1936, only Alexander amongst the growing *pacificist* wing of the peace movement was willing to publicly state that disarmament should not be unilateral and that Britain had to retain sufficient armaments to fulfil the defence needs for collective security.[41] Even those leaders who had formulated the new policy found it very hard to use the dreaded "R" word. Ernest Bevin, himself, outlining in Sheffield in April what was to become official Labour Party policy in October, said: "There should be an examination set up to find how many arms were needed in the world to stop an aggressor and then commence disarmament to that point".[42] Given the rapid technological development of armaments at this time, the implication that collective security could be assumed to be compatible with a reduction in arms spending was frankly dishonest.

By 1936 the LNU nationally were moving towards a similar definition of collective security to that accepted by the Labour Party's NEC. Locally, however, LNU officials remained, like their Labour neighbours, committed to disarmament. E.G.G. Lyon, chief local LNU spokesman was to be found in both October and November using familiar apocalyptic prophecies of the destructive capabilities of air power to question the possibility of armed defence: "If the Chancellor was given 10 times the present amount to spend on armaments he could not assure defence for thickly-populated cities".[43] Even those who did not share the Left's anti-capitalism felt that rearmament promoted values antagonistic to their belief system. Freeborough wrote in The Sheffield Liberal:

> The Peace Ballot had its value but not sufficient to stop the unholy increase in Armaments and military preparations. With the increase the degrading policy of Protection accelerates its progress. The two ugly sisters MILITARISM and PROTECTION - always go hand in hand.[44]

The First Sheffield Peace Week and the Formation of the Sheffield Peace Council:

The first Sheffield Peace Week was a direct result of the second rearmament Defence White Paper. On the 25th February 1936 "University Notes" in The Independent reported that: "The Peace Society is conducting a campaign against the

---

[41] "Labour Would not Disarm", *ibid*, 23.11.96., p1
[42] "TUC and Rearmament", *ibid*, 23.4.36., p7
[43] "Defence Schemes", *ibid*, 16.10.36. p7
[44] "Message from J.H. Freeborough, President", The Sheffield Liberal, No 4 July 1935, np

Government's proposed rearmament scheme".[45] The campaign culminated in a meeting that criticised rearmament in line with the conventional analysis of the causes of the Great War and formed a committee to investigate staging a Peace Week. The Sheffield University Peace Society, which Jim Ashford reported "helped to found and run the Sheffield Peace Council"[46] may have become aware of the peace week idea[47] through the contacts its members had made in Britain and Europe. The Peace Week planning committee attracted a spectrum of support which amounted to a *de facto* united front. Ceadel suggests that after the ending of the BAWM, the CPGB continued its efforts to influence the peace movement through the formation of peace councils. In Sheffield Ashford's and later Bill Moore's involvement would seem to corroborate this. Besides Ashford, who was the secretary, there were the pacifists, Revd Alfred Hall. Unitarian minister of the Upper Chapel, his daughter Joan MacLachlan, and her husband, H. John MacLachlan, Hall's assistant. Mrs Freeman, wife of Arnold Freeman, represented the Educational Settlement. E.G.G. Lyon, indicated LNU support. Major R. Smith, the president, was a Liberal prominent in the local LNU. George Allison was leader of the local Communist Party branch. Basil Rawson spoke for the Woodcraft Folk. Dr A.M. Boase was a lecturer at the University. C.W. Evison sat on the local Cooperative Party's Education Committee and had connections in the Esperantist movement and Mrs Eaton was from the Labour Party.[48]

On 15th April it was announced not only that some Sheffield MPs would speak at the Peace Week Rally, but also that the Sheffield Education Committee had given permission for peace talks to be given in schools and for an exhibition of peace books in the Central Library. Douglas E. Moore, Honorary Secretary of the Sheffield Liberal Federation asked all his members to attend the Sunday meeting to hear Milner Gray of

---

[45] "University Notes", The Independent, 25.2.36., p4

[46] Letter to the writer, 22.11.90. Bill Moore describes the Sheffield Peace Council as being set up: "...mainly by the initiative of the [Communist] party" in Attfield, J. & Williams, S., 1939: The Communist Party and the War, London, 1984, p55.

[47] J.E. Ashford, "Our University Peace Movement Grows", The Arrows, No 23, June 1936, pp14 - 15. The article particularly mentions the Peace Society meeting in Brussels of January 1935, a similar meeting at Manchester the following February and the International Peace Camp organised in Derbyshire in the summer of the same year by the University Peace Society.

[48] "Peace Week Proposal: United Sheffield Effort", The Independent, 16.3.36., p3

the National Liberal Federation speak.[49] The STLC Executive agreed to support Peace Week and Ashford was allowed to address the committee on 21st April. The President and Secretary represented the council at the Peace Week Meeting of 2nd May and a speaker nominated by the Secretary was allowed to give a 15 minute speech to the STLC Delegate Meeting.[50] The Delegate Meeting was heated: "Mr Butcher speaking on the question of peace brought forth many aspects responsible for war, many of his remarks brought speakers to their feet".[51] Butcher was critical of Labour Party policy and criticised the Labour movement "for constantly preaching war".[52] Despite the divisiveness of the peace issue within their own ranks two Divisional Labour Parties signed the letter to the press asking for support for the Peace Week events.[53] Although response to the Abyssinian War had been muted in the city, the spring of 1936 was one of the highpoints of public concern over peace issues. Three Christian Pacifist public meetings held in Sheffield under Methodist auspices on 22nd March attracted a total audience of 8 700 people.[54]

For the nonconformist churches twenty-one ministers signed a letter endorsing Peace Week which appeared alongside that from the secular organisations. The Church of England, whose Bishop had refused his support, was notably absent. A surprising inclusion in Peace Week was W.W. Boulton, Conservative MP for Sheffield Central. Peace Week events reflected the diversity of those involved and no effort was made to coordinate the opinions expressed. At the first meeting on Sunday 26th April Milner Gray presented a militant vision of collective security:

> If the aim of this country were to fight for the rights of other countries, then the Government should have been as ready to defend Abyssinia as they would be to defend any other part of the Empire. That was what collective security meant.[55]

On Tuesday evening Dr A.M. Boase addressed the STLC. Boase asked those

---

[49] "Letters", *ibid*, 22.4.36., p6
[50] STLC Minute Books, 24.3.36 & 21.4.36.
[51] *Ibid*, 31.3.36.
[52] "May Day Outcry", The Independent, 1.4.36., p7
[53] Hallam and Attercliffe Divisional Parties both supported Peace Week. "Letters", *ibid*, 25.4.36., p6
[54] Revd E. Benson Perkins, "Christ and Peace", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 490 April 1936, p10
[55] "Britain Blamed for Italy's Breach", The Independent, 27.4.36., p7

present to realize that: "...The solution of the problem with regard to re-arming was in the hands of the working class and organised labour of the country".[56] Union leaders were concerned about the responsibility war resistance placed on their shoulders and the minutes of the STLC translated Boase's exhortation into the anodyne statement that he had: "...Urged the delegates to use every available effort in the interest of the Peace Movement".[57] Boase was not alone, however, in seeing significance in a Peace Week within one of the country's key armaments centres. The committee's letter advertising the week had stressed the point: "As Sheffield is a great centre for the manufacture of arms it is vitally important that people of peace and goodwill should unitedly express their convictions".[58] The Daily Worker's report of the first event was similarly headed "Peace Demand from Centre of Arms Industry". Boase himself did not elaborate on how the solution to the problem of rearmament lay in the hands of the workers but he did make the point, echoing the AEU, that rearmament would bring only temporary prosperity. Underlying Boase's speech there was a commonly held belief in the existence of a conspiracy against democracy which encompassed the British Government and the arms industry as well as the more obviously anti-democratic forces behind the German reoccupation of the Rhineland.

On Wednesday afternoon a women's peace march, organised by the Sheffield Labour Women's Advisory Council, walked from the Town Hall to Endcliffe Park. Representatives from church peace organisations, Sheffield University and the Cooperative Societies participated. Speaking in the park, Councillor Mrs E. Birch emphasized the costs and waste of war. "We Want Scholarships, Not Battleships", read one of the banners carried by the half-mile long procession.[59] Councillor Mrs A.F.M. Cummings likened the protests against war, which sought to protect the rights of children, to the suffrage protest which had drawn attention to the rights of women. "We women have wakened up, and we want the men to wake up as well," she concluded.[60]

---

[56] "After Arming - What?", *ibid*, 29.4.36., p7 49.
[57] STLC Minute Books, 28.4.36.
[58] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 25.4.36., p6
[59] "2000 Women March for Peace in Arms Centre", The Daily Worker, 30.4.36., p1
[60] "Sheffield Women's Peace March", The Independent, 30.4.36., p5 Cummings remarks interestingly link the two areas of feminism, equal rights feminism and maternalist feminism, identified by Jill Liddington in the peace movement of the period. Liddington, J., "Pacifism or Anti-Fascism", The Long Road to Greenham - Feminism and Anti-

Differences between the reports in The Independent and The Daily Worker are revealing. The Independent uses the word "women" and other words relating to maternal relationships, "sons, baby, children, grandsons, mother, toddling and maternity" 22 times in its 370 words (5.9%). The Daily Worker uses "women" just five times in the body of its 206-word text (2.4%) and uses no words relating to maternal relationships. The resolution passed by the women at the event (which was printed by The Daily Worker but not by The Independent) has no specifically female content other than to describe those supporting it as "women of Sheffield". It followed mainstream themes of Peace Week demanding a commitment to peace and disarmament, an end to the private manufacture of arms, and for the National Government to pledge itself to collective security. This suggests both that The Independent's emphasis on the feminine character of the protest was the result of its own preconceptions and that the perception of women's peace agitation during these years as overridingly domestic in theme may run contrary to the intentions of those participating.[61]

Thursday 30th April was the Youth Anti-war Demonstration at which Boulton spoke. Highlighting the contradiction between the LNU's desire for sanctions against Italy and its commitment to disarmament, Boulton disparaged the League and argued in favour of unilateral rearmament: "...It was for Britain to assert herself and to be strong".[62] He was "frequently interrupted". C.H. Wilson, in his speech which followed, asked whether adherence to the League of Nations Covenant required the proposed increase in armaments. Bill Furniss of the Young Communist League also spoke.

Peace Week ended on May Day weekend and coincided with the Communists' 1st May celebrations and the STLC's 3rd May Labour Day demonstration. Tensions

---

Militarism in Britain since 1820, London, 1989, pp152 - 171

[61] MacIntyre reports, however, that even in communist dominated "little Moscows", apart from the Vale of Leven: "...the female activist was excluded from direct participation in the mainstream of industrial politics; she was usually directed to subsidiary areas..." MacIntyre suggests that anti-war groups formed one of these subsidiary areas. MacIntyre, S., Little Moscows: Communism and Working Class Militancy in Inter-War Britain, London, 1980, p146. Liddington is critical of peace movement historians of the period who she accuses of remaining "...gender blind, uninterested in the 'separate spheres' which still so significantly shaped the lives of the great majority of women, and so much of their peace activity." The Daily Worker report suggests that some female activists on the Left were keen to play down these separate spheres in relation to peace activity. Liddington, *op cit.*

[62] "Peace Calls 'Lack Understanding'", The Independent, 1.5.36., p7

beneath the apparent harmony were revealed when Percy Hargreaves was disciplined by the STLC for addressing the communist meeting. He defended himself by claiming that he believed that the event had been organised by the Peace Week Committee. Despite the Labour Party's continuing difficulties over cooperation with other political bodies[63] they cannot have failed to notice that flagging attendances at the traditional celebrations had been boosted by public interest in peace. Their demonstration was reported to be: "the biggest for many years".[64]

Saturday's concluding act was a Woodcraft Folk Demonstration. In many ways the Woodcraft Folk's work among children paralleled that of the Esperantists among adults. They sought to: "...Uproot false traditions and prejudices from the minds of children and equip them with fit bodies and fit minds and a knowledge of things as they are - and why they are - to the end of bringing about world unity and peace".[65] David Prynn has described a pacifist trend within the Folk,[66] but in Sheffield they brought to the peace movement, besides their holistic vision and the endorsement of the well-respected Basil Rawson,[67] views in line with the mainstream of the left-wing *pacificist* movement.[68] More important to the immediate development of the peace movement in the city was the delegate conference which convened on the same day.

A correspondent writing to The Independent a few days earlier had already mistakenly referred to the Peace Week committee as the Sheffield Peace Council[69] and it can be assumed that, from the beginning, some participants hoped that a permanent committee would evolve from the initiative. Peace Weeks and Peace Councils were in the air in mid-1936. However, although the STLC sent delegates to the National Peace

---

[63] STLC Minute Books, 12.5.36.
[64] "Labour M.P. Hits at Government", The Independent, 4.5.36., p7
[65] "Letters", *ibid*, 1.5.36., p6
[66] Prynn, D., "The Woodcraft Folk and the Labour Movement 1925 - 1970", Journal of Contemporary History, 18 (1983), p89
[67] Rawson had founded the first Folk group in Sheffield in April 1929. Prynn writes of him: "Rawson's educational programme, progressive in method and imaginative in conception, soon brought him considerable stature within the movement." *ibid*, pp85 - 86
[68] Rawson himself made a *pacificist* distinction: "We shall not take arms in national wars." "Whither Youth", The Manor and Woodthorpe Review, Vol 1 No11, January 1935, p93
[69] "Letters", The Independent, 28.4.36., p6

Council's Leeds Peace Congress on 26th - 29th June,[70] it appears that the formation of the Sheffield Peace Council (which was already in existence by that date) was a local initiative with a distinctly left-wing agenda. The newly founded Peace News included an article on "The Method of the Peace Council" cautioning those involved in such organisations to restrict their remit to coordination and not to enrol members directly to the council nor to attempt to achieve a united policy.[71] If those in Sheffield needed any reminding of the last point, they received an *aide-memoir* at the conference from Luther Smith, headmaster of the Central Secondary School and a member of Sheffield LNU, who: "...disassociated himself from the principle of collective security by military means".[72]

So many of the 124 delegates wished to speak that the conference had to be reconvened two weeks later. At this meeting Sheffield Peace Council's objectives were officially defined:

> (1) To coordinate the work of the organisations in Sheffield that are determined to secure and maintain world peace.
> (2) To organise joint conferences, demonstrations and other activities in furtherance of peace.
> (3) To co-operate with local and national bodies having similar aims to those of the council.
> (4) To influence Governments in all that makes for peace.[73]

The Peace Councils' inclusivity was stressed by the choice of officers. The Rev. Donald Stuart, the chairman, represented the Methodist Church. Bill Moore, secretary, was from the CPGB and Capt. R. Smith, treasurer, was from the LNU. Writing for The Voice, Moore placed the Peace Council within the context of internationalist war resistance.

> It is therefore necessary that the peoples themselves should express their firm determination that they will not be deceived into taking part in any future war, and the Peace Council is the machinery which has sprung up spontaneously to express that determination.

The Peace Councils' purpose was to coordinate the peace movement so that the situation which Moore believed had existed in the recent past would obtain again: "Until

---

[70] STLC Minute Books, 30.6.36.
[71] G. James Joyce, "The Method of the Peace Council", Peace News, No2, 27.6.36., p4
[72] "Sheffield Minister Wants Them Banned", The Independent, 4.5.36. p7
[73] "Peace Council for Sheffield", *ibid*, 18.5.36., p5

recently it was taken for granted that any hint of a new war would so unite the peoples of every country in protest that no government would dare to take action".[74] For the Communist Party the Peace Council was the means in Sheffield by which war resistors could actively impede any British war effort outside of the framework of collective security.

The organisation's first campaign aim was to publicise and send delegates to the International Peace Campaign's conference at Brussels 3rd - 6th September 1936. The French-based IPC (*Rassemblement universel pour la paix*) had close connections with the French Communist Party but was also officially supported by the LNU in Britain. Viscount Cecil believed that the LNU's support for the IPC would enable weaker continental peace movements, particularly that in France, to bring the same type of pressure on their own governments as the Peace Ballot had in Britain. His opponents were concerned both by the duplication of function between local LNU branches and IPC-inspired Peace Councils and the extent of Communist influence in the IPC.[75] There is no evidence from Sheffield that the argument over involvement with the IPC was a local LNU issue at this point.

The value placed by the Communist Party on Sheffield Peace Council's activities in connection with the IPC is not in doubt. The Daily Worker's limited space was always in demand for coverage of the CPGB's campaigns and support for the IPC was soon displaced by a United Front campaign and Aid for Spain. In the short interval before this occurred Sheffield achieved prominence twice. On 23rd July the Council's appointment of delegates to the Brussels conference was referred to as: "...A good lead to other Peace Councils". While on 6th August a report of the Peace Council's meeting to commemorate the Great War appeared, stressing again their commitment to the IPC.[76]

The STLC Executive was concerned about the extent of communist influence within the Peace Council. The history of their attitude is difficult to follow since the Executive sought to portray its own peace sub-committee as an alternative to the proposed body and their minute books have a tendency to refer to it as the "Peace

---

[74] E.L. Moore, "Sheffield Peace Council", The Voice, Vol 1 No7, August 1936, p1

[75] References from Ceadel are: Ernest Bramsted, "Apostles of collective security: the LNU and its functions", Australian Journal of Politics and History, XIII, 3, 1967, pp347 - 64, and Birn, The League of Nations Union, Ch. 10

[76] "Big British Support for World Peace Congress" and "Peace Campaign Extends", The Daily Worker, 23.7.36. and 6.8.36.

Council". The sub-committee, however, refused to see itself in this fashion and recommended as early as 5th May that the STLC should affiliate if a Peace Council was formed. The Executive voted that this recommendation "be left in abeyance for the time being" but agreed to the calling of a peace conference of all the STLC's affiliated bodies. The President and Secretary were empowered to attend on 16th May "as observers only".[77] The Peace Council, keen to have the STLC on board, offered the President, Charles Darvill, the vice-chairmanship of the Council. This was declined.[78] A fortnight later the Executive received a letter from Labour Headquarters asking for details of the STLC's association with the "All in Peace Council". The matter was referred to the Peace Committee.[79] In July that body recommended once again that the STLC affiliate to the Peace Council. The Executive attempted to stick to their former line voting by 14 to 5 to put the following recommendation to the next delegate meeting:

> Believing that Socialism and Peace are indivisible the E.C. rejects the recommendation of the Peace Council to affiliate to the Sheffield Peace Council and suggests that the Trades Council Peace Committee immediately commence extensive activities and invite affiliations from Peace organisations affiliated to, or eligible for affiliation to the Council.[80]

The Delegates Meeting, however, rejected this recommendation and the STLC became an affiliate of the Sheffield Peace Council and sent its own delegate, Mrs Freda Wood to Brussels in September.

The Peace Council and the United Front cannot be divorced. Affiliation was part of a move by the STLC Delegate Meeting towards the Communist Party's ideological position which would eventually put it in direct opposition to mainstream Labour Party policy. Affiliation's most ardent supporters were close to the Communist Party position. Mrs Wood, for instance, was instrumental in bringing forward a motion that the Hallam Division support the United Front at the next National Conference. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that the debate over peace played no part in support for Labour affiliation to the Peace Council. The Hallam DLP Management Committee voted as early as 6th June that: "...The Trades Council and the Labour Party generally should

---

[77] STLC Minute Books, 5.5.36.
[78] *Ibid*, 23.6.36.
[79] *Ibid*, 6.7.36.
[80] *Ibid*, 21.7.36. This quotation is the origin of J.W. Mager's title. There is an irony in the fact that these words prefaced a refusal to join the Sheffield Peace Council.

affiliate to the Peace Council and work wholeheartedly for peace". The committee's commitment to peace was not proscriptive, however. It instructed its delegates: "...to press for immediate action either separately or through the present Council" [the STLC's Peace Committee]. On 13th July, a fortnight before the STLC, Hallam voted to join the Peace Council but at the same meeting rejected Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party on the casting vote of their chairman and decided not to join a communist protest against the Unemployment Assistance Board by seven votes to three.[81]

Other sections of the Labour Party took a loyalist view. Brightside DLP voted on 13th June not to affiliate to the Peace Council.[82] The city's Cooperative Party Executive Committee had taken a similar decision ten days earlier.[83] The STLC Peace Committee, although in favour of the Council, continued to function autonomously and promoted a peace meeting addressed by Sir Charles Trevelyan on 12th September and an Aid for Spain meeting addressed by Alderman W. Dobbie on 5th December.[84]

The Peace Council's campaign to send delegates to the Brussels Peace Conference provided both local publicity and a unifying aim. A letter to the press on 29th July outlined the IPC's Four Points:

> 1. Restoration of the Sanctity of Treaty obligations;
> 2. Reduction and Limitation of Armaments by International Agreement, and the Suppression of Profit from the Manufacture of Arms;
> 3. Strengthening of the League of Nations for the prevention and stopping of war by the more effective organisation of Collective Security and Mutual Assistance;
> 4. Establishing within the framework of the League of Nations of effective machinery for remedying by peaceful means of internal conditions that might lead to war.[85]

This inclusive list of aims provided something for everyone in the peace movement and was deliberately unclear as to whether such terms as "strengthening" implied any commitment to military sanctions. The Sheffield Peace Council had adopted the coordinating role previously filled by various *ad hoc* bodies and the campaign linked

---

[81] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 8.6.36. & 13.7.36.
[82] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 17.6.36.
[83] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book 1927 - 1939, 4.6.36., p210
[84] STLC Minute Books, 28.8.36. & 17.11.36.
[85] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 29.7.36., p6

meetings from the anniversary of Britain's declaration of war in August to Armistice Day in November.

Reports of the first meeting demonstrate that Labour opponents of the leadership's policies were exploiting the Peace Council to publicise their continued adherence to both war resistance and a united front. Hargreaves of the STLC threw doubts upon his protestations of innocence after the May day demonstration when he called for: "a solid united front of Liberals, Socialists and Communists, so that in the event of war not a machine should turn, and not a man would shoulder a rifle".[86] Meanwhile Moore, advertising meetings at Elm Tree, Heeley Green and Darnall Terminus, announced that Sheffield Peace Council would be supporting the proposals of the Australian delegation:

> (1) A World Peace Ballot;
> (2) The establishment of a permanent People's Congress side by side with the League of Nations;
> (3) The substitution of representatives to the League of Nations elected directly by the people, for Government nominees.[87]

The conference received reasonable press coverage with "Big Ben" in his "Talk of London" column in The Independent contributing a report on "Sheffield in Brussels". The list of Sheffielders attending does not tally with that given by the same newspaper a week earlier but the Peace Council, besides two of its officers, appears to have sent representatives from the AEU, TGWU, the Cooperative Guilds, and the Educational Settlement. Mrs Wood for the STLC and Gertrude Ward for the Hallam Branch of the LNU were independent delegates.[88] Ex-Sheffielder Mrs Eleanor Barton of the Women's Cooperative Guild addressed the final plenary session on the report of the Cooperative Commission. Although The Independent was anti-left wing and sceptical about the practical use of such "oratical festivals", the correspondent conceded that despite concerns about Communist domination of the conference: "It is not accurate to say that the crimson tail redly wagged the dog". Tensions between left and right at the conference were reflected through the presence of Lord Cecil. It was very interesting, said the

---

[86] "Peace Recipes Advocated", *ibid*, 5.8.36., p5
[87] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 25.8.36., p6
[88] "Peace Delegates", *ibid*, 1.9.36., p7. Blakey was also in the CPGB - information from Bill Moore to the author, 4.5.90.

reporter:

> ...to see how impressed the foreigners were with Lord Cecil and how unimpressed (sometimes) his compatriots were with him. I cannot see his grave, dignified figure, cultured, eloquent and sane, finding a very "common front" with some of the extreme elements in the conference.[89]

These divisions were reflected in the reports of delegates. Freda Wood addressed the Shiregreen Women's Section of Brightside and Burngreave Labour party about the Congress on Armistice Day and concluded that: "...until we get socialism we shall not get lasting peace".[90] Although the Peace Council coordinated the final meeting of the campaign as planned,[91] the "united peace meeting" in the Victoria Hall was never identified by the local press as the result of the council's work.[92] While it was reported that Noel-Baker, one of the principal speakers, would be expounding the Peace Congress's four points,[93] the meeting, in the Methodists' Victoria Hall, was dominated by Methodists. Superintendent of the Mission, Revd E. Benson Perkins, acted as chairman and the other principle speaker was the Revd Henry Carter, leader of the Methodist Peace Fellowship.[94] Rivalry between peace organisations had relegated the council from the leadership role it had assumed after Peace Week. Even Revd Donald Stuart, chairman of the Peace Council, writing to ask the press to print the full text of the resolution passed at the meeting, merely listed the council amongst six associations supporting the event:

> This assembly of citizens of Sheffield at the Victoria Hall on Armistice Day 1936 representing varied political and religious loyalties -
> (a) Is deeply moved by the recollection of the folly and futility of war;
> (b) Is assured that the peoples of this and other nations earnestly desire peace;
> (c) Is conscious that present political action, especially in the direction of rearmament, is leading to another and still more disastrous war.
> This assembly, therefore, calls for a new beginning in foreign policy with

---

[89] "Talk of London", *ibid*, 8.9.36., p6
[90] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 14.10.36. & 11.11.36.
[91] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 20.9.36.
[92] "Sheffield Plea for World Peace Conference", The Independent, 12.11.36., p7
[93] E. Benson Perkins, "Between Ourselves", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, Nov. 1936, No 497, p3
[94] *Ibid*, Dec 1936, No 498, p3

a view to the elimination of competitive armaments and the calling of a World Conference to face anew the economic and social causes of war.[95]

It is ironic that the "Peace Front", fruition of the most cherished hopes of the left. should have to content itself in the first six months of its existence with producing a series of such anodyne resolutions in order to retain pacifist support. While the World Conference favoured by pacifists did offer a means to tackle the economic rivalries which were identified as the underlying causes of war, it avoided discussion of the contentious practical means by which the fighting that was at this point raging in Spain could be stopped.

The Peace Council first passed an emergency resolution on Spain at its 4th August meeting. After the Congress The Independent reported that the executive committee prepared a resolution on the Spanish situation which demanded: "...that the British Government should provide the Spanish Government with means to put down the rebellion".[96] This was an over simplification for the resolution was intended to be: "a clear statement of international obligations towards the Spanish government". The statement's main point was: "That any government giving assistance to the rebels should be deemed an aggressor under Article 10 of the Covenant". This positioned support for the Spanish government within the context of collective security and was an effort to make Spain a major peace issue. The resolution pointedly called for the Spanish Government to be allowed to "place any orders it wishes in all countries with which it maintains friendly relations" without mentioning the tricky subject of armaments.[97] It was sent to all the council's affiliated organisations for endorsement with a request that it be forwarded to various recipients including the Foreign Secretary.[98]

The Peace Council lapsed into comparative inactivity during the autumn of 1936 and took no further action on Spain until mid-December.[99]

The Sheffield Youth Peace Council:

The Youth Peace Council enjoyed a separate but parallel existence to its adult

---

[95] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 13.11.36., p6
[96] "Help for Spain", *ibid*, 21.9.36., p3
[97] "Fascists Fail in Plan to Wreck Spain Meeting", The Daily Worker, 22.9.36., p5
[98] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 5.10.36.
[99] STLC Minute Books, 15.12.36.

contemporary. The University Peace Society[100] and the Cooperative Party[101] record sending delegates to a Youth Conference held by a body already referred to as the Youth Peace Council as early as February. This may well have been an evolution of the old Youth Anti-War Committee.

Like the adult movement, the animus against rearmament was the driving force. Within the university the Peace Society promoted its opposition through a "Student Charter" which demanded a cut arms in spending and a transfer of the resources to social services. In mid-March students were asked to convey their support by signing a copy.[102] After Peace Week, the Charter was debated at a mass meeting of the University Representatives Committee. The Charter was passed by 42 votes to 28 but was heavily criticised by members of the Medical Faculty who petitioned the URC for another meeting at a time when more of their members could attend. This was granted.[103] The matter became a *cause célèbre* in the following week with both sides campaigning for support and extensive press coverage of the result. After a lengthy debate a resolution that: "The students of the University did not associate themselves with the Charter" was passed by 108 votes to 102. Medical Faculty students objected not just to the Charter but also to the involvement of university students in "political matters outside the University".[104] Aileen Button, Secretary of the Peace Society at the time, has commented: "Sheffield was then a small university in which engineers and medical students seemed to preponderate; these types were not often politically conscious".[105] The non-political nature of student union activity was enshrined not only in Clause 2 of the National Union of Students' Constitution, which debarred "political propaganda", but also by custom in the remit of the URC.[106] The Sheffield URC's adoption of a Peace Society motion calling for sanctions against Italy the previous autumn had become a test case for the right of URCs to express political opinions.[107] In these circumstances the

---

[100] Aileen Button, "Peace Society", The Arrows, No22 March 1936, p41
[101] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book 1927 - 1939, 6.2.36., p205
[102] "University Notes", The Independent, 17.3.36., p4
[103] *Ibid*, 19.5.36., p2
[104] "Students go Back on Charter", *ibid*, 19.5.36., p1
[105] Undated letter from Aileen Button to writer.
[106] Aileen Button, "N.U.S. and Plans for Peace", Viewpoint, January 1937, p3
[107] J.E. Ashford, "Our University Peace Movement Grows", The Arrows, No 23 June 1936, p14

closeness of the vote reflected the existence of the kind of *ad hoc* united front that existed in the adult movement. The speech quoted by The Independent in favour of the Charter was made by the secretary of the university's Student Christian Movement. Nevertheless, the failure of the majority of students to support the transfer of resources from arms to social services is a reminder that, even at this high point of activity, the peace movement's programme represented the views of a relatively small minority. "I cannot remember that we had any success in moving N.U.S. or the Sheffield U.R.C. into the peace movement", writes Aileen Button. By the beginning of June the Peace Society had accepted their defeat on rearmament but were seeking to pass a motion confirming the URC's right to discuss whatever political matters it wished.[108]

Outside of the university the Youth Peace Council's activities were directed at the Peace Week's youth event and National Youth Peace Day on 7th June. After Peace Week a re-launched council, whose chairman, E. Eldred stressed its "non-sectarian and non-political" character,[109] concentrated on organising the June event. Like the adult council their efforts were lauded by The Daily Worker and held up as an example to others.[110] Communist involvement prompted suspicions and just three days before The Daily Worker article, the STLC's secretary was instructed to look into the composition of the Youth Peace Council.[111]

A weekend's activities were arranged around Youth Peace Day involving: the Society of Friends, Unitarian Young People, Young Communist League, Youth Group of the League of Nations, Woodcraft Folk, Sheffield University Peace Society, various Cooperative Society circles and the International Friends' Group. The Sunday demonstration in Norfolk Park, after a procession from Barker's Pool, was addressed by Dr. Boase of the University who repeated much of what he had said to the STLC earlier in the year. Boase concluded by calling for disarmament and economic conferences: "which would settle the troubles arising from the ownership of raw materials".[112]

On Saturday afternoon the Youth Peace Council had organised a garden party at the Barbers in Nether Edge. The Daily Worker described this as taking the form of "a

---

[108] "University Notes", The Independent, 2.6.36., p7
[109] "Youth Peace Council", *ibid*, 4.4.36., p6
[110] "Mighty Demonstrations Planned", The Daily Worker, 22.5.36., p3
[111] STLC Minute Books, 19.5.36.
[112] "Sheffield's Youth Speaks For Peace", The Independent, 8.6.36., p7

sports display, tableaux, a peace play and a campfire sing song". There was a sub-culture among some peace activists which promoted the pre-conditions of peaceful co-existence. Absolute pacifists practised forms of quasi-religious witness in the later thirties but the secularisation of this tradition begun by socialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was continued by young adults in the Youth Peace Council. Peace News' report of Richard B. Gregg's visit to Britain during this year was entitled: "Training for Non-Violent Life, What it Means in Positive Terms, Manual Work: Folk Dancing".[113] Just such a holistic vision of peace propaganda informed the council's attempt to seek the affiliation of the Sheffield Ramblers.[114]

The Mayor, Alderman Thraves, and his daughter, Katherine, the Lady Mayoress made speeches suggesting a position close to absolute pacifism. Katherine was reported to have said:

> ...There are a lot of us who feel war is quite wrong and cannot be defended on any grounds whatever. The monstrous inventions of the scientists have made war too terrible to contemplate. All precautions that are talked about would be merely futile.

While her father spoke like a supporter of the Peace Pledge Union:

> "I want to see the time come," he said, "when every young man and woman will say to every Government in the world under no circumstances whatever will I take arms against my fellow men. It is an ideal state, but ideals are only reached by talking about them."[115]

These were unusual views among Labour officeholders, apart from C.H. Wilson, and the lack of a political context such as war resistance may be due to the non-political nature

---

[113] Peace News, 25.7.36., p1. Sheppard later regretted the stress on "Greggism" and acknowledged that his style of pacifism was not universally acceptable to the PPU membership. Ponsonby particularly wanted to disassociate pacifism from "cranky tendencies" and "faddism". Gregg's manual was withdrawn as an official PPU document in May 1937, although it remained available through the union to those who wanted it. Ceadel, M., Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, The Defining of a Faith, Oxford, 1980, pp254 - 257

[114] The Ramblers did not become affiliated but the Youth Peace Council was assured of: "the cordial support of individual members". William Furniss of the YCL appears to have been a member of both bodies. Sheffield and District Ramblers' Federation Minute Book, 25.3.36.

[115] "Sheffield Youth Speaks for Peace", The Independent, 8.6.36., p7

of their office.[116] Katherine Thraves' words were perhaps only a rhetorical flourish anyway for, despite the criticism of rearmament in her peace meeting speech, she was to be found just a fortnight before appealing for donations for "two silken flags" for the new cruiser, H.M.S. Sheffield.[117]

The Youth Peace Council's campaign to send delegates to the Geneva Youth Conference which ran concurrently with the IPC,[118] attracted little attention in Sheffield.[119] Even before Lincoln Ralphs and Bill Furniss attended the conference, a separate Youth Front on Spain coalesced in Sheffield to hold its first meeting on 24th August.[120] The Spanish War exacerbated tensions between the Christian pacifist and socialist wings of the youth peace council. In a parallel to what was to happen in the adult movement, Methodist leaders used the visit of representatives of the British Christian Council for International Friendship and Work to a Youth Meeting at Victoria Hall to combat what they saw as the baleful influence of the Youth Peace Council:

> We have been somewhat fearful lest in their eagerness the youth of Sheffield should make a mistake in adopting a youth programme which brought everybody in but by so doing lost the distinctive force and significance of peace from the Christian standpoint.[121]

After September none of the sources mention the Youth Peace Council which, during the remainder of 1936, appears to have entered a prolonged period of inactivity while other bodies flourished.

The League of Nations Union in Difficulties:

The League of Nations Union did not flourish during 1936. It suffered a contradictory year enjoying growing support from others interested in peace while paradoxically declining in popular appeal. This reflected the fact that although the LNU had demonstrated an ability to mobilise public opinion in 1935, the events of that year

---

[116] Thraves was given the position of Lord Mayor, said The Independent because several more senior figures wished to retain the right to political speaking during the 1935 General Election. "General Topics", *ibid*, 7.8.35. p6
[117] Joint letter with Gladys M. Roberts, Mistress Cutler, *ibid*, 23.5.36., p6
[118] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 29.7.36., p6
[119] "Geneva Youth Congress", *ibid*, 7.9.36., p7
[120] "United Front", *ibid*, 24.8.36., p7
[121] E. Benson Perkins, "Between Ourselves", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, August 1936, No 494, p3

had cast doubt on the viability of the League ideal.

By January 1936 the LNU was on the defensive. Dr A.W. Pickard-Cambridge, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University, speaking at the first large LNU meeting of the year, said: "that any actions taken by the League had to be carefully considered so as not to bring about a greater calamity".[122] The Bishop of Sheffield, who was to prove a more loyal member of the organisation, went further. Writing in January he said:

> In 1936 the question of the League of Nations as the supreme power against aggression will be decided one way or the other. Even its existence may be in peril and the whole world revert to the menacing burden of competing armaments.[123]

In Sheffield during 1936 support for the principle of a League came from the University Peace Society, the National Association of Schoolmasters' conference,[124] Ernest Bevin on behalf of the TUC,[125] churches of all the leading denominations (except the Roman Catholics), and the Liberal, Labour, Cooperative and Communist Parties. The very events which had demonstrated the League's weakness convinced many on the Left, *faute de mieux*, of the necessity for such a body. Thus while the University Peace Society thought that the League would be: "like many other products of political intrigue... destined to destroy its creator" it saw in the creation of People's Fronts in France and Spain reason to believe that the moment was "favourable" to the creation of a League representing "the will of the people". It urged British voters to "put into power a Government which will help to make the League an effective instrument to enforce peace".[126]

If this was half-hearted support of the League, it nevertheless gave an international Covenant a central role in pacification. The USSR's decision to join the League linked efforts to form Popular Front movements within national borders and efforts by Soviet diplomats to improve its relations with capitalist powers. The Daily Worker printed an article explaining the centrality of the League to the USSR's strategy:

> ...At the present time there is forming around the Soviet Union a peace

---

[122] "The League and War Danger", The Independent, 24.1.36., p7
[123] "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXII Jan 1936, p3
[124] "Opposition to Schools' Help for Tattoos", The Independent, 13.4.36., p4
[125] "TUC and Rearmament", *ibid*, 23.4.36., p7
[126] "World Wants League", *ibid*, 18.3.36., p4

> front of countries not interested in war for the present moment which can be used by the Soviet Union in the fight against the open war Powers and their allies.[127]

The ambivalence of the Left towards the League was mirrored on the right of the LNU by a distaste for both the methods and the ideology of the new converts, but this mutual antipathy could not hide the fact that a shared vision of some kind of League was promoting a broadly based coalition. In contradistinction, the right wing of the British establishment was increasingly arguing that the League's theoretical right to invoke punitive sanctions on an aggressor nation was an unacceptable loss of British sovereignty. Conservatives deployed this argument after Hitler's re-occupation of the Rhineland in March, knowing that there was no stomach in Britain for a fight over the repossession of German territory.[128] "Every quarrel at Geneva now becomes Britain's quarrel," complained Lord Riverdale at the Coal Trade Benevolent Association's Annual Festival Dinner in Sheffield. "That has got to stop."[129]

Nationally, this represented a problem for the LNU which had sought to demonstrate the League's broad appeal by attracting Conservative patronage. In Sheffield the LNU's opposition to the private manufacture of armaments had already alienated many Conservatives. Although no reason for Pickard-Cambridge's June 1936 resignation was given, a journalist suggested that in speeches made the previous year the Vice-Chancellor had opposed both the LNU's policy on the arms industry and its support for economic and physical sanctions. Pickard-Cambridge, it appeared, would have preferred to confine the LNU to the role of providing "a slow, steady education of public opinion".[130] The LNU was increasingly pushed towards an oppositional viewpoint. In November E.G.G. Lyon said of the National Government's policies: "This country must take its share of the blame for the failure of the Disarmament Conference and the tearing up of the Covenant".[131]

---

[127] "A Plain Question", The Daily Worker, 7.4.36., p3

[128] Military sanctions over the Rhineland issue were never a serious possibility. Alderman Fred Marshall, Labour MP for Brightside, reported a week later: "I have spoken to many men about the present situation in the Rhineland and I say that the general consensus is that there is not sufficient justification for the shedding of a single drop of human blood." "Rhineland", The Independent, 6.4.36., p7

[129] "League a Great Danger to Us", *ibid*, 27.3.36., p7

[130] "General Topics", *ibid*, 11.6.36., p6

[131] "Chances Lost", *ibid*, 19.11.36., p7

The Sheffield Branch of the LNU lost 219 members between 1935 and 1936, a fall of 21.7%, greater than in any other single year during the 1930s. The Annual Report for 1936 repeated the excuse given in the previous year's report that this fall was owing to the formation in 1935 of two new branches in the city. This is impossible to verify as membership figures for the new branches have not survived. Other evidence suggests that for the LNU, to whom bald membership figures were a very important measure of support for League principles in the wider community, 1936 was a crisis year. In November a paid organiser, C.W. Carpenter, was appointed. During 1937, against the national trend,[132] he succeeded in increasing membership figures by 18.9% from the low point of 792 at the end of 1936. Even during the very difficult year 1939, it retained 23 more members than it had in 1936.

Corporate Membership did not suffer in the same way. Only one church, St Mary's, Stafford Road, disappeared from the list. Similarly, the list of officers changed very little. Between 1936 and 1937 only three of the 12 officers of the three branches altered.[133] The list of Group Collectors, essential to the retention of remaining members, also showed little change and surviving records which cover the re-appointment of such collectors for the year do not suggest any controversy.[134] Amongst those with a strong commitment to the League, the vicissitudes of the later months of 1935 and the first half

---

[132] After a disastrous 1936 the Sheffield Branch performed consistently better on membership retention than did the LNU as a whole:

	National Membership	Sheffield Membership
1934:	396 184	1083
1935:	377 824 (- 5%)	1011 (-7%)
1936:	353 769 (-6%)	792 (-22%)
1937:	314 715 (-11%)	942 (+19%)
1938:	264 180 (-16%)	928 (-1%)
1939:	193 366 (-27%)	815 (-12%)
1940:	100 088 (-48%)	696 (-15%)

Sources: Buzan, B.G., "The British Peace Movement from 1919 to 1939", Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, 1972 - 1973 & Annual Reports of The Sheffield Branch of the League of Nations Union, 1934 - 1940

[133] The Sheffield Yearbook and Record, 1935, 1936, & 1937

[134] Ann's Road Methodist Church Council Minute Book, 27.2.36., Oak Street Methodist Church Minute Book, 2.12.36., and Darnall Congregational Church Minute Book, 2.12.36.

of 1936 did not lead to either disillusionment or resignation.. Faced with the defeat of the Abyssinians the branch of the LNU at Pitt's Nether Congregational Church passed a resolution stating their belief: "That in spite of current setbacks to the League collective security is the best method of obtaining peace in the world and that the preservation of the League of Nations is essential to this end".[135] The Executive of the Sheffield Branch went further, describing the League as: "...the only practical method of promoting international peace and bringing about the peaceful changes which the present world situation needs".[136] It was amongst the relatively uncommitted that disappointment in the role of the League led to non-renewal of LNU subscriptions.

Besides Conservatives and the uncommitted, the one-fifth drop in LNU membership may represent some loss of pacifist support but their influence on the Sheffield Branch remained strong. Joan MacLachlan made known her opposition to the LNU endorsement of sanctions against Italy at the Annual General Meeting in March and in a letter to The Independent a week later.[137] Differences over sanctions were exacerbated in June when the LNU, along with most other *pacificist* sections of the peace movement, pressed for the continuation of sanctions against Italy. H. John MacLachlan's autobiography, The Wine of Life, records sequentially his wife's involvement with the setting up of an LNU Youth Group and with the PPU which began in Sheffield after 1st July. Although the author comments between the two events that: "the failure of the former Allies to give solid support to the League of Nations policies and constitution" had increased the threat to world-peace and that: "public opinion felt increasing revulsion against war", he does not indicate whether his wife resigned from the LNU.[138] Certainly MacLachlan's pacifist father-in-law, Revd Alfred Hall, remained active in the Branch.

Birn has argued that at a national level the LNU's commitment to broad consensual support for the League of Nations weakened the Union's ability to influence public opinion in favour of collective security. In Sheffield major speakers at LNU meetings consistently supported the enforcement of the Covenant by the application of

---

[135] "Faith in League", *ibid*, 8.5.36., p5
[136] "Setback to Peace", *ibid*, 27.5.36., p7
[137] "Sanctions 'Wrong'" , The Independent, 31.3.36., p4 and "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 6.4.36., p6
[138] MacLachlan, H. John, The Wine of Life, Sheffield, 1991, pp61 - 62

economic sanctions. Reports of speeches by Alec Wilson of LNU headquarters in January and George Paish in November show that both specifically discussed the effect on Italy of the sanctions imposed. Stronger support for collective security came from Norman Angell in March and Milner Gray in April. Angell said that the only way to prevent war was for those countries in the League to say:

> "We will all agree to defend a certain law: the law of peaceful settlement of disputes, of arbitration, third party judgement in some form, and none shall go to war for the purpose of settling his dispute with another. Any State that violates this law shall be regarded as a common enemy. An attack on the one shall be regarded as an attack on all, to be resisted collectively."[139]

Milner Gray emphasized the point a month later: "This country and other countries," he said, "should have said to Italy: You go no further; you cannot fight Abyssinia alone; you must fight us all".[140]

If there was a confusion in Sheffield about what those who supported the League believed in, it was a reflection on the pronouncements of local activists rather than on LNU national policy. Pacifists like Hall spoke in flat contradiction of the principles of collective security: "The application of force had proved impossible and peace among nations could only be accomplished by creating a feeling of goodwill between different races".[141] Like Conservatives, pacifists wished to see the League of Nations retained only as a forum for discussion:

> What is necessary now, therefore, is not a system of sanctions, to bolster up a League which does not give Peace or justice, and to overawe the gangster dictators of States whose problems have become acute, so much as a real and active League system which will tackle the economic and political injustices in the world and so secure peace and justice.[142]

There were those in the Branch who spoke against this line. Major R. Smith replied to Mrs MacLachlan at the AGM in March: "The country which allowed an aggressor to go his own way had to consider whether it might not itself be attacked some day by the law

---

[139] "Crisis 'Last Chance of Civilisation'", The Independent, 21.3.36., p7
[140] "Britain Blamed for Italy's Breach", *ibid*, 27.4.36., p7
[141] "League Reform", *ibid*, 9.11.36., p4
[142] Letter from Joan H. MacLachlan, "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 6.4.36., p6

breaker".[143] The desire not to alienate the pacifists, however, gave them an influence disproportionate to their number. The Sheffield resolution to the Scarborough LNU Conference called for: "...disarmament combined with constructive peace building through an international conference which will study the causes of war and remove the conditions that give rise to fear, dissatisfaction and resentment among the nations".[144]

This resolution was in keeping with the four points of the IPC but noticeably avoided the specifically League issue of sanctions. It could be argued that the LNU, by putting the retention of its pacifist members above other considerations, chose not reciprocate efforts by its potential allies to find common ground. In Sheffield the LNU ignored one of the primary concerns of the Left and offered no lead on the war in Spain during the second half of 1936.

The disproportionate influence of the pacifists also reflected the opinions of local leaders. Lyon if not a pacifist, was at this point close to the pacifist position. He wrote to the press in mid-July asking pacifists to remain active within the Union.[145] This would not on its own be significant, but Lyon repeated that: "He failed to see where there could be any defence in this modern world of planes and scientific invention".[146] Ten days later, at a united meeting of the Union's three branches, he issued a warning in accordance with the Peace Pledge: "If the governments had no sensible peace policy, they must not be surprised if the people refused to be hoodwinked when they were asked to fight in defence of their country".[147]

There is, however, a danger in exaggerating the importance of pacifism in the LNU. In Birn's view the failure of the LNU to offer a strong lead on the full implications of collective security was a failure to educate public opinion. The LNU could not have provided leadership within the peace movement on this issue and despite Sheffield LNU's pacifist slant, it did encourage formal contacts to take advantage of new enthusiasm for the mainstream LNU's *pacificist* position. Hall and Carpenter visited the STLC in December 1936 and January 1937 and persuaded the council to affiliate to the LNU. Common ground between the two groups went beyond *pacificism*. Carpenter

---

[143] "Sanctions 'Wrong'", *op cit.*
[144] "League Union", The Independent, 17.6.36., p4
[145] "Hear All Sides", *ibid.* 13.7.36., p6
[146] "League Reform", *op cit.*
[147] "Chances Lost", *op cit.*

stressed the work of the International Labour Organisation as well as the League's role in combating "White Slave" and "illicit drug traffic".[148] These issues were part of a shared humanitarian agenda. Hall, who wanted League reform, had nevertheless said that: "he was still convinced that work of the highest humanitarian and peaceful order was being done by the League".[149] The LNU was not the only peace organisation whose members, confronted by the realities of the 1930s, took refuge in ameliorative good works. The difficulty for the LNU was that to accept failure in Manchuria and Abyssinia and to restrict its ambitions for the League to that of an international secretariat for a world conference was to destroy its *raison d'être*. The question of force could not be ducked indefinitely by an organisation committed to binding international arbitration. Nationally the LNU was to face up to this difficulty at the end of 1937. Meanwhile it finished 1936 with an appeal for new members which concluded: "In Sheffield there are numerous bodies working for peace along their own particular lines, and we believe that it should be possible for most people to find some society that would represent their own individual point of view".[150] While this exhortation reflected the year's inclusive mood, the future would reveal whether it was also the first sign of a determination that those who could not agree with the basic tenets of the LNU would be better accommodated elsewhere.

Pacifism and the Beginnings of the Peace Pledge Union:

It is characteristic of the contradictory impulses motivating different sections of the peace movement, that while organisations of the Left and Centre were compromising the integrity of their messages to placate pacifist opinion, pacifists themselves were building their own organisation to give expression to uncompromisingly pacifist views. Pacifism in Sheffield was largely associated with Nonconformism. The traditional pacifism of Quakers spread after the Great War to members, including some senior members, of the Unitarian, Methodist and Congregational denominations. There were pacifists within the Church of England but not among senior clergy. Larger Anglican buildings were therefore not available for pacifist meetings and this ensured that the Methodists with their Victoria Hall venue in the centre of Sheffield were the promoters

---

[148] STLC Minute Books, 2.12.36., 26.1.37., & 3.2.37.
[149] "League Reform", *op cit.*
[150] "The Will for Peace", "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 24.12.36., p6

of the popular pacifism of 1936.

When the Rearmament White Paper was issued in March Thraves called for a religious lead to be given against rearmament: "If it is wrong to go to war, the churches of this country ought to say definitely that it is wrong", he declared at a Methodist bazaar. While the Rev E. Benson Perkins, in an anti-war sermon reported on the same day said: "It is a perfectly devilish thing to think of one Methodist, an Englishman, armed with a rifle, fighting with a similarly armed German Methodist. A suggestion like that comes from the very pit of hell".[151] There remained a sense of outrage amongst some war veterans against the role of religious leaders in promoting the tribalism of the Great War. George Fullard summarised the antipathy between those who had experienced the war and those churchmen who had exhorted them to further sacrifice:

> We were the ragged weary remnants of a regiment of the victorious Allied Army that had pursued the rearguard of the defeated Bulgarians right up into their own country. We were tired and fed up to the teeth with war, with marching, fighting, hunger, thirst, military discipline, lice and lies, muck, filth, mosquitoes, fever, blood and slaughter.
> We knew all there was to know about war, we had seen and felt every phase of it; we were sick of it, fed up and disillusioned. We had only one desire, and that was to get back to England if possible and divest ourselves of the uniform that most of us detested and hated with a wholehearted hatred that could not be expressed in words.
> And now this high church dignitary, fresh from England, was here to congratulate and patronise us.[152]

Genuine embarrassment amongst Nonconformist clergy promoted a concern to redefine the relationship between Christianity and war. In April Duff Cooper, Minister of War, sensing the growing pacifism in some churches, questioned the Christian basis of a refusal to bear arms. Bishops within the Established Church supported his view, which in turn prompted angry denunciations from the peace movement. Fullard's article was a response to pronouncements by the Bishop of London, Dr Winnington Ingram, who had addressed him as a soldier some eighteen years before.[153]

---

[151] "War is Wrong" and "We Can't Fight", *ibid*, 12.3.36., p5 & p7
[152] George Fullard, "A Patriotic Bishop", The Voice, No5 June 1936, p1
[153] Winnington Ingram was a popular target: "In 1934 the Secular Society gleefully published Arms and the Clergy 1914 - 1918 (ed. G. Bedborough) with quotations from war-time sermons from over two hundred clergy. The views of Winnington Ingram... were described in the preface as 'indistinguishable from the language and sentiments of a

Although the Bishop of Sheffield took the establishment view that: "the most peaceful, the best governed, and the widest spread Empire in the world cannot afford to remain without adequate means of defence",[154] he balanced this with support for the League of Nations. He avoided becoming embroiled in the debate, writing at its height in praise of: "what the League of Nations stands for - peace and goodwill, collective security and the sacredness of contract".[155] The writer of "Church of England Notes" did involve himself and criticised the Bishop of Gloucester's support for Duff Cooper, suggesting that the peace section of a speech made at Sheffield's May Day demonstration showed that: "Alderman Dunn's view is nearer to the mind of our Lord than is Dr Headlam's.[156] A second article, although more supportive of the clergy, was critical of the confusion being created by textual justifications of the opposing viewpoints and concluded: "clergy and ministers of all denominations ought to try to come to a minimum agreement on the problems of peace and war".[157] How far this was from being the case can be judged by a speech made by the most senior Methodist minister in the city:

> ...Mr Perkins showed that pacifism is the one and only way of peace because it is Christian. He dealt with obligations to pacifism, and with militaristic arguments culled illogically from the sayings of Jesus, and made it clear that the Life and Teaching of our Lord are entirely opposed to war.[158]

During 1936 opinion in the pacifist wing of the peace movement began to crystallise into absolutism. Long-term absolutists like C.H. Wilson had tended to speak obliquely when addressing the general public. "Those who believe in armaments must be prepared to have an unlimited supply - and to use them for the purposes for which they are intended", began his speech to the Youth Anti-War demonstration in May.[159] The new separatism revealed that Wilson believed in unilateral disarmament of a most

---

cannibal chief'." Wilkinson, *op cit*, p140

[154] "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXII, No11 November 1936, p3

[155] *Ibid*, Vol XXII No5 May 1936, p4

[156] "What the Bible Teaches on Peace", The Independent, 9.5.36., p8

[157] "Church of England Notes", *ibid*, 16.5.36., p10

[158] "Victoria Hall Wesley Guild", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 498 December 1936, p16

[159] "Peace Calls 'Lack Understanding'", The Independent, 1.5.36., p7

uncompromising sort: "Complete disarmament is the only way to Peace and real defence". Pacifists thought of disarmament in pragmatic terms and believed that, by leaving the aggressor without an enemy, it would remove the legitimacy of force. "Now if the Abyssinians had adopted the same plan Mussolini would have had no military glory. He would have been the laughing-stock of the world, and thousands of lives would not have been sacrificed on either side".[160] Hitler's Final Solution implemented against the unarmed Jews of Europe discredited the policy but it was quite widely held at the time among pacifists under the influence of Gandhi and Gregg.

Speaking in Sheffield in March, George Lansbury enlarged on pacifists' main political solution to increasing European tensions, a world conference to equalise access to markets and raw materials. *Pacificists* were not necessarily opposed to this plan which formed one of the IPC's Four Points but divisions over whether such a "carrot" could, without the "stick" of sanctions, bring about peaceful change were already appearing. Fullard wrote: "To affirm that sanctions applied to Mussolini would ultimately have led to war was only aiding and abetting the world's super gangster. The dropping of sanctions was a crime against God and man..."[161] Even amongst pacifists there were those who urged caution in pacifying Germany through the redistribution of colonies. Sir Arthur Salter wrote:

> ...That which is good for prevention is not always good for cure and in the temper and outlook now abroad in Germany it does not follow that that you can redress grievances by concession. The political concessions that are of untold value are concessions that are not made under the influence of force.
> We cannot disassociate from the problem the present racial doctrine and the measures with which that doctrine is given effect.[162]

The new pacifism emerged therefore at a time when many of those associated with the peace movement who had loosely considered themselves pacifists were questioning the political relevance of absolutist views. The growth of pacifism did not take place within organisations predicated upon political solutions to the international situation. Nor did the new pacifists attach themselves to the austere creeds of the NMWM or the Quakers. The growth in membership of pacifist organisations occurred

---

[160] Cecil H. Wilson, "The Only Way", The Voice, No4 May 1936, p3
[161] George Fullard, "Pacifists, Pits and Paupers", *ibid*, No7 August 1936, p7
[162] Arthur Salter, "Must Germany Have Colonies?", Peace News, No 9 15.8.36., p7

amongst members of churches not formerly pacifist and amongst individuals previously unattached to any peace group. A "utopian" programme simplified the international problems of the era to the precept that if all men of military age refused to fight there could be no war.

The announcement that the Peace Pledge Union was being started to turn the 100,000 men who had sent a postcard to Dick Sheppard into a "vigorous and constructive Peace organisation" was made in Sheffield on 1st July. A letter appeared asking for 100,000 women to make the same commitment and setting out the purpose of the new Union.[163] Sheppard envisaged groups that would "train themselves locally in the technique of non-violence". A full launch was planned for October: "in all the great cities when the full policy, literature and constructive suggestions of the Union will be submitted to the country". Three weeks later the recently commenced Peace News reported that it was becoming the official voice of the PPU.[164]

Efforts to mobilise pacifist opinion in Sheffield pre-dated the launch of the PPU. The Lansbury meeting in March was the first mass meeting in Sheffield and was one of what Benson Perkins referred to as a series of "astounding meetings up and down the country". He attempted to analyse what drove this upsurge of pacifist, and particularly Christian pacifist, feelings. The four factors he identified were: disillusionment with the Great War - firstly because it had been realised that Allied war aims, propaganda and stated ideals had been not merely mistaken but deliberately false and misleading, and secondly that the "treaty of vengeance and oppression" which had ended it had "simply created further strife", the American Armaments enquiry which had revealed that private companies had promoted war for profit, and finally, the Abyssinian War which had revealed that: "nothing whatever had been learned of the nature and folly of war". Apart from the War in Abyssinia, which was in its closing stages, none of this was new. Benson Perkins admitted that his analysis was merely intended to suggest that there was a "conviction deepening in the minds of men and women that purely on the grounds of expediency there is no argument for war" and that his article put a Christian perspective on the theme that "the spirit of trust in one another, would and could bring about a new

---

[163] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 1.7.36., p6
[164] "An Announcement", Peace News, No 6 25.7.36., p4

Europe".[165] "We are your friends, it is the Governments who are at enmity and not us." was the message Wilson said he brought back from ordinary Germans, emphasizing the populist slant of this new pacifism.[166]

Katharine Patrick in her article on the PPU finds a division within the leadership of the organisation between "practical pacifists" who mimicked the LNU's intention of bringing popular pressure to bear on governments but from a distinct pacifist viewpoint and "constructive pacifists" who believed that, since a change in human behaviour was required to prevent wars, witness to personal conviction was the most important element of the PPU's work.[167] Benson Perkins' article suggests that in the hands of the religious leaders the new pacifism tended towards the latter model and represented, despite Sheppard's hopes for the PPU, a growing disillusionment with and despair of political action. In such circumstances, the renunciation of war became an act of disengagement.

No October meeting to publicise the PPU's formation took place in Sheffield.[168] In view of the quietist and introspective character the new pacifism it is not surprising to record that it was Frank Dawtry, secretary of the local NMWM, who called a meeting of all Sheffield male signatories of the Peace Pledge for 17th September.[169] First mention of a Sheffield Branch of the PPU does not occur until nearly two months later in early November[170] and the first large public meeting was not organised two months after that on 18th January 1937.[171]

Ceadel reports that although the national NMWM's February 1937 merger with the PPU was in part motivated by the necessity to scotch an attempt to commit the NMWM to a non-pacifist response to the war in Spain, it was primarily undertaken to

---

[165] E. Benson Perkins, "Christ and Peace", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 490 April 1936, p10

[166] "Germans' Fears", The Independent, *ibid*, 28.8.36., p7. Wilson advocated a large scale formal exchange of children between the ages of 12 and 18 years for a twelvemonth period: "These children would in years to come never wish to fight their friends and no country would desire to go to war with another at a time when 10,000 or 20,000 of its children were living there." Wilson, C.H., "Defence by Friendships", The Voice, No7 August 1936, p6

[167] Katharine Patrick, "The Mass Pursuit of Peace: England 1934 - 1940", Melbourne Historical Journal, Vol 7 1968, p19

[168] "'League a Humbug,' Says General", The Independent, 2.10.36., p7

[169] "No More War Movement", Peace News, No 13 12.9.36., p2

[170] "Sheffield Looks Ahead", *ibid*, No21 7.11.36., p8

[171] "Peace Pledge Union Recruiting", The Independent, 19.1.37., p7

"ginger up" the larger PPU with which many NMWM members were dissatisfied. A similar impatience is suggested by Dawtry's efforts to fill the political vacuum caused by the time lapse in the PPU's activation in Sheffield.[172] Dawtry was in correspondence with the STLC in May,[173] the Sheffield and Ecclesall Cooperative Party's Women's Section in June,[174] the Shiregreen Labour Party Women's Section in September[175] and the Cooperative Party in October.[176] Dawtry received short shrift from the STLC who responded to his suggested motion by replying that: "...if the organisation concerned decided that such a matter be discussed they should approach it [the STLC] through an affiliated organisation". The central Cooperative Party too rejected his efforts to denounce the leadership of the Cooperative Movement for conferring with the government over the safeguarding of food supplies in war. "This allied the greatest food distributing concern (owned by the people) with active preparations for war," wrote Dawtry.[177] The attempt to tie Cooperative Societies in to the debate about attitudes to ARP going on within the left angered Alexander. According to Dawtry, he described the NMWM's attempted intervention as "impudence". Women's sections of the party were inclined to pacifism and the letter caused "discussion", recorded the minutes.

Although women never responded in such large numbers as men to Sheppard's postcard renunciation of war, within political parties women's sections showed more interest in pacifism. Dawtry was aware of this and he arranged two meetings addressed by Muriel Wallhead Nichol of the National Committee of his organisation for that autumn. On 30th September she addressed a public meeting in Victoria Hall and on 1st October a women's meeting hosted by the Sheffield and Eccleshall Cooperative Party Women's Section.[178] At the latter of these meetings she promulgated the powerful incentive to pacifism for potential victims of air-raids that since "the bomber will always get through"[179] defence had become impossible and attack was no longer an option.

---

[172] Ceadel, M., *op cit*, p200
[173] STLC Minute Books, 5.5.36.
[174] "Cooperative Party Notes", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 139 June 1936, p5
[175] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party; Shiregreen Women's Section, Minute Book, 23.9.36.
[176] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 8.10.36.
[177] "Pacifists and the 'Coops'", Peace News, No17 10.10.36., p2
[178] "Cooperative Party Notes", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 143 November 1936, p3
[179] Baldwin's words from a House of Commons speech of 10th November 1932 were much quoted by the peace movement as official sanction for an apocalyptic vision of

The new pacifism's lack of impact in Sheffield during 1936 can be adduced to a number of factors: The strength of the pre-existing peace movement in Sheffield and the influence that a number of well-known pacifists already wielded on coordinating bodies, the leadership offered to both religious and political pacifists by pre-existing organisations, pacifism's lack of influence in the mainstream political debates, all of whose participants, Labour, Communist and Liberal, were committed to collective security, the lack of experience of collective action among many of the new pacifists which was exacerbated in Sheffield by the reluctance of the former officers of the NMWM to become committee members for the PPU,[180] and the disinclination of those motivated by political disillusionment and despair to attempt to influence others. The outbreak of war in Spain just three weeks after the announcement of the formation of the PPU undoubtedly also had an impact. Suddenly against the complexity of moral arguments for the renunciation of war, against the antagonism aroused by the sophistry and unreality of diplomatic pacification through the League of Nations, against the difficult arguments over whether the aggressive act of a nation's leadership entitled the world community to apply military sanctions to a whole population, against fears for the safety of civilians in an unstoppable attack from the air was placed, with Augustinian clarity, the case for a justified war. Most of the pacifists' allies believed that Republican Spain had the right to defend itself against the Falangists and many believed that it was a duty for anti-fascists in the rest of Europe to aid them.

In Sheffield a measure of agreement on Non-Intervention allowed pacifists and many *pacificists* to retain a common front, but nationally as early as August the pacifists' problem was being spelt out:

---

future warfare.

[180] Buzan expounds this view from a national perspective: "Most of the PPU members were completely new converts to pacifism and war resistance and, aside from their anti-war enthusiasm, many had little idea of the full implementation of their pledge." Buzan, *op cit*, p402. Edward Fisher confirmed that this was true in Sheffield describing those who joined the PPU as "loners", not used to an organisation, who: "had feelings against war but did not know what to do about it". The impact of this inexperience was worsened in Sheffield because the resigning officers of the NMWM took the decision on merger with the PPU to becoming ordinary members rather than officers in order to give new "younger blood" a chance. This was disastrous and within a year four or five of the old NMWM officers, including Fisher himself, were back as officers of the PPU. Interview with E.W. Fisher, 3.7.85.

> This is not only a dark time for the world at large. It is a peculiarly difficult one for the pacifist. For he has to face in addition to the threatening war clouds, something very like hostility from his friends in the peace movement and, in view of this particular problem of Spain, from all who love democracy - but hate fascism more. The man who tries to apply to the Spanish war his vow that he will never support or take part in any war is apt to be regarded as the enemy of the people he would fain help most.[181]

This division would be exacerbated in Sheffield because of the peace movement's large political element.

The Influence of the Communist Party

Although the Communist Party organised two peace meetings in March and May 1936,[182] the Communist Party's relationship with the Sheffield Peace Movement was largely indirect. The CPGB exercised, however, considerable influence both through Left-wing Labour sympathisers and the activities of its own open and secret membership. These entryist methods consciously used the peace movement to promote a United Front.

In relation to the peace movement, the Labour leadership's opposition to its membership's association with communists was organisational. As Harry Pollitt made clear, the *pacificist* policies of the two parties had become increasingly similar:

> "Through the National Peace Congress assembled here under the auspices of the National Peace Council is running a great new current. The current is setting swiftly and strongly away from paralysing Liberal Christian Pacifism towards close association with the organised working-class fight against the National Government, which has to be swept away before peace can be assured."[183]

The main point of difference was that the CPGB, in keeping with its quasi-revolutionary stance, retained a rhetoric of war resistance despite that policy's incompatibility with its wider commitment to collective security. Pollitt explained the choice of Sheffield for their 1936 National Conference by saying: "...the Communist Party had chosen Sheffield

---

[181] "The Need of the Hour", Peace News, No9 15.8.36., p4

[182] "Russia's Military Strength" and "Communists Meet to Signify Attitude Towards War", The Independent, 9.3.36., p7 and 18.5.36., p7

[183] "Harry Pollitt stirs Peace Congress as Delegates Move to Press Fight Against Baldwin", The Daily Worker, 29.6.36., p1

for their conference because the might and power of the city might determine whether this country should maintain peace".[184] In Sheffield, where opposition to collective security remained among Labour dissidents, this did the CPGB no harm and support for communist affiliation ran high. The vote at the STLC to allow Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party at the Edinburgh Conference was lost by 61 to 57, an endorsement of the Communist Party's position by 48% of the delegates.[185] While support for the Communist Party was not actually as high as this in all sectors of the Sheffield party, there were pockets within both the party and the trade unions that were markedly sympathetic. Handsworth and Broomhill Ward Labour Parties supported the call for affiliation[186] and at the Hallam Divisional Party Management Committee the motion was lost by just 8 votes to 10.[187] Among unions the AEU had several pro-Communist branches,[188] the ASLEF No1B Branch committee had only one dissenting voice when a petition supporting affiliation was approved[189] and STLC Delegates ready to support affiliation included representatives of TGWU, ETU, NUR and the YMA.[190]

For members of the Communist Party and those on the Left who shared their priorities the safety of the world's first workers' state was paramount. Life in Russia was seen as a positive pattern for a post-capitalist society. "Pleasure gathers strength among those who rejoice in the birth of the New World", wrote L.W. Henderson of the Woodcraft Folk.[191] Freda Tustin contrasted the dynamism of the new model of economy with the stultification of an elderly capitalism:

> But best of all was to see the people again - robust, cheerful, busy. One of the things that struck me so forcibly again in comparison to England was

---

[184] "Reds Urged to Vote for Labour", The Independent, 12.10.36., p7

[185] STLC Minute Books, 29.9.36., and "Flag Day Ban Sequel", The Independent, 30.9.36., p7

[186] "Sheffield Supports Unity", The Daily Worker, 14.8.36., p3

[187] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 14.9.36. & 5.10.36.

[188] AEU No 10, for instance, wrote to the STLC urging Communist affiliation, STLC Minute Books, 22.9.36.

[189] ASLEF 1B Branch Minute Book, 26.7.36.

[190] "Need Help of Communists", The Daily Worker, 4.7.36., p6

[191] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 29.5.36., p6. The importance of the Soviet experience to CPGB members can hardly be overstated. Ernie Trory records that he went to Moscow to convince himself that he was a sincere communist and: "From that day I swore, the Party would take first place in my life". Trory, E., Between the Wars, Recollections of a Communist Organiser, Brighton, 1974, p76

> the sense of security prevalent here.
> The future holds no menace of unemployment, of sickness without provision for it, of an unprovided-for old age. As long as you are prepared to work the future is secure - if you are unable to work through incapacity, then you will be provided for.[192]

Involvement in the peace movement offered the opportunity to promote the USSR's role within collective security. The first two points of The Daily Worker's "Ten Points for Peace Action" for the National Peace Congress at Leeds were:

> 1. Collective Security through the League of Nations and Pacts of Mutual Assistance against an aggressor.
> 2. The entry of Britain into such a pact with the Soviet Union and other European states.[193]

The Sheffield Committee of Peace and Friendship with the USSR, the local branch of a national organisation, was formed on 19th May 1936.[194] From the first the Committee framed its objectives within the peace arena:

> We believe that in view of the overwhelming support for the League of Nations Covenant and for collective security in this country (as shown by the Peace Ballot) and in the USSR, it would be highly advantageous to the peace of the world to have closer and more informed cooperation between these two countries.[195]

Far outside the circle of communist sympathisers, Russia's entry into the League was seen to have significance. This statement was signed by E.G. Rowlinson, Labour Leader of Sheffield City Council on the basis that: "...support for the Congress in no way implies agreement with the policy or actions of Communists in any part of the world".[196]

---

[192] "Sheffield Woman's Impression of Russia as I See it To-day", The Independent, 8.3.36., p6
[193] "Who Stands for Peace? Who Stands for War?", The Daily Worker, 27.6.36., p4
[194] "Sheffield-Soviet Bid for Friendship", The Independent, 20.5.36., p7. The organisation appears to have been very active at this period. "Big Ben" had reported on a forthcoming London District Committee conference on 16th May in the same paper.
[195] "Cooperation Between Britain and Russia", *ibid*, 30.5.36., p6
[196] It may be that there was some identification between the leadership of the first large city in Britain to have a Labour administration and the world's first socialist state, despite the ideological objections of Rowlinson and his colleagues to Soviet communism. There was certainly a consciousness that the years after the administration came to power were a pioneering phase for the Labour Party. Rowlinson's pamphlet, "Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield 1926 - 1932", Sheffield, 1932 is redolent of this awareness.

The friendship committee stressed the common ground between supporters of the League through: "...the work done by the representatives of the two countries [Britain and the USSR], Mr Eden and M. Litvinov, at Geneva".

The biggest threat to an acceptance of the USSR as central to the *pacificist* coalition was disapproval of the Soviet dictatorship. At the Peace and Friendship Committee's Congress in November the Revd Etienne Watts sought to dispel church resistance by reassuring those present that: "After the Russian Revolution there was no persecution by the Communists of the churches". The Zinoviev Trial, the first in the series of Moscow show trials, was reported from 20th August and potentially posed a much greater threat to communist influence on the peace movement. Of the CPGB leadership's support for the trials Willie Thompson writes:

> At a distance of more than fifty years it is impossible to read this material... without a feeling of shame that individuals who were in other aspects of their lives humane and upright could have lent their intelligence and energies to such abomination.[197]

Although those opposed to Communist influence within the Labour Party used the trials to bolster their viewpoint (both the STLC and the Brightside Divisional Labour Party ordered multiple copies of The Witchcraft Trials in Moscow from Labour Party Headquarters[198]) the wider Left in Sheffield took the same sanguine view as the CPGB.[199] Neither a circular letter defending the trials in September nor reports of further arrests in November provoked a significant response. Deli quotes Kingsley Martin to demonstrate how those sympathetic to Russia justified their continuing support for the USSR by divorcing the issue of "political liberty" from what Martin described as "...the essential fact that Russia is a socialist country with an overwhelming desire for peace".[200] Two decades distrust of anti-Soviet propaganda had left sympathisers ill-equipped to

---

[197] Willie Thompson, The Good Old Cause, British Communism 1920 - 1991, London, 1992, p60

[198] STLC Minute Book, 8.12.36. and Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 16.12.36.

[199] Thompson reflects this lack of condemnation at a national level by quoting the approving words of D.N. Pritt (KC and Labour MP, who spoke at the Sheffield Congress) and Dudley Collard (another non-communist barrister). Thompson, W., *op cit.*

[200] Deli, P., "The Images of the Russian Purges in The Daily Herald and the New Statesman", Journal of Contemporary History, 20 (1985), p270

discern the light cast by the purges on the nature of Stalin's regime and the Communist Party continued to exert a powerful influence on the Labour constituency of the Sheffield peace movement.

The Effect of the early months of the Spanish War:

In contrast to the Moscow Trials, the Spanish War was one of the key events that shaped attitudes within the peace movement. For those on the Left, the main catalyst for the change from the widespread pacific mood of the early thirties to a pragmatic *pacificism* was the Spanish War.

The right-wing uprising, which divided Spain into nationalist and republican areas, began on 18th July 1936. As early as 25th July The Daily Worker mobilised left-wing opinion in Britain with the headline: "All Into Action Now! Defend Spanish Republic!" In Sheffield the Peace Council's 4th August resolution provided the first reaction:

> We deplore the cruel loss of human life and property caused by the armed Fascist rising against the Democratic and Legal Government of Spain. We call on the National Government to accord to the legal Government of Spain all assistance requested, and so to help to bring to a speedy end a situation which at the moment threatens to endanger the peace of the world.[201]

The Independent's report of the meeting omitted any reference to Spain.[202] It was not until three days later that "Big Ben's" "Talk of London" column carried the news of the first appeal for funds by British trade union leaders.

After this initial resolution efforts to support Spain were not made through the peace movement but by organisations of the Left. A report of a Communist Party meeting of 12th August commented on: "The unusual spectacle of members of the Labour Party and the Communist Party speaking on a common platform". The appeal, which announced the event, was signed by six Labour councillors and the secretary of the STLC. Councillor Mappin, one of the signatories, told The Independent that they had signed not "in their capacity as City Councillors, but as trade union officials".[203] Hobson

---

[201] "Peace Campaign Extends", The Daily Worker, 6.8.36., p5
[202] "Peace Recipes Advocated", The Independent, 5.8.36. p7
[203] "Moral Support For Spain From Sheffield Councillors", *ibid*, 11.8.36., p5

said he: "made no apology for being on that platform in support of the fight of Spanish democracy for freedom".[204] Although Hugh Thomas and other writers have suggested that the causes of the Spanish War lay in the gap between Spain's aspirations to democracy and the violent reality of its political legacy, there is no doubt that the resonance of the Spanish cause in Britain was a product of the perception that the war was a straight fight between democracy and fascism. One of the STLC's later resolutions on Spain spoke of: "...the paramount need of supporting democracy in Spain to the ultimate benefit of democracy everywhere".[205] The letter sent to the Spanish Vice-Consul in Sheffield used the word "democracy" eight times in a 250-word message. Although we may view the Communist Party's fondness for the word with cynicism, Hobson and other Labour figures took the risk of appearing on that platform because of their awareness of what had happened in other societies where fascism had triumphed.[206] Action continued with the STLC holding a "joint" demonstration in September. Restrictions on Communist participation were again evaded by an invitation to "workers' organisations". The marching contingents included both the YCL and CPGB. Six thousand people attended the demonstration.[207]

During this direct approach by communists to the Labour Party over Spain,[208] as part of a new strategy ahead of a vote on the United Front at the Labour Party

---

[204] "Flag Day to Aid Spanish Democrats", *ibid*, 13.8.36., p7

[205] STLC Minute Book, 29.6.37. Tom Buchanan believes that the Left were very successful in the early months of the Spanish Civil War in drawing attention to both fascist aid to the rebels and to the use of "Moorish" troops to counteract the impression given by the vicious internecine nature of the initial fighting. Buchanan, T., "'A Far Away Country of which we know Nothing'? Perceptions of Spain and its Civil War in Britain 1931 - 1939", Twentieth Century British History, 4 (1993)

[206] Although Spain was to promote disagreement between Left and Right of the Labour Party, there was a common appreciation of the dangers of fascism to working class institutions. John Tilley writes that A.V. Alexander, for instance, was well aware of the attacks on the Cooperative movements in Germany and Italy through addresses given by German and Italian cooperators at the Cooperative Congress. Tilley, J., Churchill's Favourite Socialist: A Life of A.V. Alexander, Manchester, 1995, pp43 - 44

[207] "Youths Big Effort for Spain", The Daily Worker, 23.9.36., p3 & "Collection for Spanish Workers", The Independent, 21.9.36., p7. Fyrth writes that the centres of the most intense working class activity for Spain (a list in which he places Sheffield), were all localities that had traditions of industrial militancy and unemployed demonstrations where the Spanish War: "...was seen as an extension of the class struggle." Fyrth, J., The Signal was Spain, London, 1986, p31

[208] "They are Helping Spain Defend Democracy", The Daily Worker, 14.8.36., p5

Conference in October, the communists overplayed their hand. The Daily Worker's reports of the joint meeting were headed "Sheffield Shows Way to Unity" and "Sheffield Unites to Aid Spain". The Labour leadership had good cause for concern about these joint activities. Murray, for instance, was described as a communist when he spoke at the 12th August meeting but as Vice-President of the Handsworth Ward Labour Party when he addressed an NUWM march, which the Labour Party had voted to boycott, a few weeks later.[209] There was pressure from above, too, with the NCL moving strongly against the United Front through the fiercely critical document, The British Labour Movement and Communism - An Exposé of Communist Manoeuvres.

The Labour Party had regained the initiative with their September meeting and they kept it by voting to request permission from the Watch Committee for a Flag Day collection. This "splendid lead", as The Daily Worker described it,[210] was rejected by the Labour-dominated Council sub-committee and led to a further increase of tension between the leadership and activists within the party in Sheffield. Antagonism to both the local and national Labour leadership increased as it became apparent that non-intervention was working to the detriment of the Spanish government forces. At the Trades Union Congress in September an amendment was proposed by W. Zak which committed the unions to rejection of non-intervention. Zak argued that non-intervention, by placing the legally constituted government of Spain and the rebels on the same footing, had made a further concession to fascism. Placing this "concession" in a context which parallels the dominant Churchillian view of the post-war period, Zak described neutrality as: "A further step along that road of retreat which started when Japan marched into Manchuria". He concluded:

> This is a step which in my opinion, far from preserving peace draws us every day closer and closer to war because it increases the audacity of Fascist Powers. They think we will continually retreat and that therefore they can do whatever they please.[211]

The CPGB never accepted non-intervention and subsequent Left wing commentators have argued that the "malevolent neutrality" followed by the British

---

[209] "Marchers Swing Into Sheffield Like Soldiers", *ibid*, 24.10.36., p7
[210] "Flag Day in Spain's Support", The Daily Worker, 27.8.36., p1
[211] Report of the 1936 Trade Union Congress, p372 quoted in Watkins, K.W., Britain Divided: The Effect of the Spanish Civil War on British Political Opinion, London, 1963

government represented an ideological preference for fascism over Bolshevism and connived at the defeat of the elected government of Spain.[212] Zak was a communist and the links between the two issues of Spain and the United Front discouraged the trade union and Labour leaderships from moving quickly. His amendment was lost on a card vote by 51 000 to 3 029 000. Support for non-intervention was also carried by a massive majority at the Labour Party Conference at the beginning of October. Sir Charles Trevelyan, a founder of the UDC and former Labour minister, attacked the resolution, describing the party as "beggared of policy" and concluding his speech: "...when the war that is looming comes and Japan and Germany crash in to try and destroy Soviet Russia, I hope the Labour Party will have some other policy to offer than sympathy, accompanied by bandages and cigarettes".[213]

The growing bitterness, which Trevelyan's speech reflected, was reinforced on the 7th October when Spanish delegates addressed the conference. Further consideration led the National Council of Labour to call for a meeting of the International Federation of Trade Unions and the Labour and Socialist International. On 28th October a joint meeting of the Labour Party's NEC, the Executive Committee of the PLP and the General Council of the TUC officially recognised the breakdown of non-intervention. Restoration of full commercial rights to the Spanish government, including the right to purchase munitions, was called for but support for the principal of non-intervention was not rescinded.[214]

As early as 10th October A.V. Alexander, speaking in Sheffield had declared that the non-intervention pact was being flouted by the dictatorships. He called for: "an immediate conference with the Government":

> The demand they made on the Government was that if it was proved that supplies were going to the insurgents they ought to insist upon stopping the non-intervention and the Spanish Government be allowed the means to defend itself.[215]

Two days later the Hallam Divisional Labour Party heard Charles Darvill's report on the

---

[212] c.f. Little, Douglas, "Red Scare, 1936: Anti-Bolshevism and the Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War", Journal of Contemporary History, 23 (1988)
[213] Report of the 1936 Labour Party Conference, p173 quoted in Watkins, *op cit.*
[214] Report of the 1937 Labour Party Conference, p7 quoted in *ibid.*
[215] "Sheffield M.P. Urges Spain Inquiry", The Independent, 10.10.36., p7

Edinburgh Conference and resolved: "...we call for a reversal of Policy such as will enable the Spanish government to obtain the necessary supplies and equipment to suppress the Fascist insurrection".[216] Although Alexander and Darvill were singing from the same hymn sheet, tensions over Spain did not subside. Alf Sterling wrote that communists accepted that Labour politicians were: "openly denouncing the farcical British non-intervention and giving facts... of Spain's heroic fight". In calling for: "immediate action" he went on to say, however: "If Labour leaders are too blind, or fearful to lead, we must guide them".[217] At moments such as those in January 1937 after Sheffield YCL leader and hunger-marcher, Arthur Newsum, was killed in Spain,[218] it was difficult for those within the Labour Party not to feel that their leadership's strong initial reaction had degenerated in the face of communist competition into pettiness.

Pressure from the Spanish Socialist Party brought meetings of the bureaux of the IFTU and LSI in February and a conference in London in March. Reflecting impatience in Sheffield with what was seen as the shilly-shallying of the Labour leadership, the Wisewood Women's Guild of the Cooperative Party,[219] the Hallam DLP,[220] and the Brightside DLP[221] all recorded resolutions either urging greater action on Spain or repudiating non-intervention. Echoes of disputes within the Left with regard to peace policy were not confined to the question of united action with the Communists. At least one union district council in the Sheffield area, the NUR, in a move reminiscent of the general strike against war, declared its members: "...prepared to withdraw our labour to enforce our demands". The resolution received coverage in The Daily Worker which suggests CPGB approval.[222] At the LSI conference in London, European wide industrial

---

[216] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 12.10.36.

[217] "Postbag", The Daily Worker, 12.12.36., p4

[218] "Sheffield Young Communist Feared Killed While Fighting in Spain", The Independent, 19.1.37., p7. There is a memoir, "Arthur Newsum Died in Spain", compiled from oral history sources by John Baxter in Moore, E.L. (ed), Behind the Clenched Fist - Sheffield's Aid to Spain 1936 - 1939, Sheffield, 1986, np

[219] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, Executive Committee January 1937, n.d. (but probably 7.1.37.)

[220] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 11.1.37., 8.2.37. & 15.3.37.

[221] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 17.2.37.

[222] "To Help Spain", The Independent, 25.3.37., p5 and "Meet to Honour Those Killed", The Daily Worker, 30.3.37., p2 Watkins notes that the Sheffield and Chesterfield District Council of the NUR put forward a resolution to the 1937 TUC Conference calling for a national campaign of action on Spain. Watkins, *op cit*, p177

action by trade unions to force governments to help the Spanish Republic had been rejected.

Only after the bombing of Guernica in April 1937 did the bureaux meet again. On 24th June three resolutions were adopted calling upon governments within the League of Nations to support the Spanish government. The NCL adopted the same policy on 27th July, a year after it had first opened its fund to support Spain. In attempting to understand the frustration felt by the Left it is worth noting that the STLC managed to pass an emergency resolution welcoming the 24th June decision at their delegate meeting of 29th June, four weeks before the NCL moved in the matter.

The potentially disruptive effect of the Spanish War on the peace movement was not confined to the relationship between the Labour and Communist parties nor to the ongoing tensions between *pacificist* supporters of the republicans and absolute pacifists. On the right of the peace movement, and particularly amongst religious organisations, there was no tendency to automatic support for the Spanish republicans. Much was made of attacks by anti-clerical republicans on the church during left-wing reprisals for the fascist uprising.[223] The 12th August meeting had attempted to head criticism off by specifically referring to: "the atrocity stories being so assiduously spread in an attempt to prejudice public opinion against the democratic forces in Spain". This was a problem for British Catholics[224] but since *Pax*, the Roman Catholic peace organisation, does not appear to have been active locally the important question for the Left's relationship with the wider peace movement was whether other denominations would react.

Charges of desecration did not weigh heavily in Sheffield. British Protestants' views on the war, says Michael Alpert, "reflected a long-existing view of Spain as the land of the Inquisition and extreme religious reaction".[225] Methodist minister, Revd

---

[223] The Independent recommended a pamphlet entitled The Communist Atrocities Committed in Southern Spain by the Communist Forces of the Madrid Government. "General Topics", *ibid*, 16.2.37., p3

[224] A discussion on the Catholic case for Franco was reported from one of Sheffield's Catholic churches. "General Topics", *ibid*, 6.10.36., p6. Agamus - Sheffield Notre Dame Magazine, from the local Catholic girls' school, while it reported a visit to Mussolini in 1934 during which participants "took a schoolgirl delight in making the Fascist salute" was by November 1936 reflecting the mainstream concerns of young activists in Britain: "Men, countries break their pledged word, forget their promises, and attack innocent nations with the latest products of 'Civilisation'..."

[225] Alpert, M., "Humanitarianism and Politics in the British Response to the Spanish Civil

Donald Stuart, supported his Left wing allies in December 1936 when he opined that: "Our statesmen seem to be sitting about under the straddled legs of the Fascist colossus in Europe whimpering and crying and making excuses".[226] The Sheffield Methodist Mission Messenger, allied to pacifism, remained silent about the conflict for the whole of its first phase, but amongst liberal Anglicans the Papacy's support for Franco did the Nationalists' cause no favours. "Cantab" published two articles critical of both Franco and his catholic supporters in April 1937.[227] Senior figures in the Established Church supported the policy of non-intervention. The Bishop, writing in September, treated the two-sides even-handedly and referred to "ruthlessness on both sides".[228] The Revd B. Fountaine Hinde, who although a Conservative[229] had demonstrated a strong concern with peace issues,[230] explained what he saw as Britain's particular role in the conflict: "England, having a form of government in which the nation has confidence, and free of any serious menace from either Fascism or Communism, holds the last chance of exercising a moderating influence..."[231] Allegiance to British interests through non-intervention in what the Bishop described as "fratricidal strife" was regarded by them as the epitome of the Anglo-Saxon method, steering a course of moderation between unreasonable extremes.

Although the doctrine of non-intervention was a lesson read straight from the Great War when, had the quarrel between Serbia and Austria-Hungary been successfully isolated, millions of lives could have been saved, once Labour policy officially changed in July, no one from Sheffield's Labour movement was arguing for the continuation of non-intervention. Alexander, speaking in March ruled out war on behalf of Republican Spain but not other means of support.[232] Among pacifists nationally, both Lord Ponsonby and Wilfred Wellock argued in Peace News for the preservation of non-intervention on the

---

War", European History Quarterly, 14 (1984), p 434

[226] "Awaken Public Conscience", The Independent, 7.12.36., p5

[227] "Church of England Notes", *ibid*, 23.4.37 & 30.4.37., p15

[228] "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXII No9 Sept 1936, p4

[229] He praised the National Government for serving the country "nobly" just before the 1935 General Election. "Vicar's Letter", St George's Parish Magazine, November 1935, np

[230] In September 1936 he published an anonymous, overtly pacifist, blank verse poem "The Spanish Rebellion", *ibid*, September 1936, np

[231] "Vicar's Letter", *ibid*, November 1936, np

[232] "Public Assistance Office for Industry", The Independent, 29.3.37., p5

basis that to revoke it would lead to world war.[233] This viewpoint does not seem to have been given an airing in Sheffield. Breaches of the Non-Intervention Agreement were so flagrant that most *pacificists* agreed with the Labour Party that the policy could not continue. C.W. Carpenter, paid LNU organiser in Sheffield, reiterated the point made by the Peace Council some ten months before: "The greatest crime was not that the Non-Intervention Pact had not been honoured, but that the Covenant of the League had been broken".[234] Although strict adherence to the Covenant could have called for such action, Carpenter did not go as far as the Left in called for immediate armed assistance to the Republicans. He argued instead for two international commissions to be set up by the League, one to investigate breaches of the Non-Intervention Pact and a second to search for a permanent solution.[235] This weaker proposal reflected the national LNU's stance, which Birn suggests produced a situation similar to that in the Labour Party with a pro-Republican rank and file "...impatient with a leadership which seemed to be as dilatory as the Government itself".[236] There is no evidence in Sheffield, however, that pro-Republican opinion was expressed through the LNU at this stage.

Much of what supporters of the Spanish cause did could not be placed under a consensual definition of peace activity. Aid to British volunteers fighting on the Republican side (of whom there were said to be some 20 - 25 from Sheffield by early 1937)[237] and their families, for instance, was better collected at meetings in which pacifist and non-interventionist opposition would not be encountered. Aid for Spain was the most important political campaign of its generation and by involving individuals previously active on peace issues it undoubtedly weakened the strength and continuity of peace campaigning in locations with a strong left-wing involvement in the peace movement.[238] Indeed it could be argued that while the war in Spain was crucial in the

---

[233] W. Wellock, "Spain and World War", and Lord Ponsonby, "Fallacies about the War in Spain", Peace News, No 58 24.7.37., p6 and No 61 14.8.37., p2

[234] "Greatest Crime", The Independent, 6.7.37., p9

[235] "Job for the League", *ibid*, 12.7.37., p6

[236] Birn, Donald S., The League of Nations Union, 1918 - 1945, Oxford, 1981, p186

[237] "Sheffield Young Communist Feared Killed While Fighting in Spain", *op cit.*

[238] Fyrth cites the involvement of the Sheffield Youth Peace Council in Aid for Spain. The British Youth Foodship Committee, he notes, which made some of the first major food collections for Spain, evolved from the British Youth Peace Assembly which was formed after the World Youth Peace Congress at Geneva in 1935. Fyrth, *op cit*, pp244 - 248

coalescence of the *pacificist* coalition which would eventually line up against Hitler in September 1939, it was also instrumental in breaking up the coalition of activists which had come together around bodies such as the Sheffield Peace Council during 1936. The war emphasized the policy divisions between the Left and the pacifists and the Left and those in the Labour and Liberal Parties, the LNU and the Churches who initially supported non-intervention. Ironically it did this while exacerbating the divisions on the Left between those who shared policies but not parties. So, although the Peace Council wrote to the Peace Committee of the STLC at the beginning of 1937 to ask if it could cooperate in organising the next meeting for Spain after the success of Dobbie's December 1936 gathering, the prospects for the continuation into 1937 of a genuinely "all-in" Peace Council looked decidedly shaky.

Summary:

The first Sheffield Peace Week, the most concrete expression of the "all-in" peace movement, was created out of a joint reaction against rearmament among the coalition of peace groups. This occurred at a point at which the national leaderships of the *pacificist* groups were already being forced to confront the issue of rearmament, in pursuit of the ability to impose military sanctions against an aggressor, within the context of collective security. There was, however, a general unwillingness, in keeping with an inclusive ethos, to broadcast this conclusion to a sceptical peace movement. This further opened up a gap already visible between the aspirations of the membership of organisations associated with the movement and the views of their leaderships.

The continuation of the disarmament lobby in the face of the growing threat from the actions of Japan, Italy and Germany was a legacy of the widespread view that the arms race before the Great War had led directly to the outbreak of the conflict, not least through the militaristic attitudes that it had fostered. Fascism was identified in the new era as the militaristic adjunct to rearmament. *Pacificist* resistance to rearmament was strengthened by the conclusion, drawn from recent events, that the National Government was not willing to use its weapons to enforce military sanctions within a framework of collective security. Despite Sheffield's economic involvement with armaments production, the view that money spent on armaments would be better spent on other social purposes characterised the movement.

The wide coalition of interests represented on the peace week included both

pacifists and the adherents, on the Left of the Labour Party and among communists, of a lingering war resistance. There was therefore no coherent exposition of policy at the peace week. There was resistance, muted from the Labour leadership, and open within the Established Church, to Peace Week. In the case of the Anglican hierarchy, while this reflected a conservatively inspired acceptance of rearmament, it was not allowed to lead to a breach with the LNU and left open the possibility of a *rapprochement* as the *pacificist* sections of the peace movement reluctantly relinquished disarmament as an immediate goal.

The political aspirations for a united front among the Left-wing originators of the Peace Week pre-ordained the continuation of its reorganised *ad hoc* committee as a coordinating group. Amongst the membership the focus on the International Peace Campaign was cohesive because it enjoyed the support of both the LNU and the Communist Party. The Peace Council did not, however, become the voice of *pacificism* in the city but remained wedded to inclusivity until the Spanish War revealed to the Left the incompatibility of pacifism and *pacificism*. Although the opposition to the LNU's involvement with the IPC, visible at a national level, was not publicly evident in Sheffield, doubts raised by the presence of united front campaigners within the coordinating bodies of the peace movement were expressed by participating groups. This led to a reassertion of the churches' position within the peace movement, particularly by the strongest of the denominations in Sheffield, the Methodists, at the time of the Armistice Day commemorations. This reflected tensions between the different traditions which made up the peace movement, but the Methodist leadership's increasingly pacifist stance was to increase the significance of their bid for leadership.

The activities of the Youth Peace Council revealed once more that coordination was more likely to succeed amongst groups viewed as peripheral to the power centres of their organisations. The success of the coordination was due also to the fact that the more radical and idealistic views represented by the youth groups delayed the onset of the divisions over sanctions and rearmament.

Internally Sheffield's LNU had a bad year with both the failure of the League of Nations to stop the Abyssinian War and the divisions between pacifists and sanctionists costing it membership. Outside of the LNU itself, amongst those of *pacificist* views and particularly on the Left, support for the League as the only viable international coordinating body capable of delivering collective security was growing, following its

admission of the Soviet Union. Within the Sheffield LNU as a whole, the tensions between the national leadership and the local membership were similar to an extent to those in the Labour Party and it was not clear what the local branch stood for with regard both to sanctions and rearmament.

Although disillusionment with the failure of the international system put in place during the twenties to deal effectively with the aggression of the early thirties may well have been the immediate cause of the growth of absolute pacifism after 1934, publicly spokesmen of the movement tended to look back to the Great War to explain their policy. In Sheffield pacifism had surprisingly little impact in political circles and it was amongst those without formal political adherences and amongst the nonconformist churches that its influence was increasing. Efforts by the local No More War Movement to take advantage of this upsurge in popularity were rebuffed by the leaders of the local Labour Movement. The Peace Pledge Union was slow to activate in Sheffield and the diffidence of the local NMWM leadership to get involved, in the hope of fostering a newer, more dynamic leadership, made the organisation relatively ineffective leaving those rooted in other, older traditions as the local voices of pacifism.

Not unexpectedly, given the importance of Left wing organisations in the peace movement in Sheffield, the Spanish War had a considerable impact on it. In its initial phase it promoted unity on the Left across the divide over gradualism and revealed similarities of attitude which the adherence of the national Labour leadership to a policy of non-intervention was to undermine. In the medium term, however, despite the churches' failure to react strongly against the Republicans after the anti-clerical outrages of the first weeks of the conflict, the war weakened the peace movement as a result not only of the divisions it fostered within and between affiliated groups, but also because it provided an alternative focus for activists.

Chapter 5:

No Halfway House and... No Compromise

From the Unity Campaign to Saving China and Peace

(January 1937 - January 1938)

During 1937 the inclusive coalition which had formed around the Sheffield Peace Council, already weakened by a leadership bid from the pacifist-inclined Methodist Church, unravelled after the defeat of those promoting the united front and as a, largely practical, result of the war in Spain. While differences over non-intervention, the united front, rearmament and ARP continued to be debated within the peace movement, those who held *pacificist* views were moving, albeit at a wide range of speeds, towards a largely similar pragmatic strategy to contain fascist ambitions.

Although these debates still cut across pacifist and *pacificist* allegiances, the fundamental divide was increasingly between those who were willing to react against aggression through economic and military sanctions and those who were not. The isolationist implications of pacifism were becoming visible even in the superficially similar policies which had originally promoted unity and a distinctly pacifist agenda was evolving in competition with the wider peace movement's strategy.

The Unity Campaign:

The strongest challenge to the Labour NEC's opposition to a United Front was mounted when on 16th and 17th January the Socialist League voted at a special conference to launch a unity campaign with the Communist Party and ILP.[1] The NEC promptly issued an "Appeal for Party Loyalty". When the issue was first aired locally at the STLC January Delegate Meeting a split was revealed. While Darvill argued that the NEC needed: "...to give members something to which the could be loyal", Hobson pledged his support to the appeal saying: "He would continue to work in the Party for the rectification of those things which were wrong inside the Party".[2]

The Peace Council's identification with the united front ensured that renewed

---

[1] The national campaign is dealt with in Miliband, R., Parliamentary Socialism, London, 1961, pp249 - 253

[2] "Sheffield Labour Party Critics of Party's United Front Ban". The Independent, 27.1.37., p7

divisions would have a deleterious effect on the peace movement. The Shiregreen Women's Section wrote to Hobson asking if they could still be affiliated to Sheffield Peace Council. Hobson replied that "as this was in abeyance at the moment" the money they had collected on its behalf should be forwarded to the Spanish Workers' Fund.[3] The attack on the Peace Council continued when the STLC Executive voted to disaffiliate from it on account of an unspecified "variance of policy".[4] The prognostication for the continuance of a left-wing alliance within an "all-in" peace council was not good. Darvill's own position, as promoter of these policies, looked shaky ahead of the STLC elections of 23rd February. He was attacked on 22nd February by a letter signed "Be Loyal" which estimated that Sheffield sympathisers with the "so-called Unity manifesto" numbered under one thousand.[5]

In the event Darvill was re-elected "by a large majority"[6] and delegates referred back the recommendation that they disaffiliate from the peace council.[7] Sharrard congratulated Darvill whose majority, he said, was: "...symptomatic, clear and convincing, and gives him an authority that cannot be lightly considered or arrogantly brushed aside".[8] The Executive decided not to disaffiliate and this was confirmed at the March Delegates' Meeting.[9] Hallam DLP (Darvill's own) continued to display strong support for unity and a procedural move to have one such motion disallowed was defeated by the Management Committee.[10]

Nationally the campaign against the dissidents was strengthened when the NEC

---

[3] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 20.1.37. - 27.1.37. It is rather difficult to understand Hobson's reply since on the 15th December the Peace Council had been invited to meet the STLC's Peace Committee and on 5th January it had been reported by Darvill to the Executive, of which Hobson was Secretary, that such a meeting had indeed taken place.

[4] STLC Minute Books, 3.2.37.

[5] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 22.2.37., p6

[6] The previous year four ballots had been necessary to decide between the eight candidates and there had been dissatisfaction from the industrial side of the council. "Four Ballots", *ibid*, 26.2.36., p5 & "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 31.3.36., p6. Darvill reiterated his support for the Unity Campaign three days after his victory in the STLC's Presidential election. "Sheffield Labour President's Support for United Front", *ibid*, 27.2.37., p12

[7] STLC Minute Books, 23.2.37., and "'Fascist' Appeal to Terriers", The Independent, 24.2.37., p7

[8] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 2.3.37., p6

[9] STLC Minute Books, 16.3.37. & 23.3.37.

[10] Hallam DLP Minute Books, 15.3.37. & 12.4.37.

announced that from 1st June Socialist League and Labour Party membership would be incompatible.[11] Within the STLC Hobson accused Mrs Woods and Howard Hill of dual membership of the Labour and Communist Parties. Mrs Woods denied the charge immediately but Hill, while denying membership, admitted "active association with the Young Communist League". Gummed slips "outlining the duties of affiliated organisations" and 30 copies of a circular called The Labour Party and the So-Called "Unity Campaign" were ordered with the Executive requiring that each of its members sign a copy.[12]

As far as Sheffield Peace Council was concerned these moves were too late to undermine the activities of its Labour Party associates in connection with Peace Week. The unity argument was not, however, finished. Percy Hargreaves, described as secretary of the Sheffield Branch of the Socialist League, announced that at Whitsuntide the Socialist League would dissolve itself leaving a "Committee of Party Members Sympathetic to Unity" to continue the campaign within the Labour Party.[13] Darvill, his colleagues at Hallam and Councillors Bingham, Beech and Wilkinson all continued their support into this final stage of the campaign while those, like the Cooperative Party, who had opposed the campaign from the start reaffirmed their opposition.[14] Discussions on party discipline continued to affect the peace council. The Shiregreen Women's Section, who had supplied a decorated dray entitled "Peace" for the May Day parade, withdrew from the Peace Council on 10th June.[15]

On 28th July the NEC prohibited any body within the Labour Party from pursuing the goal of unity between the CPGB, ILP and Labour Party. In Sheffield Hobson dismissed the campaign as consisting of "...one or two members of the Labour Party who think unity is essential" and moved to distance the STLC from its president's

---

[11] Shackleton suggests that the overwhelming stress on loyalism in the Labour Party was as a result of the "takeover" of the party by the TUC after 1931 and the extension of a trade union ethos of solidarity into the political sphere. This meant that: "...loyalty to majority decision could be enthroned as the overriding obligation of membership". Shackleton, R., "Trade Unions and the Slump", in Pimlott B., and Cook, C. (eds) Trade Unions in British Politics, London, 1982, pp130 - 131

[12] STLC Minute Books, 6.4.37., 13.4.37 & 20.4.37.

[13] "Avoiding Split", The Independent, 11.5.37., p5

[14] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Books, 24.2.37., 26.8.37. & 7.10.37.

[15] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Books, 10.6.37.

activities.[16] The Executive had already voted on 6th July by 12 to 4 not to recognise the Unity Committee. The resolution adopted at the full STLC meeting: "That this delegate meeting of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council supports the principle of Unity of all the Working Class organisations within the constitution of the Labour Party",[17] signalled the Unity Campaign's defeat. At the end of August The Independent noted that the Sheffield party had sent no resolution on the United Front to the forthcoming National Conference.[18] The annual autumn ritual of the declaration of support for Labour candidates in the local elections by the Communist Party reinforced the impression of defeat. Basil Barker explained that Communist support rested on the view that Labour candidates represented working class organisations rather than specific party policies and that unconditional support was offered "...to prove the sincerity" of their demand for unity.[19]

The longstanding impetus for unification continued through unofficial channels. The Independent's London columns first mentioned the Left Book Club in March 1936.[20] Winnie Albaya remembered a local group starting in Sheffield before the Spanish War[21] but the first record of a local branch does not occur until January 1937 when Hallam DLP received a letter inviting them to the film "The Defence of Madrid".[22] In February The Daily Worker printed an appeal by Norman Brown to those in Sheffield interested in forming a Workers' Theatre Group.[23]

It is a significant coincidence that the local Left Book Club, to which the new Left Theatre Club was affiliated, received its first press coverage in June 1937 as the Unity Campaign moved into its final phase and ultimate defeat.[24] Thereafter both clubs

---

[16] "Snub for City Unity Campaign", The Independent, 26.7.37., p5
[17] STLC Minute Books, 27.7.37.
[18] "United Front", The Independent, 28.8.37., p5
[19] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 24.9.37., p6
[20] "Talk of London", *ibid*, 2.3.36., p6
[21] Interview with Winnie Albaya, 1988
[22] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 11.1.37.
[23] "What's On" & "Postbag", The Daily Worker, 13.2.37., p6 & 19.2.37., p4
[24] "Left Theatre Club for Sheffield" & "Self Interest", The Independent, 5.6.37., p6 & p8. Julian Symons writes that: "...the movement had a force and impetus that, in spite of its founders' denial of party political aims, made it in some ways a rival of the Labour Party". Symons, J., The Thirties a Dream Revolved, London, 1960 (revised ed. 1975), p97

received several notices, with the Left Theatre particularly, canvassing for support.[25] The connection between the book club and the peace movement was seen as being especially close. In her interview Winnie Albaya said:

> The Left Book club was a peace movement to my mind because it was widening the base of all the people who were anti-fascist. It was giving them information, knowledge, sources and building up a very wide-based peaceful movement.

The Left Book Club's first large scale meeting of 1938, featuring Victor Gollancz, John Strachey and the "Red" Dean of Canterbury, Revd Hewlett Johnson, was billed as "a demonstration against war and Fascism".[26] Although the interviewee speaks of a wider peace movement, the withdrawal of her circle from the Educational Settlement to join the Left Book Club represented a diminution of contact with those outside the Left and signalled an introspective vision paralleled in many other parts of the peace movement by a growing mood of retrenchment. Winne Albaya recalled meeting individuals such as Gertrude Ward at the Educational Settlement but reports of the January Book Club meeting suggest a narrower focus, with Harry Pollitt on the platform and no questions called from the audience.[27] Continuation through this medium magnified therefore, rather than diminished, the deleterious effect that the Unity Campaign's defeat had on the peace movement.

Unofficial contacts certainly continued through the Aid for Spain Campaign and the Youth Foodship Committee:

> Following cooperation between members of the Firth Park group of the Communist Party, members of the Labour Party and of the Cooperative organisations during the Trades Council house-to-house collections for Spain, a committee for Spanish aid was set up.[28]

This was how agitation for an "all-in" peace movement had commenced after the Peace

---

[25] Letter recorded in Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 14.7.37.
[26] "Sheffield Rally", The Independent, 28.1.38., p3.
[27] "Service at Heart of Soviet Principles", *ibid*, 3.2.38., p7. "Unconvinced" who wrote complaining about the lack of questions also threw doubt on the destination of funds collected for Spain and China at the meeting and was probably not a reliable witness.
[28] "Charles Laughton to Open Exhibition in Aid of Spain", The Daily Worker, 12.4.37., p2 (the title does not refer to events in Sheffield).

Ballot and it was significant that in 1937 the same process, probably among the same people, was directing energies away from peace issues.

The Communist Party itself was looking inward, like other groups, to a restatement of its own identity. In January it sponsored two series of lectures on "The Theoretical Basis of Communism"[29] and "Leninism".[30] Although the Right's efforts to exploit the Soviet purges continued to be unsuccessful,[31] the tone adopted by letters defending the Russian trials suggested that the defeat of the Unity Campaign had put the party on the defensive:

> With no platform from which to spread their counter-revolutionary propaganda, the agents of capitalism resorted to sabotage and murder in league with foreign Powers. Those who would endeavour to defend such agents cast very grave reflections on their own integrity.[32]

Even through the indirect means by which the Communist Party sought to influence the peace movement, the events of 1937 left it with a diminished role.

The Impact of Labour Party Attitudes to Rearmament on the Peace Movement:

Miliband offers an evenhanded critique of the policies of both the Left and Right of the Labour Party at this juncture. He dismisses the Left's contention that: "...rearmament must be opposed until the Tories had been replaced" as "blinkered".[33] On the other hand, while agreeing with the Labour leadership's policy of collective security through a measured rearmament, in keeping with the dominant historiography of his period, he is critical of the failure to make this view impact upon the National Government.[34] He argues that in rejecting the Left's option of extra-parliamentary activity in the political and industrial spheres the leadership opted for "the politics of paralysis".

---

[29] "What's On" & 'Postbag", *ibid*, 11.1.37 & 13.1.37., p6
[30] "Lecture on Lenin", The Independent, 15.11.37., p3
[31] "General Topics", *ibid*, 27.1.37., p3 Letters on the Russian purges appeared from the Communists' local organiser, John Kane on: 29.1.37., p5, 5.2.37., p6, 16.6.37., p6, and 17.6.37., p6. Letters from Kane and Howard Hill criticising "Big Ben's" snide review of a book about the Moscow City Council were printed on 9.3.37., p6 and another letter from George Allison, similarly defending Soviet democracy, appeared on 16.12.37., p6.
[32] *Ibid*
[33] R. Miliband, *op cit*, p254
[34] *Ibid*, pp234 - 235

Although constitutionalism was the ideological basis for both the Party's and the TUC's failures of mobilisation, the matter was not discussed in these terms in Sheffield. Those taking a constitutionalist view talked, as Hobson had done, in terms of loyalty to an organisation still reeling from the betrayals of 1931. Similarly, for those inclined to a "revolutionary" view, support for the United Front reflected not only an ideological position, but also personal experience of activism: "...Whenever there is anything of value to be done for the working class we always find that the communists are there helping us", said an STLC delegate supporting the Unity Campaign.[35] The Labour leadership attacked the critics within its own party: "...with a fierce energy and a dedicated ingenuity it altogether failed to display against the Government", writes Miliband. This contrast between the dynamism of the activist Left and the ponderousness of the Labour establishment led one STLC delegate to describe the Unity Campaign as: "a return of enthusiasm".

Events in Sheffield illustrate how this was exacerbated by the context in which the party found itself. Clement Attlee visited the city to give a detailed account, based on Labour's Immediate Programme, of the party's plans to redress the inequalities which disfigured the interwar years.[36] His speech outlined much that is now recognised as having made Attlee's post-war government one of the most radical and significant administrations of the century. The short section on foreign affairs reaffirmed Labour's acceptance of rearmament while carefully acknowledging that those who opposed the policy represented the party's long term view:

> Until universal disarmament and the creation of an international police force can be affected... a Labour Government would maintain efficiently and co-ordinate the Defence Services, so that Britain might take its part in Collective Security.

Attlee dealt with the difficulties of Labour control of military forces based on values and traditions antipathetic to the party's ethos by suggesting that: "Armament manufacturers would be nationalised and the three fighting forces democratised". The necessarily measured and balanced words of the middle-aged Attlee would have been contrasted by contemporaries with an interview with Noel Carritt, a young schoolmaster

---

[35] "Sheffield Labour Critics of Party's United Front Ban", The Independent, 27.1.37., p7
[36] "Labour's Plan of Action", *ibid.* 21.6.37., p8 Labour's Immediate Programme had been published in March.

who had left, unannounced, for Spain during the 1936 Christmas holidays and who returned on leave almost a year later as a Political Commissar of the British Battalion of the International Brigade. Beneath a frankly romantic portrait of his tanned, be-bereted and booted, figure, Carritt indicated, in contrast to the Left's attitude to British rearmament, how uncomplicated the acceptance of a just war had become for those who had gone to fight in Spain: "They are fighting for what they think is right. Many of them fought in the Great War, and knew what war means, but they consider the ideals at stake in the Spanish struggle are worth fighting for".[37]

Impatience with the Labour Party was in part the product of activists who, having taken refuge in the stark simplicities of the Aid for Spain Campaign,[38] then criticised the hesitancy of the party's handling of other more complex issues, by the standards of a situation where enthusiasm for a single, clearly defined objective could suffice. The CPGB stoked the flames of dissent by underlining the link between Spain and domestic arguments over the United Front, stressing in the words of a sub-heading in The Daily Worker: "British Labour Unity Needed to Save Democracy in Spain".[39] Bureaucratic obstructions such as Sheffield and Eccleshall Cooperative Society's refusal to sell tokens for the Milk for Spain Campaign in the winter of 1937 outraged Labour activists. Hallam DLP on this occasion passed a motion expressing "utmost disgust".[40]

Sharrard's paean to Darvill after his re-election delineated the STLC's President's qualities in terms of an "enthusiasm" which indicated support for unity: "Mr Darvell, [sic] whose personality and principles are linked with a mentality that is bright

---

[37] "Sheffield Man Home from Spanish Front", *ibid*, 1.12.37., p3 Carritt addressed the STLC on 21st December.

[38] The situation in Spain was not, of course, as simple as Aid for Spain meetings implied. The suppression of the POUM appears to have gone largely unremarked owing to the weakness of the ILP in Sheffield, although The Daily Worker carried a number of articles on the matter in May and June. c.f. J.R. Campbell, "Is the ILP for Winning the War or Aiding Franco?", 22.5.37., p3. Carritt, during his STLC address had presumably referred to the matter for the delegates: "welcomed the news of the unified command of the forces". STLC Minute Books, 21.12.37.

[39] The Daily Worker, 10.6.37., p1

[40] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 13.12.37. Brightside Divisional Labour Party similarly passed a resolution asking that: "...the fault be remedied immediately". Minute Book. 24.11.37. Criticism of official Labour Party failures in fundraising for Spain continued right through the war and was the subject of a highly critical speech at the 1939 Party Conference. Fyrth, J., The Signal was Spain, London. 1986, p265

and an activity that is vigorous and unceasing..."[41] The difficulty of applying schematic ideological models to party divisions in Sheffield is illustrated by the fact that the dynamism of Darvill's leadership, based on support for extra-parliamentary activism, received the support of the executive committee of Brightside DLP, the most loyalist within the Sheffield party.[42] Similarly, loyalists like Hobson and Thraves combined opposition to the Unity Campaign with a support for disarmament which, despite the compromise outlined by Attlee, was widely at variance with national policy. Just a month after the defeat of the Unity Campaign Park Division approved a resolution for National Conference criticising rearmament policy:

> Believing that the National Government is not prepared to defend Democracy against the Fascist powers, this conference of the Labour Party, while in opposition should oppose consistently the rearmament programme of the National Government, at the same time carrying on a national campaign for collective security and a peace front within the League of Nations.[43]

There continued, therefore, to be policy alliances on peace issues across the unity divide. Darvill himself, speaking at the beginning of the year, had said that he regarded opposition to decisions on Spain and rearmament taken at the 1936 conference as more important than the new United Front campaign.[44]

In the narrow focus of a single city's Labour Party it is difficult to reflect the schematic analysis attempted by Miliband who distinguishes "four distinct currents of thought in the Labour movement" with regard to rearmament.[45] These are not so readily disentangled at grass-roots level and it was a coalition of the three viewpoints held in opposition to rearmament that successfully dominated the Sheffield party. The first of Miliband's currents "the straightforward pacifist view" is described by him "as by then of marginal importance". Despite the fact that in C.H. Wilson, Sheffield had one of only six pacifist Labour MPs,[46] this was true of the local party although Thraves, who was a

---

[41] "Hear All Sides', The Independent, 2.3.37., p6
[42] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 17.2.37.
[43] "United Front", The Independent, 28.8.37. p5
[44] "General Topics", *ibid*, 15.1.37., p6
[45] Miliband, *op cit*, p246
[46] This was the number who voted against the Service Estimates in July 1937, the small extent of pacifism in the Labour Party caused consternation in the letters page of Peace News.

popular speaker at both Labour Party and LNU gatherings, continued to deploy a pacifist rhetoric.[47] Miliband offers a fuller description of the second current:

> ...belief in Labour's traditional programme of disarmament by international agreement coupled with an increasingly inconsistent acceptance of the obligation of collective action in defence of Labour's principles, and support for the League of Nations.

The difficulty in attempting to differentiate this current from pacifist thought lies in the fact that until events of the thirties forced *pacificists* to redefine "collective action" and "support for the League" into a clear commitment to economic and military sanctions, many pacifists had found nothing in Labour party policy, even after the renewed commitment to the League, inconsistent with their beliefs. Thraves bridged these two currents and the same could be said of the opposition to rearmament which continued to be voiced by the women's sections of the Sheffield party. At the autumn conference of the Sheffield Labour Women's Advisory Council, Councillor Mrs E. Birch declared, "I am definitely opposed to our Labour Party agreeing to any armaments scheme whatever".[48] On the other hand there is no doubt that officially the Women's Advisory Council supported precisely the line Miliband indicates. The resolution at their 29th April Peace Rally was "for Disarmament and Collective Security".[49]

Nor was this second strand of thought easy to distinguish from the opposition to rearmament laid out in the last "...most 'ideological' of the four" currents personified by Darvill:

> Personally I am convinced that we have no alternative but to oppose, fearlessly and relentlessly, the re-armament programme of the "National" Government whose pro-Fascist policies in Europe is largely responsible for the present dangerous crisis, and whose future policy would be to use armaments, not in the upholding of Collective Security, but in the furtherance of its own imperialist aims.[50]

This critique was shared by the Communist Party which opposed the Labour Party's

---

[47] "He hoped they could learn the lesson that force never had, and never would, settle anything", Thraves said when opening the Spanish Exhibition in Sheffield. "Air Raid Precautions That Failed", The Independent, 17.8.37., p5

[48] "Labour Women Disagree With Party on Arms", *ibid*, 18.10.37., p5

[49] Sheffield Trade and Labour Council Annual Report 1937, Sheffield, 1938, p31

[50] *Ibid*, p7

abstention on the Service Estimates.[51] Bill Moore's pamphlet for the Peace Council reflected this stance: "The Government's Rearmament Programme is aimed, not at supporting Collective Security, but at making the Government independent of Collective Security..."[52] This current of opposition was not exclusive to organs of the ideological Left. The strand of socialist pacifism which had been largely represented by the No More War Movement was by this date subsumed in the Peace Pledge Union and the same view could be found reflected in Peace News: "Our only chance to strengthen democracy and build a socialist world is to refuse to cooperate with the "National" Government, and resist all forms of militarism (the Government would never go to war except in the interests of capitalists)".[53]

While Miliband's taxonomy is useful in understanding the competing strategies within the Labour Party, it is less helpful in comprehending the political tensions within a fragmenting peace movement. Although the impetus behind efforts to build an "all-in" peace movement had diminished by this juncture, two, to some extent conflicting, areas of agreement formed possible grounds for a consensual approach to world pacification. The growing consensus within *pacificism* competed with a continuing movement allying disarmament campaigners with a pacifist opposition to rearmament. The difficulty of analysing what was happening to opinion at a local level is compounded by the fact that for a large number of activists these competing visions were not mutually exclusive. There was nothing inconsistent in the two propositions that fascism needed to be met with force, but the present regime was not to be trusted with larger armaments. The conflict lay in the fact that the first proposition was pragmatic and relativist, that the evils of war were less than the evils of fascist domination, but the second was ideological and in danger of becoming absolutist, in no circumstances could one trust the National Government to fight fascism. Practical considerations dictated, however, that if fascism was to be restrained then a point would be reached when German and Italian rearmament had to trigger a response in those countries backing Collective Security, whatever their current governments. What was lacking in the peace movement was a debate about the relative strengths of the countries of the League of Nations and those whose ambitions

---

[51] "Labour Silence on Arms", The Daily Worker, 23.7.37., p1

[52] Moore, E.L., Sheffield and Rearmament an Exposure of the "Defence" Programme, Sheffield Peace Council, 1937, p16

[53] "An Open Letter to the Labour Party", Peace News, no 59, 31.7.37., p9

threatened them. Even amongst those who accepted the need for rearmament on this basis, it is difficult to find any evidence of informed opinion on this balance of force.

This element was lacking even from the speeches of A.V. Alexander, the local figure most likely to be able to provide such an analysis. Outside of those associated with the Communist Party, for whom the threat to Russia posed by a rearmed Tory Britain was a dominant concern, the inability to discuss actual levels of necessary arms expenditure was in part psychological. After two decades of agitation in favour of disarmament, it was difficult for activists to envisage a peace campaign calling for sufficient League of Nations' tanks and aeroplanes to make Germany or Italy think twice about their next adventure. This was thought to be almost as true of the general population as of those in the peace movement and a shift away from the clear message of disarmament to more complex policies around armed Collective Security carried political dangers. Editorials in The Independent demonstrated that any attempt to discuss an international settlement based on military sanctions was likely to be used to discredit the peace movement: "Our Peace Council would doubtless have liked Britain to carry on alone to the point of military action - even as some would have us do in Spain to-day",[54] wrote "General Topics".

The dualistic reaction of the Sheffield Labour Party, which voted in favour of loyalty while remaining fundamentally opposed to rearmament, one of the key changes of policy of the party to which it was declaring its fealty, was symptomatic of the fragmentation of the peace movement in Sheffield. Efforts at a national level by a number of peace and political organisations to provide distinctive policy leads were confused and to some extent counteracted by local loyalties. The breakdown of the consensus between pacifists and *pacificists* did not in its early stages, therefore, provide a number of core groups whose competing strategies for world pacification gave peace activists clear choices of allegiance. Policy fault lines went through, as well as between, organisations and the shifting alliances this produced continued to allow concerted action by groups at a local level which was not necessarily consistent with their national leaderships' declared aims.

---

[54] "General Topics", The Independent, 16.4.37., p6

Sheffield Peace Council and the Second Sheffield Peace Week:

Events in the latter half of 1936 and tensions on the Left in the early months of 1937 scaled down considerably the larger hopes on which the Peace Council had been founded. Although the Peace Council had not suspended its activities as Hobson had suggested,[55] tensions between it and the STLC ensured that the combined meeting with the Peace Committee on Spain never took place.[56] The first public indication that the Council was continuing was a letter from Bill Moore, published on 3rd April, criticising Sir Ronald Matthew's claim that only 10% of Sheffield's metallurgical production was for armaments work.

The second Peace Week, like the first, was prompted by the annual Armaments White Paper. Moore's pamphlet Sheffield and Rearmament, around which the week was based, had been written during March 1937. It reflected a particular strand of CPGB peace activity. Pollitt himself had made a similar statistical presentation to the commission on armaments two years earlier. Sheffield and Rearmament was the summative document of the first "idealist" phase of the Sheffield peace movement of the later thirties, allying as it did a consensual rhetoric to a highly ideological, communist-inspired analysis. Despite Moore's denial in a subsequent argument with The Independent, there is no doubt that it espoused war resistance:

> In the last analysis, it is upon the men and women of Sheffield, especially upon the men who work in these vital firms, that the Government depends. It is no exaggeration to say that these men hold in their hands the key to world peace; for just as the rest of the nations wait upon the British Government, wait to see which way the "cat will jump", so the policy of the Government waits upon the attitude of the citizens of Sheffield.[57]

In following, as his statistical base, the well-trodden path of the arms inquiries, Moore rehearsed the failure of Britain to disarm after the Great War and the similarity of the contemporary arms build up to that which had occurred before 1914. He demonstrated that the total expenditure on debts and pensions accrued during the First World War and

---

[55] In February, Hallam DLP confirmed the names of their delegates to the Peace Council and in March the Management Committee voted to oppose the disaffiliation of the STLC. Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 8.2.37. and 15.3.37.
[56] STLC Minute Books, 8.2.37.
[57] Moore, *op cit*, p1

the current military expenditure on rearmament amounted to "over 57% of the Budget" for 1936 - 7. This he concluded was diverting resources away from working class families.

Turning to Sheffield, Moore listed the larger companies operating in the city and their arms trade involvement. He showed to what extent both the dividends and profits of these companies had benefited from rearmament and how dependent this new found prosperity was on arms, despite the repeated denials of industry bosses. Arms expenditure had not peaked, wrote Moore, but originated in plans laid out by several companies as far back as 1932. The date was significant since it was before Hitler came to power in Germany and thus officially before rearmament began. Moore concluded the first part of his argument with five points assessing: "the meaning of this vast arms production from the aspect of private production":

> 1. It means Colossal Profits.
> 2. It still leaves the situation where private firms cater for foreign as well as for the home government.
> 3. It indicates some long-standing agreements between the government and the arms manufacturers.
> 4. It means a cutting down on civil and commercial work.
> 5. Finally, it means a slump in the near future.[58]

The second section of the pamphlet looked at the effects of this expansion of arms production on workers. Moore's prognosis was that no wage increases would come from higher profits, that trade union rights would be a casualty of "patriotic" production, that the cost of living would rise and that the authorities would attempt to introduce conscription to man the new armaments. Another unwelcome result in the event of war would be aerial bombardment. Air Raid Precautions wrote Moore, after examining gas masks, incendiary bombs and high explosives, were futile. The purpose of ARP was only secondarily to save life. Primarily precautions were being introduced, like conscription and "...the shackling of Trade Unions" to produce a psychology of war: "...to obtain military discipline on a national scale".[59] Rearmament was intended to make the Government independent of Collective Security. It was possible for ordinary citizens, Moore contended, to compel a reversal of this action through events like peace week. He

---

[58] *Ibid.* pp7 - 8
[59] *Ibid.* p14

called for support for the four points of the IPC, abolition of the private manufacture of arms, support for trade union rights, an end to Duff Cooper's aggressive army recruiting campaign and improved air raid precautions. "Sheffield is paying the piper", concluded Moore's exposition, "Let Sheffield call the tune".[60]

The local press always reacted strongly against criticism of Sheffield's industrial base and the tone of The Independent's review of the Peace Council's pamphlet was a foregone conclusion. "General Topics" began his comments: "As I write the composition of the Sheffield Peace Council eludes my memory. But judging by the pamphlet 'Sheffield and Rearmament' which it has just published, it must have a distinct Left-wing bias".[61] Later the writer went further and implied that "Russian Gold" was financing the council's activities.[62] This drew a reply both from Moore[63] and from the Council's treasurer R. Smith, of the LNU who, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Sheffield Liberal Federation, wryly commented that he had always believed: "...that all unqualified Liberals were of the Left rather than the Right Wing in politics".[64]

Like many on the Right the journalist's understanding of peace movement policies was superficial and his accusation that the pamphlet supported unilateral disarmament was wide of the mark. Moore in replying laid out the contention shared by the wide *pacificist* grouping within the peace movement: "...that the collective strength of the peace-loving countries is at the present moment sufficient to stop any aggressor; that such vast rearmament is therefore unnecessary for Collective Security". Subsequent estimations of the relative military strengths of the two sides have generally concluded that, at least up to 1936 - 1937, it was the lack of political will, rather than armaments, which failed to prevent German expansion in Europe. "General Topics" pointed out that this failure was not the sole responsibility of the British Government and that there was a contradiction between these concerns about collective security and air raids and the peace movement's unwillingness to spend more on arms.

Sheffield and Rearmament revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of the Left's efforts to lead the peace movement from a united front perspective. Its policy was

---

[60] *Ibid*, p18
[61] "General Topics", The Independent, 16.4.37., p6
[62] *Ibid*, 23.4.37., p6
[63] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 24.4.37., p6
[64] *Ibid*, 27.4.37., p6

to create a popular movement which would force the British government to espouse a *pacificist* collective security, protecting not only the capitalist European states but also the Soviet Union. There were two caveats. Firstly the Left would not rearm the current British government because they believed it to be secretly in sympathy with fascist aims and secondly they wanted to use the same popular peace movement in the event of a war of which they did not approve in a strategy of war resistance. The strength of the policy was that it melded the peace movement's concerns into a consistent ideological whole. Its weakness was that because in the wider peace movement individual groups agreed with only parts of the policy it created both confusion and suspicion. "Realist" allies could accept only the first part of the policy while pacifists found solace only in the caveats. Outside of the context of the Left's perspective these views were becoming increasingly incompatible and in the atmosphere of distrust engendered by the unity campaign the very strengths of the analysis worked against it. The fact that within the agenda of other organisations these policies were inconsistent, coupled with the revolutionary rhetoric in which this cooperation without compromise was couched, laid the writer open to the charge that he pursued a hidden agenda.[65]

The hostility of the local press dulled the impact of Sheffield's second Peace Week. The opening City Hall meeting on Sunday 25th April addressed by Eleanor Barton, Geoffrey Mander MP, and O. Votjisek was not reported in The Independent.[66] Indeed, despite a full programme, the first meeting to receive press coverage was the Youth Meeting on Thursday night. A somewhat confused report illustrated that the *pacificist* message of the majority of the movement was being lost in its inclusivity and through the Left's objections to rearmament. Dr Alun Edwards spoke from the pacifist position, while Mrs S. Hughes of the Cambridge Scientists' Anti-War Group urged that the money being spent on new arms would be better employed on ARP.[67]

The confusion was exacerbated by the longest article on the subject of peace

---

[65] Stanley Weintraub reports that the poet Stephen Spender recorded something very similar with regard to Spain: "The Communists, Spender saw, used united fronts in order to dominate them from within, and forced men of goodwill who began to recognise the fact into a struggle of conscience which caused a deep division amongst the supporters of the Republic". Weintraub, S., The Last Great Cause, The Intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War, London, 1968, p59

[66] All the meetings discussed in connection with the peace week were listed on the back of Sheffield and Rearmament, *op cit.*

[67] "Men Hounded to War", The Independent, 30.4.37., p5

during the week, the third in a series of six entitled "If War Comes". Joan Kennedy's piece was feminist and this theme was much stronger than any anti-war sentiment:

> No one more than a woman recognises the futility of war. Yet were war to come upon us, though woman would resent it, she would change chaos to order, would buckle to, and adapt her life to war conditions.[68]

In a gushing essay Kennedy appeared to regard war as a welcome forum for women to demonstrate how "splendid" they could be: "Another war would be the iron test of womanhood", she wrote. Published on the day after the women's peace meeting, the sentiments were certainly not those that would have been reported from the Victoria Hall. The poor publicity following press rejection of Sheffield and Rearmament, cannot but have suggested to the wider peace movement that a frank statement of ideologically inspired activism limited its appeal in a situation where only large scale public support could allow it to influence foreign policy.

The second Sheffield Peace Week was the last public act of the Peace Council. No notice of the organisation's demise was ever posted so cause of death can only be tentatively ascribed to the triumph of those forces that were restricting the council's activities during the spring: the alternative demands of Aid for Spain and the failure of the Unity Campaign. Bill Moore, who had done so much to promote its work, gained employment at about this time and was advised that continued prominence on the council might threaten his position.[69]

The Revival of the League of Nations Union:

Efforts to revive the LNU in Sheffield proved effective. The writer of "General Topics" in The Independent, a sceptic as far as the union was concerned, acknowledged at the beginning of February that the LNU were very active in the district.[70] Even the social correspondent of the paper reporting that tickets for an LNU social evening in October were: "selling like hot cakes" remarked that: "Six months ago a social on the same lines might easily have been a failure. There is a very definite awakening to the

---

[68] Joan Kennedy, "If War Comes - 3", *ibid*, 28.4.37., p6
[69] Bill Moore interview with the writer, 4.5.90.
[70] "General Topics", The Independent, 9.2.37., p6

responsibility of the individual in the cause of peace".[71] The resilience of League ideals amongst the social grouping addressed by "Round of Sheffield" was a surprising factor. For while nonconformism, whose dissenting conscience had historically engendered peace agitation, remained strong in the city, the Liberal Party, which was the political expression of such views, had disappeared earlier than in many other localities under combined pressure from a Conservative Party heavily involved in arms sales and a radical Labour movement. Sheffield was an unexpected venue for an LNU revival.

Many organisations had moved towards the LNU's position but in Sheffield 1937 witnessed, not a takeover of the union by those now in agreement with it, but rather a recovery of the initiative by the LNU in coordinating a peace movement which had appeared, in the days of the Sheffield Peace Council, to have passed into the control of a coalition of the Left. On the 18th September a conference organised by the LNU involving representatives of 85 different organisations in Sheffield laid plans to continue the International Peace Campaign in the city, including a 1938 peace week.[72] In so doing the LNU recovered for itself the central role it had enjoyed at the time of Peace Ballot and made itself successor to the peace council. Nor was this simply *faute de mieux*. Coordination by the LNU was preferred by a number of organisations to leadership from groupings inspired by the united front. The Cooperative Party, for instance, had refused to involve itself with the IPC through the Sheffield Peace Council but, having affiliated to the LNU, it felt sufficient confidence in its ally to reply to a headquarters' letter calling for a distinctive Cooperative Peace Policy that: "...any further central effort would complicate the work of the LNU and the IPC Committee in Sheffield".[73] While this endorsement was largely the product of the Labour leadership's political agenda it was also a tribute to the ability of the LNU's newly appointed professional organiser, C.W. Carpenter, and the district branches' determination to retain a sense of direction and purpose despite disagreements over policy and principle. Not only do records from 1937 show no sign of a diminution in the union's characteristic activities but they also indicate some notable advances: A canvass of Firth Park was undertaken in support of the Branch

---

[71] Constance Lister, "Round of Sheffield", *ibid*, 9.10.37., p6

[72] "Plans to Win Sheffield Youth for Peace", *ibid*, 20.9.37., p5. Records in The Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Books, 24.6.37. & 7.10.37 indicate that the Sheffield LNU Branch called the conference.

[73] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 11.12.37.

which had been formed there in 1935,[74] a shortlived Woodhouse Branch was formed,[75] 200 new members were enrolled after Viscount Cecil's meeting,[76] both the STLC and the local Cooperative Party affiliated to the LNU in February[77] and a policy of the direct distribution of invitations and free-tickets appears to have increased attendances at major LNU events.[78]

1937 opened with controversy for the LNU when "Cantab" revealed that the Sheffield branch had turned down an offer by Winston Churchill to speak. Churchill had tarnished his reputation by supporting Edward VIII during the abdication crisis just six weeks before.[79] "Cantab" expressed disappointment at the decision on the grounds both that Churchill was: "...always worth listening to even if one violently disagrees with him" and that the LNU was hardly so flourishing as to be able: "...to refuse to receive back into the fold erring members".[80] Lyon replied[81] but religious organisations' endorsement of the LNU made Churchill's support for the ex-King's liaison with a divorcee a difficult issue for the union. However, his offence in the eyes of the executive committee may have had as much to do with his late 1936 campaign, "Arms and the Covenant", in favour of a revitalised League of Nations and rearmament. Pacifism remained a strong current in the upper echelons of the Sheffield LNU. The executive committee suffered another defection in March when A.C. Kirby announced his resignation after Lord Cecil had spoken in Sheffield in support of rearmament. Three other members of the executive, Luther Smith, chairman of the annual meeting, J.H. Freeborough and Revd Alfred Hall all spoke in favour of Kirby's views but preferred to stay within the LNU.[82] The annual report of the Sheffield Branch issued in that month criticised national policy on

---

[74] "General Topics", 9.2.37., *op cit.*
[75] Woodhouse LNU appears only in the annual Sheffield Yearbook and Record for 1938.
[76] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 23.2.37., p6
[77] STLC Minute Book, 3.2.37. & 23.2.37. and Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minutes, 24.2.37.
[78] c.f. for example, Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party; Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 21.11.37. or Cemetery Road Congregational Church; Church Meeting Minute Book, 27.1.37.
[79] Watkins, K.W., Britain Divided: The Effect of the Spanish Civil War on British Political Opinion, London, 1963, p93
[80] "Church of England Notes", The Independent, 16.1.37., p4
[81] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 18.1.37., p6
[82] "Pacifist who has Lost Hope", *ibid*, 9.3.37., p7

rearmament.[83]

The vitality of the Sheffield LNU is all the more remarkable because, although official documents such as the manifesto offered for signing by supporters in June continued to include pacifists' cherished panacea of a world conference,[84] national speakers of the organisation were no longer conciliating the pacifist viewpoint. The words which had so offended Kirby and others were most clearly reported in Cecil's address to Sheffield University students: "He was in favour of rearmament in that it gave this country the strength to be able to play an effective part in the maintenance of world peace".[85] This was not just a personal view but was repeated by lesser known speakers such as E.P. Wallis Jones who told the League of Nations Society at Sheffield City Trading College that: "...it is not the slightest use our adopting a purely negative attitude to the present re-armament policy of our Government".[86]

Pacifists were attempting to use the LNU to transform the League into a humanitarian organisation without recourse to sanctions. C.H. Wilson, writing in Peace News, argued this case.[87] Six weeks later, an editorial offered an obituary on the League as then constituted and urged: "The first step to the re-creation of the League is the relinquishment of the principle of coercion".[88] National leaders resisted this diminution of the League's role. Lord Allen of Hurtwood, a former pacifist, speaking in Sheffield, threw down the gauntlet:

> He advised them not to listen to pacifists who said that if they went unarmed to the League, with a constructive policy for sharing the World's assets, they would get a response from the Powers. That was his own view, but he felt that the British public, and still more that of other countries, was not going to accept pacifism during the next two or three years. They could take force out of the League, but they would not take force out of the world. They would only leave force as it was in 1914.[89]

Nor were the proponents of this pragmatic *pacificist* approach disinclined to lay the blame for the destabilisation of the international situation at the doors of the future Axis

---

[83] "Sheffield Critics", *ibid*, 2.3.37., p4
[84] "Peace Manifesto", *ibid*, 29.6.37., p7
[85] "Menaces to World Peace", *ibid*, 17.2.37., p5
[86] "Peace the Goal", *ibid*, 24.2.37., p7
[87] C.H. Wilson, "Under Big Ben", Peace News, no 73, 6.11.37., p11
[88] "The League is Dead, Long Live the League", *ibid*, no 79, 18.12.37., p7
[89] "Lord Allen Outlines Peace Plan", The Independent, 3.12.37., p7

Powers. Cecil, in his speech at the university, named Germany, Japan and Italy as: "a possible danger to peace". This contrasted strongly with, for example, the words of Frank Thraves, Labour chairman of the Sheffield District LNU, who six months after Cecil's speech was reported as saying: "Everybody is talking about defence, but nobody knows from where the attacks are supposed to be coming".[90] Other senior figures associated with pacifist views did perceive the threat posed by Germany. Lyon described Hitler's comment that each nation should be sole judge of its defence needs as: "a blatant reversion to pre-war anarchy".[91] As early as November (Chamberlain had become Prime Minister in May) Arnold Foster addressed a Sheffield District meeting on his disquiet at retreat in the face of aggression:

> I tell you that in the policy of civilised retreat that has been carried on by this country in recent years there will come a point when if we move far enough towards the edge of the stage we shall fall over.[92]

At the beginning of 1937 the LNU's reassertion of its own policy agenda in preference to the fostering of a woollier inclusivity, at least at national level, was clearly marked by its approach to the Spanish War. Despite the union's efforts to woo left-wing organisations which had moved towards its position,[93] its policy on Spain stressed the usefulness of non-intervention at a time when social-democratic organisations like the Labour Party were moving into direct support for the Republican government. Cecil's speech had been largely concerned with Spain and, although he was critical of the Nationalists' decision to commence the rebellion and the failure of non-intervention, he accepted that non-intervention had been the right policy and that: "...the fact of its existence had rendered a European war less probable". Non-intervention would have been more effective, he believed, had it been under League of Nations auspices and he

---

[90] "Air Raid Precautions that Failed", *ibid*, 17.8.37., p5

[91] "Hitler and Arms", *ibid*, 1.2.37., p7

[92] "Britain Could Stop Jap Aggression", *ibid*, 10.11.37., p3 Although Thompson credits Attlee with first speaking against appeasement on 21st October 1937, he describes this as "simply a straw in the wind" and argues that: "It was not until Munich that people began to inquire closely as to its [appeasement's] precise meaning". There were a number of speakers in Sheffield, however, who spoke on this issue in the 11 months between Attlee's comments and Munich. Thompson, N., The Anti-Appeasers, Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s, London, 1971, p27

[93] c.f. the report of Gertrude Ward's speech in Hallam Ward Labour Party Minute Book, 13.10.37.

expressed impatience with the belief that German and Italian objections would have made this impossible.[94] This was before the Labour Party had renounced the non-intervention policy but Carpenter repeated largely the same points in July.[95] Although Cecil supported the left-leaning IPC and frequently expressed his antipathy to the dictators in Rome and Berlin, his February speech indicated that he had little empathy with the resolute anti-fascism which animated the Left: "He had great difficulty in believing in the conflict of ideals between Bolshevism and Fascism because fundamentally they were both absolute governments".

The LNU's increasing wariness of Hitler and Mussolini ensured, however, that the break with the Left over Spain became of decreasing importance as the pair's flagrant disregard of non-intervention became increasingly obvious. Eleanor Rathbone "was cheered by a meeting packed to the doors" in Sheffield in October when she told a gathering held under the LNU's auspices that: "We should restore to the Spanish Government the right to purchase arms".[96] Rathbone's political allegiances were very different from those of Cecil and in repeating the point made by the Peace Council twelve months before, that: "The Spanish case should have been treated as a case of aggression..." she flatly contradicted Cecil's partial support for non-intervention. Her support for the Spanish Government nevertheless indicated a more recent trend in the pragmatic *pacificism* of the LNU leadership. This approach presented difficulties for the pacifist wing of the LNU and Freeborough publicly questioned Sheffield LNU's involvement in the IPC.[97]

The LNU was quickly deflected from its involvement in the new International Peace Campaign by international events. In Sheffield public response to the indiscriminate bombing of Chinese towns by the Japanese in September 1937 was stronger than the public outcry against the Italian attack on Abyssinia had been two years before. Concern that the British had let the Abyssinians down continued to be expressed in Sheffield. "Where is that honourable public opinion which was so much feared in the recent domestic issue?" (the Abdication Crisis) asked one correspondent in January.[98] In

---

[94] "'Arms Boom no Lasting Benefit to Sheffield'", The Independent, 16.2.37., p7
[95] "Greatest Crime", and "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 6.7.37 & 12.7.37., p9 & p6
[96] "Spain Throttled Says Woman M.P.", *ibid*, 21.10.37., p7
[97] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 18.9.37., p10
[98] *Ibid*, 7.1.37., p5

the same month A.V. Alexander suggested that Italians would never have invaded had Britain had: "...the moral courage to stick to principle".[99] The retrospective realisation of the dangerous precedent which the League of Nation's failure to prevent the Italian invasion had set, was illustrated by the fact that the LNU and the STLC passed similarly worded resolutions on consecutive nights protesting against the possible exclusion of the defeated Abyssinians from the League of Nations.[100] Two interconnected reasons suggest themselves for the greater urgency of the response to Japanese incursions.

Firstly, those who had interested themselves in international events since the mid-thirties were perceiving individual events as interconnected parts of a deteriorating situation. The Management Committee of Hallam DLP, for instance, recorded collections for China and Spain under one heading.[101] Secondly, the widespread fear of aerial bombardment of civilian targets, officially manifested in the ARP preparations, found its worst fears confirmed in Guernica in April and Canton in September. The Bishop wrote in November: "The world is very slow at seeing how insensate a thing war is. It seems to have lost all its chivalry and replaced it by the deliberate murder of non-combatants on a large scale".[102] The growing realisation that Sheffield might one day find itself on the receiving end of such aggression was augmented by the coverage given to the 21st anniversary of the Zeppelin attack in Sheffield in the autumn of 1916 which had killed 28 people.[103]

Reaction to the Japanese bombing began on 27th September when Hallam DLP passed a motion calling for a trade boycott of Japan. The motion was reported by the press on the 29th[104] and on the 2nd October "Cantab" lent the policy his support.[105] Nationally the NCL began to organise a campaign of demonstrations. In Sheffield on 14th October it was announced that the LNU would be holding a meeting of protest.[106] The next day a letter appeared calling for support for the meeting signed by: the Bishop

---

[99] "Another Slump in Sheffield", *ibid*, 11.1.37., p5
[100] "League of Nations Union", *ibid*, 31.8.37. p7 & STLC Minute Book, 31.8.37.
[101] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 11.10.37.
[102] "The Bishop's Letter", Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXIII no11, November 1937, p4
[103] "Death Stalked City Skies 21 Years Ago", The Independent, 25.9.37., p7
[104] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 27.9.37. reported in "Chinese 'Massacres'", *ibid*, 29.9.37., p3
[105] "Church of England Notes", *ibid*, 2.10.37., p13
[106] "League Union", *ibid*, 14.10.37., p3

of Sheffield, H.J. Timewell, President of the Free Church Council, the Methodists, Barnet Cohen, a local Rabbi, Freeborough for the Liberals, Hobson for the STLC, Ballard of the Cooperative Party, and Thraves for the LNU.[107] The "largely attended" meeting was addressed by H.D. Liem, a Chinese representative, and Commander Catterall for the LNU. Fred Marshall, MP, proposed the resolution which called upon the Government through the Nine Power Conference, collaboration with the USA and the League of Nations, to restrain Japan by:

> (1) Supplies of money, food and medical requirements of China; and
> (2) Refusal of all military supplies, including oil, to Japan.[108]

The absence of C.H. Wilson signified opposition to the call for sanctions. Peace News carried an article in January 1938 arguing that sanctions would be counter-productive, strengthening the hand of militaristic elements in the Japanese regime.[109] In contrast, amongst *pacificists* there was a consensus in favour of more wide ranging sanctions than those suggested at the LNU meeting. Brightside DLP passed a motion in December congratulating dockers at Southampton "on their refusal to handle Japanese goods".[110] Hallam DLP, in passing a similar resolution made it clear that they supported: "...a 100% boycott of Japanese goods".[111] Hobson, of the STLC was reported to be in favour of the municipal boycott which Hull City Council had introduced against Japanese goods.[112] His continuing interest in the cause was demonstrated in February 1938 when he, along with Carpenter, attended a "Save China, Save Peace" conference organised by the IPC in London.[113] That same month the two Cooperative Retail Societies in Sheffield committed themselves to the boycott and an article in The Sheffield Cooperator urged

---

[107] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 15.10.37., p6
[108] "Restrain Japan Call to Cabinet", *ibid*, 18.10.37., p3
[109] "Why There Should Be No Boycott of Japan", Peace News, no81, 1.1.38., p3
[110] Brightside Divisional Labour Party, 15.12.37. The refusal of dockers to handle cargo was an emotionally charged issue for many on the Left. The refusal to load *The Jolly George* with supplies for the interventionist war with the Soviet Union had become, by the mid-thirties, a legendary, oft-quoted example of the ability of industrial workers to stop war. Almost half a century later it was still being used in this manner by Bill Moore in "The Anti-War Movement in Sheffield in the 1920's and 30's", Sheffield Forward, September 1980, pp4 - 5.
[111] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 13.12.37.
[112] "Boycott Urge", The Independent, 11.11.37., p3
[113] "Bid to Boycott Japan", *ibid*, 10.2.38., p4

readers to join with LNU members in a refusal to trade with outlets stocking Japanese merchandise.[114] Two other large-scale meetings of the LNU during 1937, Arnold Foster's in November and Lord Allen's in December, continued not only to criticise Japanese aggression but also to urge the effectiveness of action against Japanese exports.[115]

Although the growing *pacificist* consensus on Japan did not mobilise the vociferous Left-wing support enjoyed by the Spanish Republic, it represented a parallel move away from the consensual, inclusive peace policies of the mid-thirties towards an acceptance of the need to physically restrain aggressive nations by economic or military means. Increasingly the divisions between left-wing and centrist *pacificists* was in the detail of this broadly agreed policy: which nations should make up the peace-enforcing party, how much military force might be needed, and what part British rearmament played in the overall scheme. The importance of the revitalised LNU in Sheffield was that, despite its powerful pacifist minority, its pragmatism highlighted the political breadth of support for collective security.

Anti-Militarism and the Peace Movement's Defence Policy

By mid-1937 most of the Left, despite a continuing opposition to rearmament, had reluctantly accepted the need for a balance of armaments between the fascist and non-fascist powers. The Parliamentary Labour Party signalled this change in July when its members, rather than voting against the Service Estimates, abstained.

Hallam, the most Left-wing of Sheffield's Divisional Labour Parties, demonstrated a subtle shift of policy when it instructed its delegates to the Victoria Hall Conference of 8th May 1937: "...to oppose the Armaments policy of the National Government unless adequate safeguards can be obtained that the Government's Foreign Policy is to be moulded on League of Nations Security Pacts..."[116] The further conditions demanded by the resolution to ensure "Labour's cooperation in defence" were:

---

[114] "Boycott to End War in Far East", The Sheffield Cooperator, no 155, February 1938, p2

[115] "Britain Could Stop Jap Aggression", *op cit* & "Lord Allen Outlines Peace Plan", *op cit.*

[116] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, Special Management Committee, 3.5.37.

1. That adequate food supplies in case of war shall be guaranteed by the Government.
2. Adequate protection shall be afforded the Civil Population in the provision of Bomb proof schools and shelters, and supplies of gas masks of the same standard as supplied to the Armed Forces.
3. We demand the Nationalisation of the Armaments Industry to take the Profit out of War.

Nobody in the DLP believed that the government would concede these points but the positive tone of the reference to the League of Nations, the call for effective air raid precautions and even the practical note of the need to ensure food supplies would have been unthinkable in a similar resolution in 1934. The Left remained suspicious of militarism but, particularly as a result of the Spanish War, it no longer regarded armaments as inherently militaristic.

Specifically anti-militarist campaigns in Sheffield during 1937 were sponsored by the pacifists and the Churches with only the youth movements of political sections represented. The Established Church found itself in some confusion: "The Church wobbles on the question of armaments. She speaks with a divided voice. How can we expect to be effective in the world of affairs if we do not know our own minds on leading questions?"[117] asked "Cantab". In his "Church of England Notes" he objected to militaristic celebrations complaining that: "There is a growing concern that there are far too many military parades at Sheffield Cathedral".[118] The Bishop of Sheffield's willingness to accommodate the trade of some of his most powerful parishioners was not shared by all the Anglican hierarchy. Speaking in Sheffield, the Bishop of Derby regretted that the city's growing economic recovery was related to the armaments trade and noted that: "...there were people in the area whose consciences were haunted by that fact".[119] If Anglicans were divided over the issue, Methodists had moved closer to the pacifist position. Although the statement "The Church and Peace" issued in August was to present alternative pacifist and *pacificist* positions, the statement issued by the Social Welfare Department of the Methodist Church in response to the Armaments White Paper in March echoed pacifist thought by reiterating the department's call in July 1936 for "a

---

[117] "Church of England Notes", The Independent, 29.5.37., p7
[118] *Ibid.* 15.5.57., p13
[119] "Bishop Regrets City's 'Arms Prosperity'", *ibid.* 13.12.37., p4

new inclusive World Conference of Nations".[120] By this date some resolutely *pacificist* groups were actively rejecting the initiative on the grounds that it rewarded aggression.[121] The strength of the Methodist rejection of the White Paper contrasted with the Church of England's confusion: "It [the Methodist Church] regards the re-organisation of the life of the peoples on a war basis as an appalling and imminent menace to world peace".

The Northern Military Tattoo, to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI in May 1937, provoked a response from sections of Sheffield's peace movement. Methodists tempered their patriotic response with a concern for peace: "Putting aside, therefore, the unchristian boasts of Imperialism, and the equally unchristian trust in war, we rightly take our part in this Coronation".[122] By contrast some individual Anglicans responded with a gushing imperialism:

> We are the proud and happy members of an Empire which is unique, not only in the greatness of its extent, but also in the fact that it is the only Empire that has ever been known which could naturally and truthfully be described as a family - a family which finds the symbol and bond of its unity in one throne and which sees in the King, not merely a Figurehead, but a Father of his people.[123]

Anglicans were absent from the list of supporters of the Anti-Tattoo Committee. Officials of Sheffield Youth Peace Council, University Peace Society, Peace Pledge Union, Methodist Peace Fellowship and Free Church Council all signed the letter to The Independent. Lyon, Secretary of the Sheffield Branch of the League of Nations Union also added his signature but only in his capacity as a private individual. The letter deplored the influence of the tattoo on the young, both in creating in children's minds "a subconscious impression that war is a thing of glory" and in encouraging young men to

---

[120] "The Methodist Church and Armaments", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, no 501, March 1937, p9

[121] "Whilst the Cooperative Party was in no way opposed to World Conferences, they did not think them practical." - from the address of Alfred Barnes, M.P., President of the Cooperative Conference reported in "Cooperation, Peace and Stability", The Sheffield Cooperator, no 147, April 1937, p1

[122] "The Coronation", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, no 503, May 1937, p3

[123] "Home Words", Vol LXVII, no 5, p65, a syndicated insert into Church of England parish magazines, from The Sharrovian (St Andrew's Church, Sharrow), May 1937

enlist by "the presentation of such an incomplete picture".[124]

The new pragmatism amongst some *pacificists* was visible too in the composition of the opposition to Air Raid Precautions. The introduction of the Air Raid Precautions Act compelled local authorities to produce plans. Throughout local government there was anger that councils were being asked to foot the bill for what was essentially defence spending.[125] The STLC executive instructed its secretary to talk to the Labour Group on the City Council after training for Corporation employees in Fire Drill began.[126] It was difficult for the STLC to express the full strength of its opposition since, even in the first voluntaryist phase, Sheffield, unlike some Labour controlled councils,[127] had participated in ARP schemes. However, even though the Executive would continue until 1939 to refuse to be identified with the local ARP organisation,[128] it is noticeable that the STLC's deliberations on ARP took place at the Executive rather than at the Delegates' Meeting. Active opposition to ARP preparations in the city came from the PPU.

Many on the Left, however, regarded ARP as, in Bill Moore's word, "futile". One problem was that enthusiasm for ARP was synonymous with right-wing views. The Sheffield Conservative Federation sponsored a series of lectures on the subject[129] while the Chamber of Commerce offered an advice service to commercial firms[130] and sponsored an ARP exhibition.[131] This reinforced the Left's fears that a hidden agenda of conscription and National Service underlay the plans and that the protection of property was receiving a higher priority than the saving of life. The Communist Party nationally made this point at the opening of the National Peace Congress when it declared itself: "Against militarised control of the civilian population through so called ARP and for the best possible real protection".[132] By 1937 events increasingly encouraged the party to stress its commitment to "real protection". In part this was a political move which

---

[124] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 3.7.37., p6
[125] "Defence is not Our Job", *ibid*, 24.7.37., p7
[126] STLC Minute Books, 12.1.37.
[127] Locally, Barnsley had refused to implement the Home Office circular of 1935. "Citizens Plan Barnsley Raid Precautions", The Independent, 20.3.37., p9
[128] c.f., for instance, STLC Minute Book, 23.8.38.
[129] "Raid Precautions", The Independent, 16.1.37., p13
[130] "Sheffield Plan to Pool Raid Experts", *ibid*, 13.3.37., p7
[131] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 6.4.37., p6
[132] "How Can We Save Peace", The Daily Worker, 28.5.37., p4

allowed the party to continue criticising ARP from a public safety standpoint.[133] Deteriorating international relations during 1938, however, pushed the party into a more genuinely vanguardist approach and later in that year the party published its own scheme for the city's defence from air attack.

As with other aspects of the move from idealism to realism in foreign policy the Communist Party were, at least theoretically, ahead of many of their colleagues in the peace movement. As late as December, "Cantab", discovering that the next chapter meeting was to be addressed on the subject of ARP, voiced his suspicions that the clergy were being used to propagate "the idea of taking precautions. There certainly seems to be a reluctance on the part of many people, he wrote, to take the Government's efforts in this direction seriously". However, noting that instructors at ARP centres were saying "When an air raid happens" rather the "If an air raid happens" he opined that "the talk of peace" amidst "the feverish preparations for war" suggested to him that: "...the public are not being told the whole truth by any means".[134] Councillor Mrs E. Birch echoed these suspicions at the Sheffield Labour Women's Advisory Council with regard to her party leaders' change of heart over the service estimates.[135]

Such movement as peace activists made towards an acceptance of the need for effective ARP may have been in advance of public opinion. Although plans for first aid, hospital services, the warning system, the black out and the Auxiliary Fire Service were publicised during 1937, those involved with their introduction were dissatisfied with the speed with which the authorities moved. Captain Leonard Beswick, organiser of the Sheffield volunteers complained: "...that eight valuable months had been wasted while the question of finance was being settled", and it was not until January 1938 that the

---

[133] William Gallacher M.P. offered this inspired critique of ARP: "Everyone... was to be provided with a gas mask which would be stored at a central place. If people lived next door to this place, they would be all right, but if they lived about four miles away they would have to fetch the mask, put it on, go home and wait till the raid was over. Again, householders were to have a room sealed with gum paper, in case of a raid the whole family would go into this hermetically sealed room and suffocate." "Communist MP Attacks Raid Plans", The Independent, 14.2.38., p7

[134] "Church of England Notes", *ibid*, 4.12.37., p13. "Cantab" was not himself a pacifist. His statement that: "England, France and Russia can keep the peace in Europe if they would let it be known that they proposed to deal harshly with a would be aggressor", put him in the mainstream of *pacificist* opinion.

[135] "Labour Women Disagree with Party on Arms", *ibid*, 18.10.37., p5

training of volunteer wardens actually began in Sheffield.[136] Public enthusiasm, as measured by enrolments in ARP organisations, was never overwhelming and, although the confusion around the figures given makes it difficult to be sure,[137] it would appear that by October only 120 wardens were in post out of a proposed 7000.[138]

Apathy in the face of an increasingly threatening situation was a psychological reaction widespread enough to demand note. The writer of "Free Church Notes" in The Independent welcomed the lack of interest in politics: "The fear that Nonconformity has lost its political influence does not perturb me at all..." The writer went on, in language reflecting pacifist thought, to contrast the desire to "win men to the Gospel of Jesus Christ with efforts to coerce them through political activity".[139] Similarly, while activists at the University continued to involve themselves in peace events, interest amongst the student body was declining. None of the 1937 editions of The Arrows contained accounts of the Peace Society's activities and the December edition bemoaned the lack of student support for Armistice Day commemorations.[140]

There is a danger in over emphasising the speed with which the peace movement was embracing a more avowedly *pacificist* position. Even A.V. Alexander, whose defencist credentials pre-dated the Labour Party's move in this direction, continued to criticise the Government's defence spending during 1937. Populist political considerations determined that it remained extremely difficult for anyone, Left or Right, to argue for a pro-active defence policy. Alexander's first speech on the naval estimates in the city emphasized the deleterious effect of the government's defence loan on the standard of living.[141] Alexander stated that the Labour Party would buy enough defence equipment: "...for collective security within the system of the League".[142] A later article

---

[136] "City Volunteers", *ibid*, 18.1.37., p7

[137] The multiplicity of agencies was responsible for the confusion. This was dealt with at about the same time as proper training of volunteers began. "City Air Raid Precautions to be Merged?", *ibid*, 19.1.38., p5

[138] "Air Raid Wardens Appeal", *ibid*, 1.10.37., p5 This was despite the fact that 400 people were reported to be training in August. "400 Ready to Man Sheffield's Air Raid Posts", *ibid*, 6.8.37., p5

[139] "Free Church Notes", *ibid*, 7.12.37., p3

[140] "Commentary", The Arrows, no 27 December 1937, p14. Mass Observation reports taken at the time indicate a gap between the attitudes of young and old to the Armistice Day ceremonies.

[141] "Defence Loan Gesture to Rich", The Independent, 13.2.37., p7

[142] "Mr Alexander on Rearmament Loan - No Effective Check on Profits". The Sheffield

(not written by Alexander) offered the rather dubious figure that this would cost: "...about one third of the expenditure proposed".[143]

Even those not ideologically opposed to the sale of arms for profit remained defensive about rearmament. Not only Ronald Matthews, but P.B. Brown, speaking to the District Building Trades Employers,[144] and Joseph Ward, chairman of T.W. Ward,[145] all denied that Sheffield's recovery from the slump of the early thirties was connected to the arms boom. The most popular call on the Left remained for full nationalisation. Concern to limit the profits of arms manufacturers united everyone on the Left from Alexander to the Communist Party, while avoiding the contentious question of how many arms such a nationalised industry would have been asked to produce.

The Peace Pledge Union in Operation:

The first large scale activity of the PPU in Sheffield was their 18th January 1937 mass meeting in the City Hall addressed by Canon Stuart Morris in place of Dick Sheppard, who was ill.[146] The report of the event confirmed that pacifists were cultivating the divergence of opinion which was threatening to split the peace movement more assiduously than their *pacificist* colleagues: "There were only two policies worth consideration today, said Morris. One was rearmament and the other was pacifism. There was no halfway house and there could be no compromise".[147] Morris claimed that the PPU was recruiting faster than the army. Vera Brittain referred to the PPU's difficulties in Sheffield where so many people were personally involved in the arms trade. Although she blamed the system and not the workers, the individual responsibility stressed by the pledge was emphasized by Peace News when it reported the appeal of an Attercliffe man against loss of benefit after he had refused to take clerking work in an armaments factory. It urged: "...all those, who, by their work, are in fact supporting war, to cease doing so".[148]

The numerical strength of the Sheffield Peace Pledge Union is difficult to gauge.

Cooperator, no 146 March 1937, p2

[143] "What Could be Done", *ibid*, no 149 June 1937, p7

[144] "Arms not Cause of Boom", The Independent, 25.2.37., p7

[145] "Works Busy Before Arms Rush", *ibid*, 10.3.37., p7

[146] Letter from Helen Wilson, "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 14.1.37., p6

[147] "Peace Pledge Union Recruiting", *ibid*, 19.1.37., p7

[148] "New Ruling Confirms Right to Refuse War Work" , Peace News, no 57, 17.7.37., p1

In the Peace Ballot 728 people had responded to the question on military measures by declaring themselves "Christian Pacifists". Although this was less than half a percent of those responding, it was three times the proportion recorded nationally. By July 1937 the PPU was claiming that it was: "the biggest peace organisation in the country".[149] This claim rested on confining the term "peace organisation" to those of pacifist views, for the *pacificist* LNU, which had reached a national membership peak of 406 868 in 1931 still had 264 180 members in 1938.[150] At their January 1937 meeting in Sheffield the PPU were claiming 120 000 members nationally. In 1937 the Sheffield Branch of the LNU still had 942 members[151] and there were three other smaller branches in the city. If local and national memberships were proportional the PPU must have had something like 500 members in the city.[152]

A properly constituted PPU group appears to have become active within Sheffield after the end of Peace Week. The group decided at a meeting addressed by Revd Alfred Hall to leaflet one of the Sheffield stores which was demonstrating a gas proof room as part of the Government's ARP Campaign.[153] A duplicated sheet of their monthly activities was being produced and a summer school was organised.[154] July saw a garden party and a public meeting on "Palestine and the Jewish Problem" addressed by Martha Steinitz.[155] October witnessed a flurry of activity with a meeting addressed by Dr Norman, a Sheffield doctor who had successfully moved a motion at the British Medical Association's conference in Belfast in July asking for the League of Nations to establish a section under its health organisation to study the psychology of war,[156] a film show and

---

[149] "Whither the Labour Party", *ibid*, no 59, 31.7.37., p6

[150] Donald S. Birn, The League of Nations Union, p129

[151] Sheffield Branch of the League of Nations Union Annual Report 1937

[152] The memorial service in Sheffield for Dick Sheppard, who died in November, attracted 300 people. "Disciple of Cross", The Independent, 8.11.37., p3

[153] "Protest Over Gas Raids Precautions", and "Comic Opera", *ibid*, 28.5.37., p7

[154] "The Notice Board", Peace News, no 51, 5.6.37., p4

[155] "Sheffield's Activity", and "Diary of the Week", *ibid*, nos 55 and 56, 3.7.37 and 10.7.37., p12. The meeting was not reported in The Independent but appears to have prompted a letter from Revd Arnold Gordon, a member of the Peace Army, on the subject (17.7.37.,p6).

[156] "From BMA to PPU", Peace News, no 69, 9.10,37., p4. The motion had attracted attention at the time, having been proposed and seconded by doctors working in Sheffield. c.f. "Sheffield Doctor's Peace Plea", The Independent, 21.7.37., p3 The Medical Peace Campaign (begun in 1936) and the Psychologists for Peace Group to which many of the participants belonged are discussed in Lewer, Nick, Physicians and

the establishment of a lending library.[157] In December a review of activities in the South Yorkshire area confirmed that Sheffield was an established centre of the union[158] and Morris returned to address a meeting in the smaller YMCA Lecture Hall.[159] Activity continued into February 1938 with a lecture on ARP delivered by E.M. Cook of the Cambridge Scientists Anti-War Group[160] and a talk by Bertrand Russell in the Central Library's Winter Lectures Series.[161]

Pacifists found it difficult to presenting an inspiring response to world events around which a popular movement could coalesce. The wider peace movement confronted with renewed Japanese aggression in China organised demonstrations of protest and a trade boycott. The PPU's response was outlined by Peace News:

> The pacifist answer, while criticising Japan, not only for terrorism, but for using war at all, and recognising that we cannot condemn the use of war by other countries while our own country also maintains the instruments of war is to renounce war - and arms - for our own country.[162]

While suspicion of rearmament was common, unilateral disarmament in the face of aggression was hardly likely to prove a popular rallying cry.

For those not sharing the PPU's viewpoint, pacifist activity could appear both quirky and ineffective. F. Russell Ralphs, a regular Sheffield correspondent to Peace News, had at least four letters published during 1937. His first letter, claiming that it could be proved that armaments rings had financed Hitler and were influential in Britain, would have found widespread support amongst peace activists. He recommended reading The Secret International and L. du Garde Peache's Patriotism Ltd both published by the Union for Democratic Control.[163] The second letter, however, written in response to the BBC's withdrawal of a broadcast of the latter play, gave an example of the slightly risible acts of witness sometimes indulged in by pacifists. Russell Ralphs suggested that members of the PPU should not renew their wireless licences and should encourage

---

the Peace Movement, Prescriptions for Hope, London, 1992, pp52 - 57

[157] "Group Notes", Peace News, nos 70 and 72, 16.10.37., and 30.10.37., p4

[158] *Ibid*, no 77, 4.12.37., p4

[159] "Diary of the Week", *ibid*, no 78, 11.12.37., p12

[160] "City Anti-War Talk", The Independent, 12.2.38., p7

[161] "Pacifist Urges Persuasion's Power", *ibid*, 23.2.38., p4

[162] "Pacifist Answer to Japanese Aggression", Peace News, no 68, 2.10.37., p1

[163] "Arms Trade", *ibid*, no 29, 2.1.37., p7

others to do the same. "We must show the nation that we are prepared to take any steps, however sacrificial, and show that our way is right", he concluded.[164] A further letter in July provided an early pointer to the disturbing similarity between some pacifist and fascist views. Contrasting the Salvation Army's appeal for 10s a week to support each of the Basque refugee children and the Public Assistance Committees' weekly allowance for children of the unemployed, Russell Ralphs xenophobically questioned: "Why should we subscribe 10s to make bonny children of Spaniards, while many of ours exist in skin and bone on 2s per week?"[165]

The creation of the PPU gave pacifists the confidence to pursue their own agenda. At national level, July saw a furious attack by Peace News on the Labour Party for not voting against the Service Estimates. This offered an opportunity to the PPU to make common purpose with those in the Labour Party who remained opposed to rearmament. "...We must remain loyal members of the party, doing our best to win our comrades to our point of view,"[166] said George Lansbury. Another article in the same July issue picked up on the link between rearmament and internal fascism, a matter dear to the Left's heart.[167] Editorially, however, no effort was made to come to terms with the outright opposition to fascism which conditioned the very different attitude of these potential allies. Peace News described Nazi atrocities in Germany as: "deplorable acts... which are simply a measure of our own wickedness".[168]

The uncompromising pacifism represented by Peace News tended towards political isolation and isolationism and was ultimately incompatible with the "all-in" peace movement whose creation had been the goal in Sheffield since the Peace Ballot. Peace News' criticism of the Labour Party in 1937 presaged on the one hand an acceptance of the impracticability of pacifism as a political force[169] and on the other a pacifist appeasement which would, in the near future, be difficult to distinguish from that

---

[164] "Banned Radio Play Protest", *ibid*, no 39, 13.3.37., p9
[165] "Child Victims at Home", Peace News, no 58, 24.7.37., p2. The same point was made by Roy Capell, Prospective British Union Candidate for Eccleshall, in a letter to The Independent, 12.8.37., p6
[166] George Lansbury, "Rearmament and After", Peace News, no 70, 16.10.37., p6
[167] Sydney George Conbeer, "An Open Letter to the Labour Party", *ibid*, no 59, 31.7.37., p9
[168] "A Message for the T.U.C.", *ibid*, no 64, 6.9.37., p6
[169] J. Middleton Murry, "A Weekly Commentary", *ibid*, p7

of the National Government.[170] Middleton Murry, writing in early 1938 in reply to an article by Kingsley Martin, described pacifism as "...the conviction that any condition of society, any condition for the individual, is better than participation in modern war". With hindsight, it is difficult to avoid feeling that it was a precondition of this absolute conviction, rather than the outraged moral sense paraded in the pages of Peace News, that prevented pacifists like Wilfred Wellock from distinguishing between the immorality of Nazi Germany and the Allied immorality which had, in their view, produced the Nazi Government. Murry's refusal to acknowledge Martin's contention that: "Politics conjure up intellectual problems for which the refusal to fight does not in itself provide a solution",[171] illustrated why shared disapproval of the Labour leadership' acquiescence to the Rearmament Plan could not forge a new Left-pacifist alliance to revitalise the flagging all-in peace movement.

Domestic Fascism in Sheffield:

Appeasement was to bring pacifists, Conservatives and those holding fascist and pro-German views into an unacknowledged and uneasy alliance. At this point the similarity lay solely in the belief that young men would refuse to fight an unnecessary war. R. Coates, a pacifist, wrote: "These young men would be those who realise not only that war is futile, but also that to participate in a war is a sin which no sincere Christian or anyone with his own moral code would allow himself to commit". "Flash-Action" meanwhile, countered: "The only time that the young men would fight again will be in defence of England and the Empire, and never abroad again in a Jewish quarrel".[172] Beneath these very different ideologies lay a common theme of isolationism whose growing importance would increase what, at this point, was a superficial similarity. To most of those involved in the peace movement the German Government was abhorrent, the antithesis of peaceful values, but there was a pronounced germanophilia among certain pacifists. Appeasement fostered similar attitudes amongst Chamberlain's most enthusiastic supporters so that, for instance, by November 1937 W.W. Boulton, Conservative M.P. for Sheffield Central, was to be found urging: "closer cooperation

---

[170] J. Middleton Murry, "England's Debt to the World", *ibid*, no 74, 13.11.37, p7
[171] J. Middleton Murry, "Pacifism and Politics", *ibid*, no 81, 1.1.38., p7
[172] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 5.2.37., p6

with Germany" and that "Anglo-German friendship was essential for European peace".[173]

Domestic fascism had, therefore, two influences on the Peace Movement in Sheffield. On the one hand for the Left the presence of those publicly espousing fascist views sharpened the focus of the anti-fascist animus which was the foundation of their vision of foreign policy. On the other hand those with fascist views or who espoused an isolationist or pro-German foreign policy increasingly identified themselves as a "peace party" as the likelihood of war with Nazi-Germany increased.

A survey of Fascist penetration in Sheffield conducted in June 1934 by Transport House suggested a membership of a Central Branch of approximately 350 of whom 50 wore uniforms. However outdoor public meetings were reported in only one division and street literature sales in two. Indoor meetings, apart from the annual City Hall event, were not reported anywhere in Sheffield. Fascist letters did appear in the local press and were sometimes answered by those holding different views but not systematically by Labour Party members. No progress was reported in the fascists' attempts to organise women's sections. There was not a youth group as such but the movement did seem "...to be composed of youths or very young men". All those questioned agreed that the fascists had made no effort to influence trade union branches and were receiving no support from local politicians or personalities.[174]

In March 1936, in the immediate aftermath of the Remilitarisation of the Rhineland, a letter in The Independent complained that "Jew-baiting" was becoming more frequent in Sheffield.[175] In April a letter from BUF Headquarters made explicit what fascists believed was the populist appeal of their racism:

> We demand Briton for the British, and jobs for the Briton before jobs for the alien. Therefore in areas where British workers are suffering at the hands of Jewish finance we do not hesitate to tell them who their enemies are.
> In districts where British workers are suffering not at the hands of Jews, but of other Asiatics, such as Lascars and Arabs, we point out that under Fascism British white seamen will have first preference and coloured races will only be employed in tropical areas unsuitable for white labour.[176]

---

[173] "Wages Jump", *ibid*, 25.11.37., p7
[174] Sheffield Labour Party Records, Transport House Survey, dated 19th June 1934
[175] Letter from Tom Capper, "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 10.3.36., p6
[176] Letter from J.A. McNab, "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 25.4.36., p6

A later letter dismissed the controversy over the Italians' conquest in Africa in the belief that Abyssinians would be better off under white rule.[177] Deeper, subconscious roots of racial prejudice were on display in October when a fascist writing under the *nom-de-plume* Sturmo initiated a distasteful debate on the subject of coloured students at the university accompanying white girls around the town. His views were strongly objected to by University students and others.[178]

The rejection of such views encouraged the re-statement of the internationalism which underpinned the Left's vision of co-existence in the cultural as well as the political sphere. The motto that opened The Sheffield Clarion Rambler's Annual Syllabus for 1935 - 1936 was: "The Object for Mankind is Universalism, not Nationalism". The Left's internationalism was genuine in as much as it read the experience of other European countries as a possible pattern for Britain. Addressing members of the Cooperative Institute on "Fascism in Europe", P.T.A. Campbell of Leicester spoke of "Hitler, Mussolini and Oswald Mosley" and called for the Cooperative Movement: "to take action and defend itself and its members".[179] The STLC were addressed in similar vein by an unnamed "...German comrade who urged the workers of this country to do all in their power to keep fascism from spreading in this nations [sic] as they in Germany had now lost their freedom".[180] This empathetic reaction to those countries which had suffered a Fascist take-over was not always shared by those from the liberal tradition of foreign policy radicalism. Revd E Benson Perkins was reported as saying, for instance, that: "He was opposed to Nazism, but he recognised that before Hitler Germany was in a great trough of depression and with a fear of Communism. 'Hitler had done some good things, but I can never bring myself to believe in a dictatorship'".[181]

1937 witnessed a change in BUF tactics in Sheffield with the party contesting local elections for the first time. This effort to court respectability had an importance to the peace movement for, while the Left were clearly going to reject all fascist tactics, those of centrist views might have been influenced by the new veneer of electoral

---

[177] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 22.7.36., p6
[178] *Ibid*, 29.10.36., p6 for the initial letter.
[179] "Alternative to Fascism", *ibid*, 6.1.35., p5
[180] STLC Minute Books, 28.8.36.
[181] "Germany's Difficulties", The Independent, 21.1.35., np

probity. However, despite the fears of many on the Left who identified all Conservatives with the Fascist cause,[182] the racial intolerance of British society and the clear connections between the foreign policy of the right of the Conservative Party and the BUF,[183] the attractions of Fascist policy were outweighed for a majority in Britain by their extremism. The authoritarianism of the party provoked The Independent to put a critical twist on what would normally have been seen as a commendation: "Cemetery Road Vestry Hall...has witnessed few more orderly meetings than that at which the prospective Fascist candidate...spoke last night", began their report on the BUF's first campaign meeting.[184] Neither R. Asham-Capell in Sharrow (98 votes) nor Herbert Bunting in Burngreave (97 votes) made any headway. In the same election George Fletcher took 1937 votes for the Communists at Crookesmoor. A Fascist "Yorkshire Rally" expected to attract two or three thousand supporters to the Fairground[185] which provoked opposition from the STLC[186] never materialised. During 1937 therefore the fascists' relationship with the peace movement was in limbo. Domestic anti-fascism had ceased to be the focus for the young activists now taken up with the Spanish cause and the superficial alliance between an outwardly more respectable fascism and an isolationist pacifism was only just beginning.

The Second Phase of the Spanish War:

In Sheffield the major shift in attitude of the second phase of the conflict was the involvement of a far broader swathe of the peace movement in humanitarian relief. As May Birkinhead, Sheffield Organiser of Aid for Spain, explained, the humanitarian aid which the Left had commenced to provide from the very beginning of the war served a political and military purpose: "...it is only by a determined and systematic collection of money and food that we can obtain any effective result in assisting the defenders of

---

[182] John Kane, leader of the Communist Party in Sheffield was for instance reported as saying: "...the same folk who hide under the label of 'Progressive' in Sheffield - are the counterpart in this country of those who have plunged Spain into the horrors of modern war."

[183] c.f. for instance the letter from "National Socialist" suggesting the racial basis for a Britain/Germany alliance against Russia/France (Aryans versus Slavs and Latins). *Ibid*, 6.1.37., p5

[184] "Fascist Campaign Opens", and "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 5.2.37 p4 and p7

[185] "Yorkshire Rally Plans by Fascist and Communists", *ibid*, 2.10.37., p7

[186] STLC Minute Books, 5.10.37. and 19.10.37.

democracy in Spain".[187] The housing of Spanish refugee children in Sheffield, provided an opportunity for those who, more chary of direct support for the Republican Government, nevertheless felt a humanitarian impulse to relieve the suffering of non-combatants. The contrast between the context in which humanitarian aid was perceived was evident when the Basque children arrived in Sheffield in October. For The Independent's journalist the Spanish teacher's appearance: "recalled Belgian refugees during the War". The Bishop of Sheffield added: "It was a pathetic sight, a witness to the miseries of civil war and the culpable stupidity of mankind".[188] Communists in the welcoming party, meanwhile, greeted the children with a clenched-fist salute.[189]

The move away from the "missionary" charity of the nineteenth and early twentieth century towards a more secular conception of overseas aid started during the inter-war years and was stimulated by the refugee problem. Religious leaders were often involved in these appeals but the intended outcome was wholly secular. The peace movement in widening its objectives to include caring for the victims of wars paralleled the ameliorative work of the League of Nations through such organisations as the ILO, which many saw, even by this date, as the most successful aspect of the League's functions[190] and which was to be perpetuated post-war through operations such as United Nations' children's agency, UNICEF.

On 1st June 1937 the STLC appointed a committee to consider offering accommodation to some of the Basque refugee children who had been brought to Southampton.[191] Before the STLC Executive heard a progress report a fortnight later, two of the party's constituent bodies, Shiregreen Women's Section[192] and Hallam DLP,[193] had discussed the matter. What the more political sections hoped to achieve was indicated by the Sheffield Youth Foodship Committee who: "firmly believed that the

---

[187] Letter published in The Sheffield Cooperator, no 145, February 1937, p3
[188] "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXIII no 11, November 1937, p4
[189] "Sheffield Gives Great Welcome to Basques", The Independent, 20.10.37., p4
[190] This was an abiding theme of the pacifist critique on the League. c.f., for example C.H. Wilson, "Under Big Ben", Peace News, no 73, 6.11.37., p11: "We should never forget that where purely nationalist interests do not enter, the League has done and is doing most valuable work which was not done before the League came into being".
[191] STLC Minute Book, 1.6.37.
[192] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 10.6.37.
[193] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 14.6.37.

presence of refugee children would stimulate interest in the Spanish War. and in foodship activities".[194]

By 2nd July the project was supported by some of Sheffield's religious leaders: The Bishop, Alfred Hall for the Unitarians and Benson Perkins for the Methodists.[195] A conference which also had the endorsement of the LNU met on 3rd July.[196] The non-sectarian and non-political nature of the committee set up by the conference demonstrated a commitment to attract help for the project from outside of those supporting the Republic. The Dowager Duchess of Norfolk offered the Queen's Tower of Sheffield Manor as accommodation for the Basques.[197] More importantly, as far as the history of the peace movement is concerned, was the ease with which the Labour Party, the Churches and the LNU fell into cooperation with each other, creating what Buchanan describes as a *de facto* United Front.[198] While 1937 was characterised by the replacement of the search for consensus within the peace movement by a pursuit of self defined goals, the will to cooperate still existed and links forged during the earlier period made cooperation easier. On 15th July it was announced that the committee would be based at the LNU offices in Sheffield and that C.W. Carpenter was one of the joint secretaries.[199]

By the end of the first week of August it was announced that the Queen's Tower had been found unsuitable and that the refugees would initially be housed in a camp at Hollowford, on a site put at the disposal of the Sheffield committee by the Educational Settlement.[200] Castleton Councillor J.A. Sellars' successful objection to this[201] ironically revealed the genuinely non-political nature of support for the committee. When the BUF's Roy Capell, (alias Asham-Capell) claimed that voters from Sharrow Ward had

---

[194] "No Spanish Children for Sheffield", The Independent, 3.6.37., p7
[195] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 2.7.37., p6
[196] *Ibid*, 3.7.37., p6
[197] "Duke's Offer to Sheffield", *ibid*, 5.7.37., p7
[198] Buchanan, T., "The Role of the British Labour Movement in the Origins and Work of the Basque Children's Committee 1937 - 1939", European History Quarterly, 18 (1988)
[199] "Sheffield to Adopt 25 Basque Children", The Independent, 15.7.37., p7
[200] "City to 'Adopt' 25 Basques", *ibid*, 7.8.37., p7
[201] "Basques not Wanted at Castleton", *ibid*, 9.8.37., p7, "Castleton Still Determined Not to Have Basques", *ibid*, 12.8.37., p9 & "Basque Children Not Going to Castleton", *ibid*, 14.8.37., p7. Rejection of the Basques was not political at Castleton but reflected concerns about the effect of the refugees on the local tourist industry. "A Worker's Notebook", The Daily Worker, 12.8.37., p4

contacted him "to protest against British money being spent on foreign charity",[202] it was the Progressives' Councillor Bearcroft who replied that not only had no such protests reached Sharrow's councillors but also: "What has come to us is a strong protest from people with children against their being continuously disturbed late into the night by the oratory of Mr Capell and his friends, which no one wants to listen to".[203] The appeal for funds stressed that the children would not be allowed to become a drain on public resources and that in other centres they had proved: "...both appreciative and attractive to all with whom they are brought in contact. ...It should be entirely unnecessary to emphasise the sufferings these children have endured..." wrote the organisers.[204] One senses both anger and embarrassment in Sheffield over this controversy but this was not the end of mischief making by those opposed to the accommodation of the children in Sheffield. Early in the following year a denial that the children were being indoctrinated against their Catholic faith had to be issued.[205]

The children arrived in Sheffield on 19th October and were accommodated at Froggatt Guest House. By the end of October ten were being sponsored and the organisers had received clothing and food "in some quantities".[206] Although it tended to be organisations of the Left who had most direct contact with the children, with the Sheffield and Eccleshall Cooperative Institute organising a concert for the children to raise funds[207] and the Woodcraft Folk giving them a party,[208] a large part of the coalition which made up the peace movement was initially involved in accommodating the Basques in Sheffield. At Christmastime Arnold Freeman appealed for presents for the children[209] and the overall organisation continued to come from the LNU offices. The Labour Party, having reported back to the STLC Delegates' Meeting on the start of the committee[210] did not re-involve itself until it issued a circular in early 1938 warning its

---

[202] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 12.8.37., p6
[203] *Ibid*, 13.8.37., p6 Bearcroft attacked Capell again over the matter three days later.
[204] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 21.8.37., p6
[205] "Religious Propaganda Denied", *ibid*, 2.2.38., p11. There was a pro-Franco Basque Children's Repatriation Committee which coordinated national agitation against the Basque Children's Committees.
[206] "No Request for Return of Basques", *ibid*, 30.10.37., p7
[207] "Basque Children", *ibid*, 14.12.37., p7
[208] "Basque Children", *ibid*, 4.1.38., p5
[209] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 13.12.37., p6
[210] STLC Minute Book, 27.7.37.

affiliated organisations that the project was running short of funds.[211]

Pacifists at this same time were turning towards voluntary service overseas as a means of witnessing their beliefs.[212] Despite the long-term importance of the move towards humanitarian aid, the shift in emphasis acknowledged a lessening of ambition for the peace movement. The widening remit cannot be divorced from the context of the disengagement observable among sections of the peace movement and the general public. It was not, therefore, a gesture of hope but rather an acknowledgement of the failure of the "all-in" peace movement's efforts to achieve pacification by political pressure in the first phase of its existence.

Summary:

The Unity Campaign split the Labour Party's membership and caused some withdrawal of support from the Peace Council, which was identified with the united front. Darvill's re-election as president of the STLC confirmed, however, that opposition to the united front was not strong enough to take precedence over support for a range of Left-wing policies including those on peace. The CPGB continued to benefit in Sheffield from their activist reputation which was favourably contrasted with what was regarded as the rather moribund constitutionalism of the Labour Party leadership. The defeat of the Unity Campaign had a limited effect on the Peace Week arrangements because these were already in place before the campaign entered its crisis phase. After the defeat of the campaign, the Left Book Club became increasingly important as the unofficial channel of CPGB influence on the Labour and peace movements. The Left's relation to the peace issue was however changing and it was increasingly viewed from the perspective of, and as secondary to, the situation in Spain. By the end of the year the Labour leadership's renewed wariness of contacts with known communists had combined with the effects of

---

[211] STLC Minute Books 15.2.38 & 22.2.38. Fyrth reports that Sheffield Foundry Workers' Union, whose records were not publicly available when the research for this essay was done, gave one pound a week for 20 weeks to this appeal. Fyrth, *op cit*, p273

[212] Peter Freeman, son of Arnold Freeman, Warden of the Educational Settlement in Sheffield, returned from voluntary service in Spain in April 1938. Buchanan suggests that Labour Movement support for the Basque children: "...represented a further step in the depoliticisation of its relief work, marking a swing away from a commitment to affiliated political organisations and towards a more personal commitment towards individuals". Communist Party attitudes in Sheffield throw doubt on this point. Buchanan, *op cit*, p162

a communist line which was prioritising the single issue of Spain to end the revolutionary Left's leadership of peace movement coordination.

Rearmament remained a live issue and the focus of the 1937 Peace Week. Within the Labour Party this reflected the strength of an alliance of a generalised pacific sentiment with a more ideological Left-wing *pacificism*. While this continued the possibility of pacifist/*pacificist* cooperation within the local forum, it alienated the local party from the national leadership who in pursuit of a realist *pacificist* policy was accepting the necessity of rearmament. There was, however, a reluctance amongst Labour leaders to give a lead on support for rearmament, which was felt to be out of keeping with the party's traditions. Although the LNU's national leaders were less chary of publicly endorsing rearmament, the situation in the local LNU was very similar. Faced with the growing fragmentation of the "all-in" peace movement, therefore, activists were not presented with a clear and educative choice between competing strategies.

Peace Week's focus on rearmament increased the vehemence of the local press's condemnation of the peace movement and limited the public impact of the event. The disappearance of the Peace Council, which followed, marked the end of the inclusive phase of the peace movement. The fact that the pamphlet at the heart of Peace Week looked backwards towards the situation preceding the Great War and to the decreasingly relevant doctrine of war resistance represented a missed opportunity. The communist dominated Left had been successful neither in adapting their own "line" nor in influencing others towards the kind of *pacificist* popular front vision that would have fostered a strong response to the fascist threat. This reflected a continuing prioritisation (except with regard to Spain) of domestic opposition to the National Government.

The renewed vitality of the LNU in Sheffield defied the national trend and reflected the strength of those *pacificist* traditions, including that within the Labour Party, which were to coalesce around the need to contain fascist aggression. The strength of the reaction against renewed Japanese action against China in the city reflected this vitality as well as the pervasive fear of air warfare on civilians and a growing awareness of an international refugee problem. Originating in a humanitarian movement largely appealing to the centre and right, the involvement of the peace movement pushed this reaction towards open criticism and eventually a public boycott of the Japanese. The success of this suggested that a sanctionist *pacificism* rather than the absolute pacifism of the PPU was becoming the dominant ethos of the local movement.

Although rearmament remained unpopular within the peace groups. the gut anti-militarism of earlier disarmament campaigners was becoming less characteristic of the movement as a whole, except among youth groups and the PPU. The situation with regard to air raid precautions was moving in a similar realist direction with only pacifists, who viewed participation as quasi-military service, continuing to voice absolute objection. The realism of the peace movement may have been ahead of public opinion on ARP, although public attitudes reflected the psychological impact of the increasing international tension and anticipation of war as well as more considered political judgements.

By mid-1937 there was a properly constituted PPU branch active in the city. Its late development restricted its influence because the quasi-pacifism of a large section of the peace movement had lessened with each new fascist aggression and the first year of the Spanish War had strengthened the commitment of the Left to a sanctionist view. The PPU faced an uphill task in proselytising its views in Sheffield both because of the difficulty it had in conveying a dynamic response to fascist depredations and of the attitudes promoted by an awareness that it spoke directly to a very limited audience.

A consciousness that the very broad ambitions of the original movement, which came together to carry out the Peace Ballot and had continued to work for a large coalition across the spectrum of pro-peace opinion, had not come to fruition was visible by the end of the year. Humanitarian support for the Spanish Republicans, which was to involve a broader section of non-leftist groups as the war proceeded, reflected in part a disillusionment with efforts to influence political practice and an acceptance of a less ambitious, ameliorative role for the peace movement.

Chapter 6

Despised and Abused by Future Historians

From Eden's Resignation to Munich and its Aftermath

(February - December 1938)

1938 saw the consolidation of a consensus among *pacificists* based on a pragmatic response to the expansionist policies of Germany, Italy and Japan. The diminishing imperative to compromise with pacifists allowed the enunciation of a distinctly *pacificist* agenda. Divisions between *pacificists* lessened as groups applied a standard of "realism" to their policies. Although divisions over British rearmament and ARP remained, the underlying philosophy of containment by physical measures ensured that there was a raft of policies on which fundamental agreement existed. The formation of a consensus was eased because, although nationally the Labour Party continued to oppose a united front strategy, locally the *pacificist* consensus formed a Popular Front on peace issues and, outside of communist involvement and manipulation, this was not contentious. Pacifists, unable to accept a physically coercive dimension to foreign policy, increasingly found that the isolationist implications of this stance pushed them into alliance with right-wing supporters of appeasement in outright opposition to their former *pacificist* allies.

The Resignation of Eden:

By early 1938, Labour speakers like Fred Marshall MP were routinely identifying the origin of the deepening international crisis as the failure in 1931 to halt the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.[1] Nevertheless, in Sheffield Eden's resignation, the first result of Chamberlain's appeasement policy, appears to have shocked even those on the Left, who had long accused the National Government of secretly harbouring the intention of allying themselves with the Fascist Powers.

The LNU's increasing disenchantment was reflected in the Sheffield Branch's letter to the Prime Minister. The union spoke for the majority of the peace movement when it wrote that Eden's resignation had:

> ...created a widespread impression that Mr Eden and Lord Cranborne

---

[1] "Wentworth MP Accuses Premier of Killing League". The Independent. 7.3.38., p7

> have been sacrificed to the hostility of certain foreign governments which have championed international anarchy and hindered the League of Nations in the work of achieving international peace and security.[2]

The letter also spoke of the "...disastrous impression on public opinion at home, in Europe and in America" that would be given were Eden's policy reversed and urged that: "...any action which involves, or appears to involve, sympathetic support for the dictators and the abandonment of the League would not be in the interests of lasting peace". Use of the conditional tense gave the letter a diplomatic veneer. The STLC bluntly declared that it: "...indignantly protests against any pacts with Fascist countries with the object of assisting them in their aggressive policy".[3] The convergence of opinion amongst *pacificists* included A.J. Murray. Murray wrote of Chamberlain's administration: "They prate of their love of freedom and democracy, and behind their prating prepare to assist the stamping out of freedom and democracy throughout the world".[4] In so doing he appropriated the language of patriotism, referring to Eden's resignation as "...a matter which affects the welfare and honour of every man and woman in the country". Eden had resigned because he refused "...to be a party to this country becoming the dishcloth of those Governments which have plunged parts of the world into war".[5] For those like Murray, involved with the soon-to-be-launched Popular Front campaign, the conception of the *pacificist* consensus as embodying true patriotism was part of conscious effort to widen the net of those with whom the Left was willing to work. Roger Spalding argues that this change of rhetoric indicated that the Labour Left's priorities had changed, following its recognition that it was not in a revolutionary situation, and that this was part of a larger movement which consciously relinquished the unattainable goal of immediate socialism in favour of the defence of democracy, thus bringing it more into line with the gradualist leadership. The adoption by the Labour Left of the Popular Front three years after the CPGB's move towards this policy in 1935 was a further indication, in Spalding's view, of that sector of the party's independence from

---

[2] "League's Loss", *ibid*, 24.2.38., p3

[3] STLC Minute Books, 22.2.38.

[4] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 23.2.38., p6

[5] Murray was not alone. Sharrard, one of Darvill's allies in the STLC wrote: "And it would also be pertinent and no less relevant and desirable to inquire if England, with its traditional pride and courage, has turned completely yellow and lost that will and spirit to act with firmness when the occasion, and no more plainly than now, calls for definiteness and determination". ("Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 29.3.38., p6)

communist influence.[6] However, although the utilisation of a new patriotic vocabulary by the Left is a feature of the situation in Sheffield, it does not appear to indicate that those on the Left in the city had either relinquished their opposition to rearmament or moved away from their close relationship with the Communist Party.

As yet open opposition amongst dissident Conservatives was unusual although coincidentally, Vyvyan Adams, the only Tory MP to vote against the government in the division over an opposition motion of censure provoked by Eden's resignation, had been due to address Sheffield LNU on the night of the debate.[7] Both the Cooperative Party[8] and the Liberal Party executive committee[9] took the same line as the LNU and Labour Party in regretting Eden's departure. The Cooperative Party voted to join any LNU or STLC action organised in response. The Labour Party held a large number of such meetings up and down the country, including one in Sheffield on 6th March, under the banner of its "Peace and Security" campaign.[10]

The two main religious denominations in Sheffield were wary of expressing an opinion about the resignation. Benson Perkins attempted to sound even-handed while echoing the views of his more outspoken allies in the peace movement:

> Unquestionably the resignation of the Foreign Secretary has created an uneasiness in the minds of most people. Was he too rigid in his attitude? Is the Prime Minister too considerate in his relationship with Italy? It does not seem as though circumstances ought to have arisen which call for resignation and it does seem as though the principles for which Mr Anthony Eden stood ought to be safeguarded.[11]

In contrast, the Anglican prelate failed to mention the matter, although the Rev. George Needham, vicar of St Philip's, introduced a resolution which was passed at both the Sheffield Deanery and Rural Decanal Chapter[12] endorsing Eden's views: "It [the Chapter] hopes that his Majesty's Government will do all in its power to increase the

---

[6] Spalding, R., "Revolutionary Socialism to Radical Patriotism - The British Labour Left 1931 - 1945", M. Phil thesis, University of East Anglia, 1989
[7] "Separating 'Sheep and Goats'", *ibid*, 22.2.38., p7
[8] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minutes, 24.2.38.
[9] "Liberal protest", The Independent, 25.2.38., p5
[10] "Between Ourselves", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, no 513, March 1938, p1
[11] "Wentworth MP Accuses Premier of Killing League", *op cit*
[12] "League Support", The Independent, 31.3.38., p5

effective application of the principles of the League of Nations".[13] The anodyne nature of the resolution provoked Lyon of the LNU who, having wryly noted the existence of "one or two local clerics who regard the terms British Empire and the Kingdom of God as synonymous", described it as "colourless" and "a feeble policy". Lyon's impatience with both government and church was expressed when he suggested that it would have been more helpful had the Church simply endorsed the Government's 1935 election manifesto.[14]

Eden's resignation highlighted the differences between pacifists and the rest of the peace movement. C.H. Wilson was quoted as saying that "the problem was something much bigger than Mr Eden or Mr Chamberlain" but his own views were critical of Eden:

> There had been general agreement in the Cabinet regarding the need for conversations with Italy, but Mr Eden had said the ground had not been prepared.
> Whose fault was it, asked Mr Wilson, that the ground was not prepared? Surely that was the work of the Foreign Secretary.

In the past Wilson's germanophilia had led him dangerously close to becoming an apologist for the Hitler regime. In seeking to justify the actions of both Mussolini and Chamberlain, Wilson revealed the curious suspension of moral judgement that was hastening the demise of the pacifist/*pacificist* coalition:

> The position was that feeling in Italy was very bitter against Mr Eden who was regarded as the originator of sanctions imposed on Italy during the Abyssinian war.
> Human nature being what it was Mussolini wanted revenge...[15]

Although Peace News supported Chamberlain's position and was critical of the Labour Party's vote of censure, it was more chary of aligning itself with Chamberlain, emphasizing that he had been instrumental both in the introduction of tariffs, which were regarded as exacerbating global economic inequalities, and of rearmament.[16] In Sheffield, J.H. Freeborough echoed Peace News' concerns and found Wilson's enthusiasm for

---

[13] "Churches' Lead for Peace", *ibid*, 26.3.38., p7
[14] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 23.2.38. & 4.4.38., p6
[15] "Eden Dropped by Premier to Appease Duce", *ibid*, 28.2.38., p4
[16] "Rome Talks Must Go On, But...", Peace News, no 89, 26.2.38., p1

Chamberlain's policy "both surprising and a disappointment".[17]

Further protests about Eden's resignation were overtaken by events. By the time Hallam DLP's Management Committee meeting took place German troops were already in Austria. Their resolution in support of Collective Security therefore cited the *Anschluss*.[18] The critique of appeasement which has dominated the historiography of the past sixty years was shared by the *pacificist* peace movement who inevitably linked the two events: "...The Prime Minister in the House of Commons made it perfectly clear that small nations need not look to the League for assistance in case of aggression and almost immediately we had the spectacle of Austria being over-run by German troops...", wrote C.W. Carpenter. His article illustrated how far the mainstream LNU had moved away from the National Government and towards the Left:

> Is it not obvious that the world should know exactly for what this nation is prepared to fight and for what she is not prepared to fight. Or is it that the answer to this question would reveal a state of things so embarrassing for the Government that prudence demands silence? If so, then it is truly a very dangerous thing that we should be going on re-arming in ignorance of the purposes to which these arms are going to be put.[19]

The strongest reaction against the *Anschluss* came from the Sheffield Youth Peace Council which had survived its adult counterpart and claimed to represent 20 youth groups in the city.[20] It was already concerned about similar German action against Czechoslovakia. Its manifesto of 21st March demanded:

> That Germany withdraw its troops from Austria.
> A free plebiscite in Austria under the auspices of the League of Nations.
> That the Government state its policy towards Czechoslovakia.
> That talks with Germany be stopped until these demands are granted.

---

[17] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 10.3.38., p6

[18] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 14.3.38. Although the Labour leadership is often accused of lacking a sense of urgency in the face of, for instance, the fall of Spain, there is no doubt that even those within the most conservative DLPs in Sheffield appreciated the significance of events such as the *Anschluss*. Within a couple of days of that event Shiregreen Women's Section was addressed by an Austrian national. Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 16.3.38.

[19] C.W. Carpenter, "Sheffield Peace Week", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 157 April 1938, p2

[20] "Youth Peace Bid", The Independent, 16.3.38., p4

And that as non-intervention has proved a farce, it should be abolished.[21]

None of the city's MPs accepted the Youth Peace Council's invitations to speak at a protest meeting but Joyce Hunter, Secretary of the council, defended the decision to hold such a meeting by a restatement of the mainstream *pacificist* credo: "This country may be kept out of war for a few months or even years by the present policy, but it seems obvious to us that a stand must be taken by the non-aggressive nations if international anarchy is not eventually to swamp civilisation".[22] C.H. Wilson distanced himself from such public protests: "At the very critical time through which we are passing I have very grave doubts as to the desirability or useful purpose served by demonstrations at which a very great deal of passion is aroused".[23] While the statement reflected the quietism of Christian pacifism, it also indicated a growing identification with Government policy. Members of the local Labour and Liberal Parties and Lyon of the LNU all accepted invitations to speak at the demonstration.

Pacificist criticism of pacifist attitudes was becoming less coded and when a number of groups attacked British recognition of Italy's conquest of Abyssinia,[24] one result of the appeasement of Italy to which Eden had been sacrificed, "Cantab" concentrated his attack on the enthusiasm for appeasement of Christian pacifists like Wilson:

> It has always seemed to me that the Christian attitude was to sacrifice yourself for a good cause, if the need arose. Most of our Christian pacifists, however, are engaged in sacrificing **others** for the sake of a good cause.
> For the sake of peace many of our pacifists will sacrifice Manchuria, Spain, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia and any other country that is incapable of resisting aggression.[25]

Others were not yet regarding concessions to the dictators so negatively. Labour Councillor W.G. Robinson's letter on the same topic allied the pacifist emphasis on a "willingness to remedy through the League of Nations legitimate grievances of race, territory or wealth-distribution" with the *pacificist* belief that those states who refused to

---

[21] "Sheffield Youth Peace Demands", *ibid*, 21.3.38., p7
[22] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 24.3.38., p6
[23] "Sheffield MP's Doubts About Peace Rally", *ibid*, 19.3.38., p7
[24] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 21.4.38., p6 & "Protest to MPs", *ibid*, 28.4.38., p7
[25] "Abyssinia Question May Cause a Split", *ibid*, 21.5.38., p13

accept the peaceful settlement of disputes should be subject to "moral pressure, economic pressure and whatever means are necessary to prevent the aggressor nation using violence".[26]

The sense of danger, increased by Sir Samuel Hoare's broadcast appeal for volunteer air-raid wardens to come forward, exacerbated peace activists' impatience with what they felt to the wrong direct taken by government policy and discredited the similar schemes of the pacifists. Belief in the imminence of war would wax and wane over the next few months but the daily reports of warden recruitment given between 22nd March and 13th April[27] were a frightening echo of the Army recruiting drive of the early months of the Great War for those old enough to remember. Such fears throughout the spring and summer imparted a renewed urgency to the activities of the peace movement.

The Popular Front:

The new United Peace Alliance, suggests Miliband, a product of: "...the desperation which the Government's Foreign Policy engendered among quite moderate people...",[28] was a genuinely wider coalition than the united front campaign, encompassing as it did 120 Constituency Labour Parties, Reynolds' News, the Easter Congress of the Cooperative Party, the Liberal News Chronicle, and the Communist Party.

This was not true of the genesis of the UPA in Sheffield which was launched, although not by name, by the Communist Party more than a week before Eden's resignation.[29] In a familiar pattern, the Sheffield Communist Party leader, George Allison's, call for a "peace crusade" was taken up by those like Darvill inside the STLC who closely followed Communist Party policy. G.D.H. Cole finds: "The advocates of the United Front were still opposing rearmament while Chamberlain was in power, whereas the Popular Frontists favoured it..."[30] This policy difference was not expressed in Sheffield. In March a special delegate meeting endorsed a "questionnaire" of five motions upon which affiliated organisations were asked to comment. The Independent,

---

[26] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 19.4.38., & 25.4.38., p6
[27] The Independent reported that numbers rose from 1 600 to 4 104.
[28] Miliband, *op cit*, discusses the alliance pp 257 - 259
[29] "Peace Crusade Launched", The Independent, 9.2.38., p5
[30] Cole, G.D.H., Socialism and Fascism 1931 - 1939, London, 1969, p87

while stressing the council's call for the NCL to organise a "Chamberlain Must Go" campaign, signalled in a quotation from Darvill's speech the reiteration of a familiar message: "In this campaign... the Labour movement should hold out the hand of friendship to every Communist, Liberal, and non-party lover of peace for a national effort to clear out the National Government".[31]

Discussions of the five points are recorded in a number of organisation's minutes:

> 1. That there shall be no collusion between the National Council of Labour and the National Government.
> 2. That we call upon the National Council of Labour to call an emergency conference to consider ways and means of arousing Public Opinion against the Government.
> 3. That we call upon the National Council of Labour to immediately institute enquiries for the purpose of setting up machinery to form an alliance of all working class forces throughout the world in order to stem the advancing tide of Imperialistic Dictators.
> 4. To inaugurate a systematic campaign to arouse local Public Opinion to the seriousness of the situation.
> 5. That we agree to the setting up of a Council of Action of All Bodies working for the overthrow of the Government.[32]

The fact that Hobson's signature was on the letter which asked branches to discuss the five proposals corroborates Miliband's view that the alliance enjoyed more support than had the Socialist League's campaign a year earlier. Dissatisfaction with the Labour Party's performance and particularly with rule changes which prevented a Labour Party Conference taking place in 1938 bolstered the dissidents. Trade union activists also wished to scotch any possibility of a *rapprochement* between the TUC and Chamberlain who had approached it in the hope of speeding up the armaments programme. When the AEU refused its cooperation the STLC sent a telegram of congratulation.[33] Surviving ASLEF Branch minutes record the strength of feeling on the issue:

> That this branch request our General Secretary to carefully guard our interests in any future negotiations of the TUC with the Government, and wish to inform him we are more than suspicious of the action of the

---

[31] "Labour to Prepare Big Push", The Independent, 30.3.38., p7
[32] STLC letter to all branches of affiliated organisations, STLC Minute Books 29.3.38., quoted from Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 11.4.38.
[33] STLC Minute Books, 26.4.38.

> Secretary of the TUC in meeting the Premier without knowledge of the General Body of the TUC, further we have no intention of again being bound by agreements as in 1914...[34]

On 12th April the NEC issued a circular warning "against the weakening of Party policy to accommodate other political elements" and in May a second statement, The Labour Party and the Popular Front. Miliband is critical of the party's position on the UPA contrasting Cole's explanation of its function: "...to stop the policy of appeasement at once, and not to wait until the Conservatives saw fit to dissolve Parliament", with the concentration on narrow party advantage which he detects in Labour's rejection of the initiative. Locally there was a continuing vigilance regarding those supporting unity and Brightside DLP were asked by Hobson to investigate their Mr Sadler's appearance on the platform of a Daily Worker League benefit for the International Brigade. The counter-accusation from the DLP that two Labour Councillors had attended a similar function the previous evening suggests that despite the leadership's efforts to extirpate formal links between Labour and the Left, unofficial links continued to flourish.[35] Divisions within the party over Eden's resignation were similarly focussed on the question of cross-party cooperation. Sharrard's protest motion to Central DLP, which named Eden, was lost 10 to 11, to be replaced by a similar motion not naming him which was passed unanimously.[36] Both Hallam Ward[37] and Hallam DLP supported the five proposals on the questionnaire in their entirety and thus voted for the Popular Front. Central DLP[38] and Brightside DLP,[39] on the other hand, voted only for proposals 1, 2, and 4, rejecting that part of the circular which gave support to the UPA. Cooperative Party minutes suggest nervousness over the issue with the report from the Easter Conference being delayed and Alexander being asked to attend "with reference to the United Peace Alliance".[40]

The STLC minutes are cryptic on the progress of the questionnaire. Although opinion within the Executive had temporarily shifted in favour of testing local opinion,

---

[34] ASLEF Branch 1B Minute Book, 27.3.38.
[35] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 19.1.38. & 16.2.38.
[36] Central Division Labour Party Minute Book, 24.3.38.
[37] Hallam Ward Labour Party Minute Book, 7.4.38.
[38] Central Division Labour Party Minute Book, 6.5.38.
[39] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 20.4.38., (Executive Committee) and Brightside Divisional Labour Party Members' Meetings Minute Book, 24.4.38.
[40] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Books, 5.5.38.

replies to the questionnaire indicated that the majority of affiliated organisations did not approve of the UPA. The Executive compromised with the resolution:

> That the Executive Committee of this Council accept the findings of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party and we are of the opinion that the National Labour Party can continue to lead Working Class organisations we do however reaffirm our decision calling upon the National Executive Committee to call an emergency conference.

By 8th June the executive had received firm instructions from the TUC to withdraw the questionnaire and resolved: "that the subject matter contained therein be now declared null and void".[41] The motion was passed "unanimously" according to a note added in pencil. The STLC Executive, whatever its impatience with party headquarters, saw no purpose in pushing its disagreements to the point of disaffiliation. In June Alexander proposed the motion opposing the UPA to the Annual Cooperative Party Congress, effectively overriding Easter's decision, while Marshall, Brightside's Labour MP, newly elected president of the NUGMW, publicly attacked the proposals.[42]

In Sheffield therefore, despite the existence of a broad based consensus within pacificism and widespread acceptance of the necessity for cooperation, coordinating efforts identified with the Left continued to founder on the Labour leadership's opposition and the loyalty of sections of the party. Communists continued to press for unity, going as far in the Municipal Elections in October, in which they put up no candidates, as to suggest that victory in the elections would be a "vindication" of Labour administration in the city.[43]

While there is no evidence that the continuing Moscow Trials lessened support for communist policies amongst the Labour Left, the attitudes which the defence of the trials provoked among communists reinforced divisions within the wider Left. In March Lelensky, former President of the Union of Soviet Cooperative Societies, "confessed" that during talks with Alexander in 1935, Alexander had negotiated for support for the British Cooperative movement if the Trotskyists ever came to power.[44] This unlikely revelation was denied by Alexander but Basil Barker replied defending the veracity of the

---

[41] STLC Minute Books, Executive and Delegates' Meetings, 5.4.38 - 8.6.38.
[42] "Talk of London", The Independent, 9.6.38., p4 & 21.6.38., p5
[43] "Communists to Back Labour Party", *ibid*, 21.10.38., p3
[44] "Laughable Soviet Allegation", *ibid*, 7.3.38., p5

preposterous confessions made during the trials. His final sentence was intended to be read in the context of executions taking place in Moscow at this time:

> What they ["the broad mass of the people"] are more than likely thinking at the present time is: that if we in this country had a strong people's Government which could deal with our warmongers and friends of Fascists as ably and well as the Soviet Government can deal with theirs, then peace and democracy would have been infinitely better served during the last few weeks.[45]

The Communist Party's obsession with the Soviet Union diminished its influence over the wider *pacificist* consensus. Less than six weeks before Munich, during nights of practise ARP black-outs, the meeting of the North Midlands' District Committee chose to devote its press release to the "valuable service to world peace" rendered by the Soviet Government's firm stand against the Japanese during incidents on the Soviet-Manchuko border.[46]

In domestic peace policy, however, the Communists continued to demonstrate a pragmatism which other groups on the ideological Left, such as the Socialist League and the ILP, had failed to develop. During 1938 the CPGB, thwarted by the defeat of the unity campaign from setting the peace movement's agenda, sought to continue to exert an influence by its developed critique of Sheffield's ARP Plans.

The League of Nations Union and the International Peace Campaign

After the successful revitalisation of the Sheffield Branch during 1937, the LNU found itself in an anomalous situation. By the beginning of 1938 the Branch enjoyed greater credibility than did the League of Nations itself. Freeborough, elected President at the AGM in March, spoke of the failure of the League[47] and those attending an LNU garden party were urged: "...not to allow jeers and scoffs to weaken their work for peace".[48] "In these days", wrote "Cantab", "it is fashionable to assume that membership of the League of Nations Union is decreasing. This is not so in Sheffield".[49] The annual report confirmed that the union lost less than a dozen members by resignation and

---

[45] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 10.3.38., p6
[46] "Threat to Peace", *ibid*, 8.8.34., p4
[47] "Sheffield Call to Rally Round League", *ibid*, 26.3.38., p7
[48] "Garden Party", *ibid*, 17.6.38., p7
[49] "Church of England Notes", *ibid*, 22.1.38., p11

finished the year with 928 members, just 14 less than the previous year. Instability was suggested, however, by the enrolment of 208 new members, indicating a turnover in membership of more than 20%.

Sheffield LNU owed its continuing success to Carpenter's re-positioning of the Branch into the vacancy left by the demise of the Peace Council. Not only was it a broad church itself but through the IPC, its own Youth Groups, and the relief and refugee organisations which Carpenter helped to coordinate, the union had associates within almost every branch of the peace movement and was, to an extent, a living embodiment of the Popular Front. Carpenter himself joined the Council of Action in July.[50]

The extent of radicalism within the LNU itself, however, is exaggerated by this overall view. Carpenter differentiated between the functions of the LNU and IPC:

> In this country the way to show that public support of the League is for people to join the LNU which has consistently stood by League principles, and to get their respective organisations to work with the union in focussing public opinion on the necessity for a strong League. This is being done at the present time very largely through the IPC...[51]

The LNU remained the establishment face of the organisation, while the IPC's coordinating role brought it into contact with more left-wing groups. Notwithstanding this, LNU and IPC were used interchangeably in some of the surviving records and the growing warmth and identification between the LNU and the Labour and Cooperative Parties continued during the period between Eden's resignation and the Munich Crisis. The STLC, for instance, agreed without demur to send out LNU literature with their own correspondence.[52]

In the circumstances of the moment, the middle-class ambience of Sheffield's LNU, which continued to feature in The Independent's society column, enhanced its coordinating role. Its one big public meeting during the period between the *Anschluss* and Munich was addressed by Winston Churchill. Churchill, as the only major Conservative dissident (apart from Eden who had chosen not to capitalise on the support he enjoyed in the country at the time of his resignation), had an important function for the *pacificist* peace movement. An interest was taken in his views both by those whose

---

[50] "Recruits for Peace", *ibid*, 22.7.38., p4
[51] C.W. Carpenter, "Sheffield Peace Week", *op cit.*
[52] STLC Minute Books, 1.2.38.

definition of the Popular Front extended as far as Conservative supporters of the League of Nations and by the Labour Party leadership whose only caveat to its unrelenting opposition to the Popular Front was that a different situation would arise if large numbers of government MPs rejected Chamberlain's foreign policy.[53] The Independent reported that the audience for Churchill's meeting, chaired by the Labour Mayor of Sheffield, E.G. Rowlinson, was very mixed.[54]

Churchill's subsequent career has focussed attention on his criticism of the speed of rearmament under Chamberlain and of appeasement. In fact, Churchill's position at this time was more equivocal than his later statements suggest. Despite Eden's resignation there had been little sign of Conservative dissent in the country and none at all in Sheffield. In these circumstances it was hardly surprising that Churchill, out of office for more than a decade and with no obvious power base within his own party, softened the thrust of his trenchant critique of his party's leadership. Those who came to the City Hall on that May night to hear Chamberlain lambasted by a senior member of his own party went home disappointed. Hitler had just backed away from his initial threats against Czechoslovakia following international protests and in an important speech, which received extensive coverage in The Times and is quoted by Thompson in his book on Conservative critics of appeasement, Churchill offered Chamberlain his support:

> He [Chamberlain] made clear his abhorrence, which I am sure is sincere, of totalitarian tyranny in all its forms.
> He declared his resolve to defend free, democratic, parliamentary Government, and thirdly, he affirmed his loyalty to the Covenant of the League of Nations.
> Upon these assurances, organised labour and especially the skilled unions, ought to throw their full energies into the task of national defence.[55]

Although the statement must have disappointed critics of the Government, the "one-nation" rhetoric with its notion of reciprocation is noteworthy. Later in the speech Churchill returned to another of his major criticisms of the administration, its failure to set up a Ministry of Supply, and said that its establishment was: "...refused upon the

---

[53] Miliband, *op cit*, p258
[54] "General Topics", The Independent, 1.6.38., p6
[55] "'Lamentable' Air Defence Lag", *ibid*, 1.6.38., p1. The Times coverage appeared on the same day. N. Thompson quotes this section of the speech in The Anti-Appeasers, Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s, London (1971), p172

astonishing ground that there is no emergency. If there is no emergency, well, can you wonder that the Amalgamated Engineers say 'What right have you to come to us for special sacrifices?'" This paralleled the Left's call for the nationalisation of the armaments industry with its stress on the rationalisation of production, the removal of profit and the sharing of sacrifice and helps to explain why, almost in spite of himself, Churchill's wartime administration had a potent influence on post-war social policy. Darvill recognised the parallel and wrote in December 1938 that: "The idea of a Ministry of Supply... might possibly check profiteering in the arms industry".[56] Of more immediate importance to the politics of the peace movement was the strength of Churchill's endorsement of a re-armed League:

> Never shall we be able to make a good settlement in Europe until there are enough well-armed nations firmly bonded together to uphold the Covenant and it is in the conviction that the catastrophe may still be averted by gathering together forces, not only military but moral also, that no aggressor will dare to challenge them, that I urge you to set forth steadfastly along a hard road, but the right road, and the only road to a sure freedom and lasting peace.

There was nothing in this concluding sentence of truly Churchillian proportions with which centre-left *pacificists* would disagree. It was another of the anomalies of the LNU in Sheffield that such views were being promulgated in the name of a committee many of whose members retained a quasi-pacifist opposition to rearmament.

The strengthening consensus among *pacificists* ensured that, despite the establishment influence of the LNU on the IPC, the third Sheffield Peace Week was little different in tone from its united-front inspired predecessors. The open split with pacifism meant that the organisers of the 1938 week actually had to make fewer concessions to dissenters within their ranks. At the opening of an exhibition of paintings[57] before Peace Week Sir Norman Angell, executive member of the LNU, illustrated the extent to which *pacificist* views, originating in widely differing perspectives, were converging. Not only did he describe the possible fascist victory in Spain as "...a victory of German and Italian forces", but, in what must have been music to Left-wing ears (and brought forth "Loud applause"), he also appealed for "co-operation with Russia". Whilst offering no support

---

[56] "Hallam for Labour", The Sheffield Cooperator, December 1938 No 164, p3
[57] "Peace and War Compared", The Independent, 5.4.38., p3

for Soviet internal policy and declaring that he would "...welcome a Fascist state in the League of Nations", he differentiated between the foreign policies of Russia and the Fascist states:

> Russia is not pledged to territorial expansion. The Fascist states say they want conquest and expansion. We can co-operate with Russia, but we cannot co-operate with Fascist States until they drop their policy of expansion.[58]

The Left continued both to benefit from its association with the wider peace movement and to attempt to influence it towards its own political agenda. On 1st May the STLC held its most successful May Day Rally in many years with The Independent reporting a crowd of 4 000 people, half of whom had formed a mile long procession through the city.[59] Almost at the same moment the Communist Party sent its detailed critique of the City's ARP plans to members of the Corporation, Sheffield MPs, the STLC and the local organiser of the preparations.[60] Like Peace Week's own Sheffield and Rearmament the previous year, ARP - A Complete Plan for the Safety of the People of Sheffield was published as a pamphlet and provoked verbal skirmishing with "General Topics" in the week preceding Peace Week.[61]

However, the centrist coordination offered by the LNU through the IPC brought on board organisations which would not knowingly have cooperated with a group more clearly identified with the Left. This was particularly true of the Churches which had a direct link to the LNU through the "Corporate Membership" scheme. Methodist involvement was recorded not only by the usual endorsement in their monthly magazine[62] but more unusually by the forwarding of peace literature to preachers officiating on 8th and 15th May.[63] Church of England Parish magazines also advertised the event,[64] although at least one incumbent with the kind of anglocentric views complained of by

---

[58] "Any Bombs Dropped on the City Will Come from Germany", *ibid.*
[59] "4 000 Brave Cold Wind", *ibid*, 2.5.38., p7
[60] "Communist Plan for Air Raid Protection", *ibid*, 30.4.38., p9
[61] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 3.5.38., p6
[62] "Between Ourselves", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, no 514, May 1938, p5
[63] Sheffield (Norfolk Circuit) Local Preachers' Meeting Minute Book, 3.3.38. The Petre Street Methodist Church Notice Book recorded: "Today is the second Sunday of IPC when our preachers are to refer to the great international question of Peace".
[64] e.g. "Sheffield Peace Week", St Augustine's Parish Magazine, no 456, May 1938, np

Lyon, dismissed the usefulness of demonstrating support for peace within what he regarded as a blameless Britain: "Personally, I feel this is preaching to the converted, for we all long for peace".[65]

Within the Cooperative Movement, the enthusiasm of whose female members for peace had always been balanced by the wariness of its leadership towards the United Front connections of peace events, the new management of Peace Week encouraged participation. Both Sheffield Societies' Boards of Management lent vehicles for the procession.[66] There are signs too that secular non-political organisations felt easier about working with the new Peace Week committee. The Sheffield Sub-Region of the Youth Hostel Association was reported to be encouraging its members to take part in the initial event.[67] The Independent's report of Saturday's events laid stress on the support given by "...nearly every religious and secular organisation in Sheffield".

Despite the inclusive framing of the IPC's original four points, the speeches made at the third Peace Week were firmly *pacificist* in tone. The organisers made no effort to emasculate the third point which hinted at the use of force by the League of Nations "for the prevention and stopping of war". Instead, after Darvill's opening speech listing the four points, Lyon, presiding, "...explained that two of the organisations taking part - the Society of Friends and the Peace Pledge Union - did not commit themselves on the question of the use of force for collective security and mutual assistance".[68] On the question of rearmament, which remained controversial among *pacificists*, the organisers were assisted by the inclusive phrasing of point two which called for: "Reduction and Limitation of Armaments by International Agreement, and the Suppression of Profit from the Manufacture of Arms". According to Gallup Polls of the time, while public opinion continued to show around 90% support for Government control of both the production of, and profits from, armaments, calls for disarmament were far less popular. A question framed almost identically to the first section of point two had received only 49% support in December 1937 and by October 1938, after Munich, rearmament was supported by 72% of the public.[69]

---

[65] "Vicar's Letter", St George's Parish Magazine, April 1938, np
[66] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 5.5.38.
[67] "Youth Hostel Members May Help Peace Week'. The Independent, 17.3.38., p7
[68] "Peace March Through Sheffield", *ibid*, 9.5.38., p4
[69] Gallup, George H., (ed), The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain

At Monday's opening meeting Professor Ramsey Muir spoke conciliatorily of the Fascist states' intentions: "There was no Government of this country, or any other, including Italy and Germany, which did not shudder at the thought of being drawn into the horrors of war". Gesturing to pacifist views he also criticised the League of Nations for doing too little to ensure that: "...peace should rest on justice" and spoke of disarmament as the ultimate aim of the League. Nevertheless, he reaffirmed that: "...in the present desperate conditions... they had got to rearm". Vyvyan Adams MP urged European nations not to countenance German claims on Czechoslovakia, while Alfred M. Wall, Secretary of the London Trades Council, attacked Chamberlain, predicting that, having got rid of Eden to appease Mussolini: "The next move would be a similar agreement with Hitler".[70]

At Wednesday's Youth Peace Council Miss Wellington Koo, daughter of the Chinese ambassador in Paris, promoted the boycott of Japanese goods. She claimed that the Japanese were attempting to spread opium addiction amongst the conquered Chinese.[71] Previous women's meetings had possessed a quasi-pacifist tone but at the following day's rally Lady Layton, another member of the LNU Executive, offered a firmly *pacificist* message:

> She considered that the only way to keep peace was by being willing to take risks for something that was worth more than life itself. If England was ready to step in and stop acts of aggression; America would also be prepared to help.[72]

Lady Layton also repeated the call for the ending of Non-Intervention in Spain which had by this time become official LNU policy.

The final act of Peace Week was the presentation of a number of peace plays. Besides the expected Left Theatre Club were a company formed by staff at the King Edward VII School (performing one of two plays being presented that were written by local author and peace-activist L. du Garde Peach), Sheffield Playgoers' Society, Sheffield YMCA Dramatic Society and the Caledonian Players.[73] While this undoubtedly

---

1937 - 1975, Vol: One 1937 - 1964, New York, 1976, pp1, 4, 10 & 11

[70] "Czechs Vital Factor in Europe Crisis", The Independent, 10.5.38., p7

[71] "Why China Must Beat Japan", *ibid*, 12.5.38., p4

[72] "Peace Campaign", *ibid*, 13.5.38., p4

[73] "Peace Plays" *ibid*, 14.5.38., p5

illustrated the fashionableness of "peace" as a subject, the groups' willingness to act under the IPC banner underlined the wide acceptability of the new coordination. All in all, wrote "Cantab", Peace Week had been a success with 2 000 attending Angell's pre-meeting, and 1 400 there on the first Monday of the week itself. Like the Peace Council before it, however, the IPC had become the promoter of Peace Week rather than the long-term coordinator of peace activity in Sheffield. Despite the week's success, little was heard of the IPC during the rest of the year.

The Shape of the Consensus:

Ceadel uses the phrase "*pacificist* consensus" to denote the period of undifferentiated pacifist and *pacificist* support for the League and Disarmament before 1933.[74] By 1935 it had become clear that pacifist and *pacificist* policies were incompatible and the consensus across the whole of the peace movement in support of the League began to evaporate. Michael Pugh has written of this period that: "the argument that the peace movement was a point of consensus can only be valid at a superficial level".[75] After 1936 pacifist groups rejected the sanctionist model and collective security became identified with the disparate groups who accepted a *pacificist* methodology. James Jupp commenting on the Left's attitudes to peace in the later thirties appears to find a continuity with Pugh's view that even this consensus within *pacificism* existed only superficially. The Left, he writes: "...had a vaguely defined common attitude but was unable to develop a coherent policy".[76] It is argued here, however, that it was the policy disagreements which were "superficial". The "vaguely defined common attitude" was a *pacificist* consensus that there were circumstances in which war was necessary and that the fascist expansion in Europe might constitute such circumstances. This was to prove, as far as the continuum of events went, historically more important than the disagreements. Taylor certainly supports this view with regard to the Labour Party: "Once subtract the appeasers... and the remaining contestants

---

[74] Ceadel, M., Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, The Defining of a Faith, Oxford, 1980, p123

[75] Pugh, M., "Pacifism and Politics in Britain 1931 -1935", Historical Journal, 23, 3, 1980, p641

[76] Jupp, J., The Radical Left in Britain 1931 - 1941, London, 1982, p172

agreed fundamentally despite the harsh phrases which they levelled against each other".[77] There continued to be, however, beyond a rejection of pacifism and isolationism, important differences over specific issues which obscured the large measure of agreement growing within the *pacificist* peace movement.

(a) Spain: 1938 saw no slackening in efforts for Spanish Relief.[78] Numerous meetings, large and small, dominated the Left's activism.[79] The closer the Republicans came to defeat, the greater became their support in Britain. This was true of *pacificists* of the Centre and Right, whose distrust of Fascist intentions in Europe had grown since 1936, as well as of those giving humanitarian aid. By 1938 Methodists were unembarrassedly collecting food for the Republic.[80] Most unusually, a resolution in the early days of 1939 from a Special Leaders' Meeting of the Petre Street congregation went so far as to express political support for the Republicans: "A Resolution was carried unanimously to do all in our power to alleviate the sufferings of the Spanish people in their heroic struggle for liberty and independence".[81] Aid for Spain had become socially acceptable. The "Round of Sheffield" column gave extensive coverage to a showing of the documentary "Three Prisoners" about the interrogation of captured German and Italian airmen.[82] Among *pacificists* tensions over Spain had lessened. Sheffield Youth Peace Council's efforts for Spain were endorsed by the Bishop, the Mayor, the Free Churches, and Labour MPs despite the council's obvious Communist links.[83]

On the Left, the British government's attitude to Spain was seen to epitomise the

---

[77] Taylor, A.J.P., The Troublemakers, Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792 - 1939, London, 1957, p191

[78] e.g. Sheffield District AEU bought a lorry and loaded it with food. "Sheffield Workers' Lorry Laden with Food for Spain", The Telegraph, 24.11.38., p7. Fyrth gives details of the logistics of AEU collections in Sheffield. Fyrth, J., The Signal was Spain, London, 1986, p267. Carbrook Cooperative Society gave £150 to the milk campaign. "More Milk for Spain", The Sheffield Cooperator, no 160, July 1938, p6

[79] Of 75 headed items in the STLC Minute Books for 1938 noted by the writer, fully 23 included the words "Spain" or "Spanish" in their title and well over a third included some reference to the situation there.

[80] e.g. Ebenezer Chapel, Walkley, Leaders' Meeting Minute Book, 31.3.38. and "Between Ourselves", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, no 522, December 1938, p3

[81] Petre Street Methodist Church Minute Book, 17.1.39.

[82] "Round of Sheffield", The Independent, 21.5.38., p6

[83] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 26.2.38., p7

establishment's preference for fascism. It remained common practice to tag all foreign policy resolutions with a call for non-intervention to be ended.[84] As the plight of the Republic worsened the animosity felt towards Chamberlain sharpened:

> I think it is one of the most despicable characteristics of the pro-Fascist Chamberlain Government that whilst it pretends to be unaware of the Fascist forces in Spain it denies to the Spanish Government the legal right to purchase even so much as an anti-aircraft gun with which to defend the helpless women and children in the towns and villages of Spain. If we allow our Spanish comrades to go down into the abyss of Fascist tyranny history will write beside the name of our Movement the word "finis". If there were no other reason this one alone is more than enough to urge us onward for the end of the "National" Government and its replacement by a Government that will carry out the true will of the people of this country.[85]

Miliband is critical of the Labour Party's constitutionalist line at this juncture, arguing that the Party could have done more within parliament by obstructive practices and outside by demonstrations, protests, and by mobilising its industrial power.[86] Spain was a continuous pressure in favour of views associated with the united front and by 1938 such a coalition existed *de facto* within the *pacificist* peace movement. When British ships were bombed in June, the two British politicians which Park DLP's free newspaper quoted with approval were the Conservatives, Anthony Eden and Lord Cecil. Of Chamberlain's policy Cecil had said that it: "...seems to him inconsistent with British honour and international morality".[87] Despite years of trenchant criticism of Britain's imperialist and capitalist system, many on the Left shared the sense of national humiliation. Although the STLC put the matter into its own socialist context and idiom, such sentiments clearly underlay its resolution:

> That this delegate meeting of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council protests in the strongest possible terms against the bombing of British Seamen engaged upon the [sic] lawful duties by Franco Planes. In view of the unsatisfactory answers of Chamberlain who in his anxiety to ingratiate himself with the Fascist Dictators is prepared to sacrifice the lives of

---

[84] Hallam DLP's resolution against the invasion of Austria, for instance, included such a call, Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 14.3.38.
[85] "President's Forward", Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Annual Report, 1938, p9
[86] Miliband, pp 233 - 234
[87] "Non-Intervention", The Park and Heeley Gazette and Manor and Woodseats Herald, no 45, July 1938, p2

> British Workers, we demand the Spanish Government [sic] the right to purchase arms in its own defence.[88]

Although as yet devoid of a unifying political strategy, there were signs that the consensus within *pacificism* was emerging as a credible intellectual alternative to Chamberlain's policies and Hugh Thomas suggests that it was Italian and German acceptance at the beginning of July that the raids on British ships posed a danger to Chamberlain's continuance as premier that led them to stop the attacks.[89]

The failure of the offensive across the Ebro between July and November 1938 demonstrated that the Republicans were doomed. The weakness of the ILP in Sheffield had ensured that the Spanish War had always been a crusade, unsullied by its complex realities, even when communist and syndicalist Republicans had been fighting on the streets of Barcelona. The imminent end was greeted with a similarly idealistic response and few left-wing speakers admitted the possibility of defeat, although Prof. J.B.S. Haldane speaking in Sheffield at the end of November adumbrated the likely shifts in the Balance of Power against Britain should Franco win.[90]

By 1938 Negrin, the Republican leader, was looking for a negotiated end to the war. His options were limited. His best hopes of saving something from the impending wreck of the Republic lay in either a wider conflict between Fascism and the democracies which would bring support to Spain or in a ceasefire and a treaty of re-unification. With appeasement making the former outcome unlikely, Negrin had to hope that Spain would become part of a wider settlement of the tensions centred on Czechoslovakia.[91] Negrin's Communist allies never accepted this option. In Sheffield too, there is no evidence that pro-Republicans accepted Negrin's, admittedly secret, agenda. Indeed in Sheffield there is no evidence at all of discussion of the possible shape of a peace settlement in Spain.

The Anglo-Italian Agreement, whose arrangement had necessitated the removal of Eden, had been signed in April but its implementation awaited, on the British side, a settlement of the question of Italian involvement in Spain. Negrin, judging that the general settlement which seemed bound to follow the Munich Agreement might include

---

[88] STLC Minute Books, 28.6.38.

[89] Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, London, 1961, p829. Watkins agrees with this assessment but dates it earlier to February 1938. Watkins, K.W., Britain Divided, London, 1963, p109

[90] "Britain Endangered if Franco Wins", The Telegraph, 28.11.38., p36

[91] Thomas, *op cit*, Chapter 47, pp835 - 857

Spain, had accepted a League supervised withdrawal of all volunteers in Spain from both sides on 1st October in order to put pressure on Franco. Mussolini treated this further act of non-intervention as he had treated all the others and, withdrawing less than half his forces, persuaded the British Government to implement the April agreement including the granting of belligerent rights to Franco.

Reaction went unnoticed in Sheffield's press but the Cooperative Party, the LNU,[92] Brightside and Hallam DLPs[93] and the STLC[94] all signed a petition of protest. By the end of November British volunteers were coming home. If they feared that the Spanish Republic was near its end they did not let on. On 9th December Walter Ryder, one of 407 British members of the International Brigade to be repatriated, arrived home to Sheffield Station to be greeted by a crowd of nearly a hundred people, including Darvill and Hobson of the STLC:

> "Now I am back in Britain I intend to fight even more for the Spanish people," he said. "They have proved that the 'planes and ships of Germany and Italy cannot beat them and we shall see that they will not starve."[95]

The contradiction between the activities of those who talked as if victory was still a possibility, while working frantically to feed and clothe a Republican Spain they knew to be on the verge of starvation, was the product of an ideological impasse. A reviewer in Peace News, reading F. Elwyn Jones' The Battle for Peace, quoted a sentence from the writer which encapsulated the Left's view that: "The battle for peace and the battle against fascism are one and the same thing". Elwyn Jones elaborated: "All over the world today two dynamic forces are in conflict: aggression and peace. Between these two there can be no cooperation". The reviewer countered:

> But without cooperation, there can be no peace. Peacemaking does not consist of siding violently with one side or the other, but in drawing the best of both sides together - not in making the utmost of political differences but in showing that humanity needs all men whatever their

---

[92] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Books, 22.12.38.
[93] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 19.10.38.
[94] STLC Minute Book, 15.11. & 29.11.38.
[95] "Home from Spain", The Telegraph, 10.12.38., p14. Other repatriated members of the International Brigades visited Sheffield to help the campaign. c.f. "Aid for Spain", *ibid*, 28.11.38., p9 & "Clothing for Spain", *ibid*, 5.12.38., p8

beliefs, whether communist, fascist, Christian, or pagan in its "battle" for peace.[96]

History has vindicated the Left's antagonism to the "cooperation" that degenerated into appeasement. On Spain, however, the highly ideological position taken by the Left ensured that, unable to bring its own agenda to bear on the situation, powerless therefore to supply the arms which alone could have brought about its favoured solution and unwilling to compromise, the Left's priority became, despite its continuing political rhetoric, humanitarian aid. Paradoxically, therefore the imminent defeat of the Spanish Republic promoted cohesion between the Left, expressing its support in an acceptably peaceable manner, and *pacificists* on the right who had come to see those resisting fascism as forming a common front.

(b) The Sheffield China Relief Committee and the "Refugee Problem": Unlike Aid for Spain, which started as a political campaign and evolved into a humanitarian relief programme, China Relief began on a humanitarian model and became increasingly political with the involvement of the national China Campaign Committee and the LNU. The group which came together in February and March 1938 to support the Lord Mayor of London's Fund for the Relief of Distress in China, working within refugee camps and providing medical aid,[97] attracted an establishment membership. The appeal was signed by Sheffield's Lord Mayor, Master Cutler, Bishop and the President of the Chamber of Commerce.[98] Even so, the activity was felt to be controversial enough to demand a disclaimer: "...the rights and wrongs of the war in China are not our concern, for the political ramifications find no place in our effort to bring aid to the victims of this conflict. We approach you solely in the name of humanity".[99] This was because some of those targeted by the appeals were opposed to an interventionist foreign policy. In October a thousand pounds worth of implements donated by the Sheffield Stainless Steel Manufacturers' Association along with garments donated by the Ladies' Committee were exhibited prior to their shipment to China.[100]

---

[96] "New Books", Peace News, no 117, 10.9.38., p6
[97] "City Aid for China's Refugees", The Independent, 4.2.38., p3
[98] "China Relief Fund", *ibid*, 5.3.38., p8
[99] "Sheffield Appeal for Distress in China", *ibid*, 8.4.38., p6
[100] "Sheffield Aid for China", *ibid*, 10.10.38., p7

November, however, saw a China Relief Campaign meeting that combined an appeal for humanitarian aid with a more politicised view. The Chinese ambassador in Britain, Dr Quo Tai-Chi, who presided and Miss Wellington Koo both referred to the problems experienced by refugees, but also made partisan appeals for support: "...they are confident" said the ambassador of his countrymen, "that they have not only your encouragement, your support, and your good wishes, but they know that their cause and your cause have very much in common".[101] Alexander, the third speaker,[102] was there to emphasize the point. He spoke of the fighting in China in much the same vein as those further to the Left spoke of the conflict in Spain: "...it was surely a practical and wise expenditure to help those countries which were already fighting for the cause of freedom, democracy, and liberty".

Within the peace movement itself there remained a residuum of pacifist inspired opposition to a boycott of Japanese goods. The Brightside and Firth Park Joint Wards of the Labour Party rejected the official call by their national leaders and the TUC for a boycott.[103] Early in 1938 cooperators in Hillsborough were addressed on the issue of sanctions by Mr E. Topham, Editor, Publications Department of the Cooperative Union.[104] This was part of a concerted effort to win over doubting members. In the same month Ballard attempted to palliate sanctions in The Sheffield Cooperator by putting them into a domestic context:

> The question of sanctions has naturally aroused the opposition of sincere pacifists. Generally the objector visualises a combination of capitalist States attacking democratic countries with international forces. When it is pointed out that whilst the civil police may have been misused in capitalist interest on occasion, everybody accepts the idea that the police are necessary to protect the community against the bully aggressor, and that to visualise "sanctions", either economic or military, as capitalistic aggressive measures instead of peaceful protection and security is to mistake the whole purpose of the League and to misinterpret the intentions of every decent democrat in the world.[105]

---

[101] "Chinese Army Still Intact", The Telegraph, 7.11.38., p9

[102] Letter dated 6.9.38. from AVA to F.M. Osborn. Originally asked to move a vote of thanks, Alexander wrote to the LNU organiser to request a chance to speak. Cooperative Party Records (49)

[103] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 16.2.38. & 16.3.38.

[104] Circular dated 31.3.38. from Cooperative Party Records (12)

[105] "The Coop Party's Peace Policy", The Sheffield Cooperator, no 155, February 1938, p3

In June, however, the Cooperative Women's Guild national conference re-affirmed their pacifist policy by 897 votes to 623.[106] Although most of the Labour movement remained strong on the boycott, there was no sign of aid for China being systematically organised by left-wing organisations.[107] There was an element of eurocentricity in this not in keeping with the Left's professed internationalism. A large number of those promoting the Chinese cause were either, in the parlance of the time, "old China hands", or individuals of Chinese descent. Chinese refugee problems were potentially enormous. One speaker referred to the suffering of the 150 000 000 Chinese living in Japanese occupied areas, but this was vicariously experienced suffering. The increasing number of crises in Europe was bringing the refugee problem directly to the Sheffield peace movement.

By the end of April 14 of the original Basque children remained. The Basque Region had fallen to the Nationalists and some children had returned. The project ran short of funds in February and October.[108] Carpenter in an effort to widen the circle of donors used the "Round of Sheffield" column to intimate that unless funds were rapidly forthcoming the children would have to be sent elsewhere.[109] Although support for the Basque children had initially come from a widespread coalition it appears to have become, in contrast to China Relief, generally identified with the Left.[110] The growing humanitarian aid from a wider spectrum of donors was directed at the refugee crisis in

---

[106] Peace News reported this (no 107, 2.7.38., p5) for commentary c.f. Liddington, J., "Pacifism or Anti-Fascism", The Long Road to Greenham - Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820, London, 1989, p163

[107] The boycott was referred to in Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 23.1.38 & 21.9.38., Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregeen Women's Section Minute Book, 16.2.38. and Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 14.2.38., 11.7.38., and 12.9.38. c.f. also "Bid to Boycott Japan" & "Boycott Urged", The Independent, 4.3.38., p7, & 10.2.38., p4 and "Sheffielders Play Your Part!", The Sheffield Cooperator, no 155, February 1938, p2

[108] "Hear all Sides", The Independent, 10.10.38., p6

[109] "Round of Sheffield", *ibid*, 12.3.38., p6

[110] The Woodcraft Folk ("Basque Children", *ibid*, 4.1.38., p5), the Cooperative Party, (Cooperative party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 7.7.38. and "Spanish Carnival", The Telegraph, 26.11.38., p7), Brightside DLP, (Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 20.7.38), Hallam DLP, (Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 8.8.38.) Hallam Ward Labour Party (Hallam Ward Labour Party Minute Book, 8.9.38.) and Shiregreen Women's Section (Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 31.8.38.) all report their involvement with the Basque children during 1938.

Spanish Government territory which worsened as the year progressed. In November a fundraising meeting organised by the Free Churches was addressed by J.B.S. Haldane.[111] It was not just Spain and China, however, which were raising public awareness of the "refugee problem". Individuals escaping from both Austria and the Sudeten areas of Czechoslovakia after the Nazi occupations reached Sheffield and addressed meetings there.

Throughout the period covered by this thesis three types of gatherings in Sheffield had protested against Jewish persecution in Nazi Germany: Meetings by Jewish groups, meetings about Palestine run both by Jewish groups and by groups like the LNU with a more general interest in foreign affairs and Christian meetings about the persecution of individuals of Jewish descent who had converted to Christianity.[112] *Kristallnacht*, the medieval pogrom of November 1938, which was greeted with revulsion in Sheffield, finally, and rather belatedly, put Nazi anti-Jewish activities on to the non-Jewish peace movement's agenda. On 12th November two letters appeared in The Telegraph protesting against the Nazi atrocities. One criticised Chamberlain for attempting to make peace with a state capable of such acts.[113] Methodists and Anglicans expressed sympathy for the plight of Jews two days later[114] and two days after that the paper reported the protests of the Sunday School Union.[115] The churches moved to defend all Jews, not just those who had converted to Christianity, and a letter from the STLC reflected a similar change of attitude to Jewish persecution among secular organisations:

The Executive Committee of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council

---

[111] Rev. B.M. Eason, "The Free Churches", The Telegraph, 22.11.38., p3

[112] e.g. Brightside and Firth Park Joint Wards resolution to the Brightside DLP concerning Palestine (Brightside Divisional Labour Party, 19.1.38.), a meeting at the Synagogue Hall to discuss Austrian Jews' problems after the *Anschluss* ("Jews Plight", The Independent, 25.5.38., p4), the American Jewish comedian Eddie Cantor's appeal during a dinner organised by the Sheffield Ladies Committee of the German and Austrian Jewish Relief Fund to resettle Jewish children in Palestine ("Eddie Cantor's £11,200 Haul", *ibid*, 20.7.38., p7) and the speech by an anonymous German to the Sheffield Auxiliary of the London Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews about the persecution faced by those of Jewish descent in Germany ("Jew Baiting in Germany", *ibid*, 20.9.38., p4).

[113] H. Birch & H Vaughan Jones, "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 12.1.38., p10

[114] "City Minister to Return for World Peace Conference", *ibid*, 14.11.38., p7

[115] "Sunday School Union Protest", *ibid*, 16.11.38., p11

> protest in the strongest terms possible against the brutal and vindictive treatment of the helpless Jewish minority in Germany.
> We consider this treatment as typical of the Nazi Regime, which has been and still is responsible for the maiming and murder of thousands of working class leaders and which still holds Thaelman in prison without trial.
> We therefore call upon all lovers of freedom and justice to do all in their power to make an effective protest against the callous-hearted treatment of helpless people.[116]

The contextualising of Jewish persecution as part of a wider attack by the Nazi Party on human rights was an important expression of solidarity. Identification with those who suffered under the attacks of the Germans, Italians and Japanese and the vision of these acts as a single problem was an important factor in building the consensus in the *pacificist* peace movement.

These expressions of support drew forth the latent anti-Semitism in Sheffield[117] even from within the peace movement. Revd George Needham wrote a letter, published with the letter from the STLC, which drew attention to the wealth of certain sectors of the Jewish community in Germany and by implication questioned the appeals for financial support for Jewish refugees. The Executive Committee of the local NALGO Branch refused to endorse an appeal for signatures of protest from one of their own members.[118] There was an ill-concealed contempt expressed for such individuals in Arnold Freeman's letter advertising the meeting organised by the city council to "find appropriate ways to give civic expression to the emotions that are being aroused in the hearts of all decent people in Sheffield by the treatment of its Jewish citizens by the German government".[119] As a result of this initial 8th December meeting, a public gathering supported by the peace movement's constituency: the Anglicans, Free Churches, Methodists, Society of Friends, PPU, and LNU was announced.[120] "Current Topics" suggested that this was "rather superfluous" and was answered by the Methodist signatory, Benson-Perkins. The primary purpose of the meeting, he argued, was to disavow anti-Semitism in Britain: "We owe it to the Jewish people in our midst to indicate boldly and emphatically that we disown racial antagonism and have a fraternal sympathy with them in the sufferings of

---

[116] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 21.11.38., p3
[117] *Ibid*, 30.11.38., p5 & 1.12.38., p6
[118] NALGO Executive Committee Minute Book, 16.11.38.
[119] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 5.12.38., p6
[120] *Ibid*, 8.12.38., p8

the Jewish people of Germany".[121] Such expressions did indeed reassure Jews living in Sheffield and the STLC received a letter of thanks from Rabbi Cohen after their stand on the matter.[122] Underestimating the insularity of Nazi ideology, Benson-Perkins also suggested that similar meetings in every city in Britain "would have considerable effect upon German opinion". The event was not, however, without a practical side and a general committee was formed to provide aid to Jewish refugees.[123] Before December was out, a German Jewish boy had arrived in Sheffield to swell the growing number of refugees in the city.[124] For all sections of Sheffield's peace movement, whatever emphasis they had sought to place upon the political rather than humanitarian side of their work, helping the victims of war and fascism had become a unifying expression of their protests against war and fascism.

(c) Air Raid Precautions: Although ARP was not an LNU issue, the Left's reaction to it during 1938 ensured that, like other shared concerns of the peace movement, it witnessed the growth of a homogeneity of views among *pacificists*. Amongst the wider public involvement in ARP was a significant reaction to the international problems of the year. By April a chemist was suggesting sales of the recommended materials indicated that householders were taking the precautions seriously.[125] "Householders" may be the key word here for the local press hinted that men sufficiently committed to volunteer as air raid wardens were both older and more middle class than the demographic average for the city.[126] In Heeley, Neepsend and Firth Park the City Council had to run recruitment campaigns for wardens even after the widespread fear engendered by Munich.[127] The Left, the peace movement and working class organisations remained suspicious of ARP which continued to be identified with the Right.

Although in Sheffield, Labour had accepted Home Office advice on ARP, Progressives continued to use the subject to attack the party. April 1938 saw the Progressive's leader on the Council, Ald. Harold W. Jackson, charge the Labour Party

---

[121] *Ibid*, 10.12.38., p10
[122] STLC Minute Books, 29.11.38.
[123] "'Diabolical' Nazi Way With Jews", The Telegraph, 16.12.38., p9
[124] "Refugee Now Safe With Sheffield Penfriend", *ibid* , 30.12.38., p7
[125] "Rest for ARP", The Independent, 18.4.38., p7
[126] "Men Over 70 Volunteer for Raid Service" & "Raid Warden Plans for City Complete", *ibid*, 30.3.38., p6 & 9.7.38., p5
[127] "Sheffield ARP Campaign", The Telegraph, 11.11.38., p9

with "deliberately neglecting Sheffield, knowing it to be one of the main armament towns in the country..."[128] For both sides attitudes were symbolic. The Right's demand that land at Norton be reserved for an aerodrome paraded their militaristic sympathies and contrasted themselves with the domestic priorities of the Left who wished to use the same area for housing.[129] Such debates recurred at a number of points in the year, most aggressively after the Munich Crisis in the run up to the local elections in November, when Progressives criticised the City's Labour leadership for the inadequate preparations which the war-scare had revealed.[130] In Brightside the Progressive leaflet urged "For Security Vote ARP", ARP in this case standing for Alf Ramsey, Progressive.[131] Asbury's reply echoed the Popular Front campaign in challenging the Progressives' right to represent the patriotic mainstream: "At the outset Councillor Asbury said as far as Sheffield was concerned no party had a monopoly of patriotism. There was one subject which was above Party controversy and that was the protection of the civilian population".[132]

It is in reference to attitudes to rearmament and ARP that the peace movement has most often been accused of a "lack of realism" but by 1938 the Left had realised that the debate on ARP offered opportunities to attack the inadequacy and motivation of Conservative preparations while making a populist appeal for greater protection. This was particularly true of the National Government's concentration on the danger of a gas attack. Visitors to Spain, including Charles Darvill of the STLC,[133] returned with strong views on ARP. Mrs. B. Ayrton Gould, vice-chairman of the Labour Party addressed the Darnall Ward Women's Section:

> She said that gas had not been used in Spain, neither had it been used in China, and she considered the British Government's extensive precautions against gas were useless.
> The damage and killing in Spain was being done by explosive and

---

[128] "Labour charged with Deliberate Neglect of City", The Independent, 2.4.38., p7
[129] "Norton 'Drome Plea Fails", *ibid*, 7.4.38., p5
[130] "Challenge on ARP", *ibid*, 24.10.38., p4
[131] "Current Topics", The Telegraph, 31.10.38., p8
[132] "Councillors who Neglect ARP 'Disgrace'", The Independent, 16.6.38., p1
[133] STLC Minute Books, 25.1.38., 1.2.38., & 15.2.38., "To Visit Spain" & "Building Schools in Madrid Now", The Independent, 27.1.38., p5 & 15.2.38., p4. The largest meeting was at the Coliseum, Spital Hill, "Madrid is Cheerful Says City Teacher", *ibid*, 21.2.38., p7

incendiary bombs. These were capable of bursting through a seven storey building and exploding in the basement bringing down the whole building.[134]

Spectacular high profile ARP events such as the practise blackout and over flying by the RAF on 7th August were criticised by the Communist Party for being little more than publicity stunts.[135] As so often happened in Sheffield, the new policy emphasis was first signalled by a figure who formed a bridge between the Communist and Labour parties, in this case, one of the keystones, A.J. Murray. His March letter, proposed five measures:

1. Work should be commenced on properly-built underground shelters such as are being provided in Paris.
2. There should be a completely organised scheme for the evacuation of people from area devastated by bombardment.
3. There should be proper organisation to ensure that supplies are not seriously interrupted.
4. That there should be no profit whatever made from any of the work carried out in connection with such schemes.
5. That the civil organisation of the population in connection with these schemes should not be made the sole responsibility of the police or of the military authorities, but should be carried out in conjunction with the trade unions and similar bodies.[136]

Murray's proposals were too close to the Communist Party's pamphlet launched shortly before Peace Week to have been arrived at independently. The pamphlet's basic aim was to rescue the ARP agenda from the Right and in their forward, Basil Barker, George Allison and George Fletcher explained that they accepted neither the inevitability of war nor the basis of current ARP preparations but recognised that efforts to avert war (by getting rid of Chamberlain) might not succeed and that in those circumstances "the safety of the people comes first". Accepting public scepticism with regard to ARP, they urged that "genuine schemes of protection" needed to be proposed based not upon "regimentation" but upon "self-imposed democratic discipline". Despite this strongly ideological context which gave rise to such proposals as the funding of ARP from armaments profits, much that they suggested was pragmatic: the building of a greater number of fighter aircraft, the siting of anti-aircraft batteries on Sheffield's hills, and the

---

[134] "Labour Critic of Air Raid Precautions", *ibid*, 17.3.38., p7
[135] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 12.8.38., p6
[136] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 18.3.38., p6

setting up of an efficient warning system. Evacuation plans and those to be evacuated compulsorily, voluntarily, permanently and temporarily were given in detail. Three types of shelters were proposed, heavy bombproof, light bombproof, or splinterproof according to the likelihood of attack. ARP centres, their staffing, location, duties and centralised organisation were all laid out.

The pamphlet was presented as a memorandum to the Town Clerk at the end of April and thereafter published.[137] By mid-June 3000 copies had been sold. Reaction to it, despite its pragmatism, was almost wholly motivated by political antipathy. Labour councillors ignored it while the editorial staff of The Independent poured scorn on its suggestion that armaments works should be protected partly at the cost of those who owned them.[138] An exchange in the House of Commons between the Communist MP, William Gallacher and Geoffrey Lloyd, minister responsible for ARP, however, concentrated on the impracticability of the temporary evacuation plans since Sheffield would receive only seven to ten minutes warning of an impending raid. As far as the public knew, no plans for evacuation had been formulated for the city[139] so the pamphlet illustrated that, while local reaction to it had been dominated by ideological considerations, in pragmatic terms it was actually ahead of the defencist Right.

Other left-wing *pacificists* recorded a similar shift to pragmatic acceptance of the need for ARP albeit without the Communists' dynamism.[140] It was grudging acceptance of an unwelcome necessity but as Sharrard explained in a letter to the press, acceptance nonetheless:

> ...ARP with its limited objectives and constitution is inadequate, inefficient, and undemocratic. But notwithstanding our definite indifference, and sometimes opposition to ARP, don't let your correspondents "kid" themselves or attempt to "kid" others of your numerous readers that organised labour, local or national, is prepared to commit suicide or see wholesale slaughter done without question of

---

[137] "Communist Plan for Air Raid Protection", *op cit.*
[138] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 3.5.38., p6
[139] "ARP Too Slow for Communists", *ibid*, 16.7.38., p9
[140] The Cooperative Party organised ARP lectures ("Co-op Party Notes", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 162 October 1938, p6), while the STLC would not identify itself with the local ARP organisation, it accepted the need for ARP and prepared a report on it (STLC Minute Book, 20.9.38.) and Hallam Ward Labour Party passed a resolution supporting ARP principles similar to those laid down in the Communist Party pamphlet (Hallam Ward Labour Party Minute Book, 8.9.38.).

effort.[141]

Although demarcations on the issue were not absolute, this opened the gap further between the *pacificist* Left of the peace movement and the pacifist minority who continued to reiterate the original grounds of objection to ARP: "...they are designed to create a war psychology and to act as the preliminary steps to the militarisation of the nation".[142] Some pacifists accepted ARP and amongst *pacificists* there remained pockets of "utopianism". As late as March 1938 the Labour Shiregreen Women's Section suggested a resolution: "That this conference, realising the apparent impossibility of defence against aerial attack, demands that efforts be made by the National Government through the League of Nations Union, to abolish all military aircraft".[143]

Peace News stuck to its opposition to ARP throughout the war scares of the year,[144] and it was in Sheffield churches influenced by pacifism that opposition to ARP was aired in 1938. Debate in the churches focussed on the extent to which they should identify themselves with precautions. As early as January leaders at Firvale Methodist Church resolved: "That the secretary reply that in the opinion of their leaders such a meeting should be held distinct from the Church..."[145] but when in April Sir Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, wrote asking for the churches' cooperation the Bishop of Sheffield published the letter appending to it a reference to pacifist views:

> It is an appeal which should meet with a specially ready response from those to whom all ideas of physical violence are repellent, while at the same time the work to be done would give an opportunity in the event of war for the manifestation of heroism latent in all of us, since it would frequently have to be done in circumstances of danger.[146]

Adopting a pragmatic stance he attempted to scotch ideological objections in a homely metaphor: "Air Raid Precautions are not military, they are on the same footing as

---

[141] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 24.9.38., p6
[142] "MP Says City Duped by ARP", *ibid*, 25.4.38., p4 & "Primate's Ruling on ARP", *ibid*, 16.7.38., p15
[143] "War in Air", *ibid*, 5.3.38., p7, Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 9.2.38.
[144] c.f. "Bombs and ARP, or Friendship and Peace?", Peace News, No 93, 26.3.38., p1
[145] Trinity Wesleyan Church, Firvale, Leaders Meeting Minute Book, 6.1.38.
[146] "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXIV No 5, May 1938, p4

precautions against fire. When I insure my home, I am not encouraging arson".[147] The new vicar of St Augustine's, Revd T. Mitchell Garaway, responded tetchily: "That is exactly my own view, but I have never regarded it as part of my duty as a preacher of the Gospel to exhort my congregation to insure their property against fire. By the same token, I do not regard the pulpit as the place for ARP propaganda".[148] Garaway viewed the matter not as one of principle but of "correctness". Methodists, however, accepted that in refusing to identify their church either with ARP or with those who were standing outside of it, they were reflecting ideological divisions within Methodism: "Firstly, there are the people who support the Government in its policy of preparedness and armament; and secondly, those who take a pacifist view".[149] Methodist pacifists like Revd H. Tyler Lane, while agreeing with Hoare that: "...the great majority of members are in support of the precautions..."[150] nevertheless felt, like Peace News, that this rather esoteric debate had publicised support within the churches for an outright rejection of ARP, and thus differentiated pacifist policies further from the *pacificist* majority in the peace movement.

Developments in the Peace Pledge Union:

The growing isolation of pacifists from the rest of the peace movement was illustrated by the lack of PPU involvement in Sheffield's third Peace Week. On the first Sunday of the planned events, when peace services were taking place in many of the churches, the Sheffield and Rotherham PPU groups announced that they intended to "...invade Derbyshire for the day".[151] The only other event promoted by the PPU was an address given by Bertrand Russell that was not part of the official peace week programme.

Nationally, Ben Greene, who was to be discredited within the Labour Party because of his pacifist germanophilia, was complaining by September that pacifists were coming under pressure from the more resolutely *pacificist* tone of peace activities:

> The pacifist movement can no longer ignore the ever-growing expression of hostility which is directed against it by a section of the wider peace

---

[147] *Ibid*, Vol XXIV No 8 August 1938, p4
[148] Saint Augustine's Parish Magazine, No 460, October 1938, np
[149] "Methodist Church Won't Give ARP Lead", The Independent, 16.9.38., p7
[150] "Free Churches Not Backing ARP", Peace News, No 117, 10.9.38., p1
[151] "News from the Four Corners", *ibid*, no 98, 30.4.38., p1

> movement. The significance of these attacks, coming with greater frequency and increasing venom, lies in the fact that today the most dangerous opposition to pacifism comes not so much from the Right as from the political Left wing which, till quite recently, was more than sympathetic to the pacifist position.[152]

That pressure was being felt by pacifists in Sheffield was suggested by a letter in Peace News from a couple who had attended the Peace Week meeting on China:

> What has pacifism to say to China, of all countries, in this situation? Pacifism relies upon a faith in the ability of moral force to overcome armed force. But with drug warfare demoralisation is automatic; morality cannot defend the victims; they receive drugs unwittingly, in food and cigarettes, for instance.
> The course for other countries is clear; we must do what we can to influence Japan; for one thing we must try to get back to the first causes of her discontent. But what shall we say to China in the meantime? Could pacifism possibly help?[153]

This letter offers a glimpse of the largely unrecorded process by which the bulk of the PPU's 100 000 postcard pledgers accepted the *pacificist* answer to these questions, reducing pacifism after May 1940 to a rump of absolutists to whom the principle of non-violence was more important than any other moral consideration. Mark Gilbert quotes the views of novelist Storm Jameson to represent those who, while being unwilling to take any action that might involve the death of another human being, believed that resisting Hitler was a moral duty and were willing to perform ancillary tasks such as nursing. Jameson believed that the pledge's assumption that modern warfare was the worst of all evils was superseded by the greater evil of Nazi rule.[154] Such individuals are difficult to identify *en masse* in the evidence available and it is difficult to know at what point this exodus began but the Munich Crisis would appear to show that residual quasi-pacifism among *pacificists* was a stronger historical force during 1938 than *pacificist* recidivism within pacifist ranks.

Sheffield records confirm Ceadel's view that the PPU did not grow significantly after the success of its initial formation and that after December 1936 the union

---

[152] "Problems of the Peace Movement", *ibid*, no 116, 3.9.38., p8
[153] "Can Pacifism Help?", *ibid*, no 103, 4.6.38., p13
[154] Gilbert, Mark, "Pacifist Attitudes to Nazi Germany, 1936 - 1945", Journal of Contemporary History, 27 (1992), p497

expanded only in terms of local group meetings and the circulation of Peace News.[155] The largest pacifist event in Sheffield during the period between Eden's resignation and the Munich Crisis was not held under the PPU banner and even Bertrand Russell's peace week meeting was a repeat of a smaller meeting organised independently. Debates between fiercely held views within the existing membership absorbed the organisation's energy. A PPU South Yorkshire Area Weekend School was described thus: "The discussion showed a keen appreciation, though not always a very deft handling of the half-bricks thrown at those present (in a truly pacifist manner) by Allen Skinner. All members were left at least with a great deal to think about".[156] Internal realignments resulted in the creation of a Sheffield branch of the quietist Christian pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation.[157] Much of this internal activity did not receive press notice and did not, therefore, proselytise the pacifist cause.

Nationally the PPU adopted a new manifesto on 14th March with three specific principles to address the problems created by Fascist expansionism. Fascism, said the document, was caused by the unequal sharing of the world's wealth. The League of Nations must be reformed and committed to redressing this. To this end, the Van Zeeland report, commissioned by Chamberlain in response to Lansbury's talks with Hitler and Mussolini, which had urged the fairer distribution of international markets and raw materials, should be implemented. Local activists had been speaking in favour of a World Conference for a number of months.[158] More of a departure for the PPU, which had pursued a policy of pacifist separatism since it became an organisational force, was a commitment after April 1938 to engagement with the Labour Party. A Peace News editorial held out the hope that the PPU could change Labour's peace policy through propaganda work amongst the party's membership.[159] Thereafter articles appeared addressing shared concerns of pacifists and socialists[160] and meetings were held in various parts of the country in pursuit of Labour Party members.

---

[155] Ceadel, *op cit*, pp263 - 264
[156] "News From the Four Corners", Peace News, no 103, 4.6.38., p10
[157] "Peace Move", The Independent, 1.2.38., p7.
[158] "Peace Pledge Union's New Manifesto", Peace News, no 91, 12.3.38., p1
[159] "Will Labour Choose Peace?", *ibid*, no 98, 30.4.38., p8
[160] c.f. for instance Mair Saklatvala, "Appeal of the PPU to the Worker 1", *ibid*, no 111, 30.7.38., and Caecilia E.M. Pugh, "Our Mission is to the Owners", *ibid*, no 113, 13.8.38., p7

Locally the new PPU manifesto had little influence. Bertrand Russell's first address, delivered just three weeks before acceptance of the manifesto, offered little short term hope of pacifism's success: "Pacifism in the complete sense in which he would like to see it carried out was a distant ideal. It was not a thing that was going to happen in his lifetime". On the question of restraining German expansionism, he said: "It seemed to him that in time Germany would get over its persecution mania".[161] This pessimistic, quietist message, which was allied on his second visit with conventional criticism of ARP, was popular and may well have characterised Sheffield's pacifism.[162] All the tickets for Russell's previous meeting had been taken within half an hour of the box office opening and 2 000 people had applied for seats.[163]

Although the Pacifist Convention organised by the Parliamentary Pacifist Group and the local PPU,[164] brought some well-known names to Sheffield their allegiance was almost exclusively to Christian pacifism and the meeting had little success in returning Labour Party members to the pacifist fold. Although Shiregreen Women's Section sent delegates to the Convention, it was unwilling or unable to help with expenses.[165] Brightside and Hallam DLPs refused to become involved[166] and the leadership of the local Cooperative Movement showed no interest. Speeches at the Convention were against the implementation of ARP and rearmament, and for the rights of conscientious objectors, a world conference and the PPU Manifesto. Even meetings of this size highlighted internal debates. The Revd H. Ferraby stood up after the speech by G.H. McGhee MP to demand that individual involvement in ARP precautions should be a matter of conscience. McGhee readily conceded the point.[167] In Attercliffe, Wilson's constituency, efforts continued to promote pacifism within the Labour Party. McGhee

---

[161] "Pacifist Urges Persuasion's Power", The Independent, 23.2.38., p4
[162] "Sheffield Attack on Raid Precautions", *ibid*, 16.5.38., p7
[163] "News from the Four Corners", Peace News, no 98, 30.4.38., p1
[164] "News From the Four Corners", *ibid*, no 94, 2.4.38., p9. Wilson was one of three founding members in the summer of 1936 of the Parliamentary Pacifist Group: "...increasingly aware of being an isolated minority within the Labour Party". Sheffield was the fourth in the series of Conventions begun in March 1937. Ceadel, *op cit*, p275
[165] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 23.3.38., 30.3.38., 11.5.38., and 8.6.38.
[166] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 20.4.38. and Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 11.4.38.
[167] "MP Says City Duped by ARP", *op cit*

addressed the DLP at the end of May[168] and a fortnight later Wilson devoted much of a similar meeting to peace issues. Blaming a rise in local unemployment on the amount of armaments work being undertaken in the East End of the City, Wilson recalled Labour pioneer, Keir Hardie's, pacifism. He also criticised Labour's commitment to sanctions.[169] There was no sign in the STLC or elsewhere, that these efforts had any influence on the *pacificist* direction taken by the majority of the Sheffield party. Not that this weakened PPU resolve. November and December witnessed a consolidation of the Sheffield Branch with premises for a Dick Sheppard Centre being actively sought in the city.[170]

With the *pacificist* peace movement now embracing a proactive internationalist policy and the PPU pursuing, in contradistinction, an absolutist model there was a lack of representation for the generalised populist sentiments for peace from which the movement had developed. In April D. Young stepped into the breach by announcing the formation of his People's League.[171] Despite the mocking tone of the headline on this initial announcement, it was a sign of the desperation of the time that the inaugural meeting received six column inches in The Independent. The League had a populist platform dismissive of party politics, critical of the League of Nations and patriotic. Britain was called upon to: "fulfil the part the world expects her to play - the part of a great exemplar".[172]

Nothing more was heard of Young's organisation but in June another similar organisation, the People's Peace Party, appeared in the letter pages virulently critical of Churchill's LNU speech:

> If you can show where the League of Nations is going to benefit nations and peoples of the world under its present status for their security, we fail to agree... The League of Nations is practically a dead letter organisation for any security of the people. Nations are leaving the League and in some cases will never return again.
> There must be other ways of protection for the people, that is by nations collaborating together at a nation's world peace conference.[173]

---

[168] "Poverty Not Hitler the Problem", The Independent, 30.5.38., p7
[169] "Stop to Think First, Says City MP", *ibid*, 13.6.38., p5
[170] "News from the Four Corners" and "Peace Centre for Sheffield", Peace News, No 126, 12.11.38. & No 131, 16.12.38., p10
[171] "City Bid 'To Save World'", The Independent, 11.4.38., p12
[172] "Sheffield Peace Lovers", *ibid*, 13.4.38., p3
[173] "World Peace", *ibid*, 2.6.38., p7

It is not clear whether this group was connected with the Marquis of Tavistock's British Peace Party, identified by Ceadel as an anti-Semitic and pro-German ally of the pacifists in the last days before the Second World War.[174] Sheffield press coverage described the People's Peace Party of Great Britain as a home grown initiative, in this case: "...by a man now living in Sheffield, Mr A. Leigh".[175] The party had been formed "just over two years ago", and had, according to its founder "...about 3,000 to 4,000 members in Sheffield alone, representing all classes of people from architects, doctors, teachers and other professions to manual workers". This claim is hard to swallow. The rather larger achievements of Sheffield's LNU Branch had been secured with a membership of approximately a thousand. Leigh, who told the paper that the initiative was the product of his own experiences during the Great War, stressed a populist vision of international relations:

> Mr Leigh said that his ideal was to get together a body of people throughout the world strong enough to resist any attempts to break peace by armed force.
> They would form a People's Judgement Commission who would hold conferences to judge a declaration of war. The League of Nations, he contended, failed to make any provision for people to give their own judgement before being committed to war.

Nothing more was heard of these organisations until after Munich when a renewed opportunity to capitalise on generalised sentiments in favour of peace arrived.

Munich:

Chamberlain's settlement of the Munich Crisis over German demands for the Sudetenland revealed that the consensus within *pacificism* that had come together over the previous two years was not a seamless garment. Those on the Left of the movement rejected any settlement made at the expense of the Czechs of the Sudeten areas. As the crisis began Sheffield Labour Councillor, W.G. Robinson, claimed that accusations of discrimination made by the Sudeten German leader Heinlein and his supporters were exaggerated. Quoting statistics to show that Germans were taught in their own language, had their own press, and were allowed to use German both in the courts and in

---

[174] Ceadel, *op cit.*, p281 & Benewick, R., The Fascist Movement in Britain, 1972, p258
[175] "Sheffield Move to Outlaw War", The Independent, 20.5.38., p5

parliament, Robinson averred that the real persecution would start once the Sudetenland belonged to Germany.[176] Hallam DLP had no compunction in demanding that Britain should defend Czechoslovakia: "That we write the Prime Minister. asking for a declaration that if Czechoslovakia is attacked Britain will join with France and the USSR in defence of her independence, and that parliament be summoned without delay".[177] A gap between this attitude and the popular mood was suggested a few days later, however, when a local journalist wrote: "I doubt if any statesman in recent years has made a move which has so readily been acclaimed on all sides as that dramatic step taken by the Prime Minister in flying to Germany".[178] National Peace Prayer Day the following Sunday was well supported with large congregations at many churches. While the comments of Canon H.W. MacKay that: "Race was a source of and excuse for armaments and war and everything which ran contrary to the spirit of Christ",[179] suggested a critique of the German position, the overwhelming theme of the prayers was simply peace. The two main denominations in Sheffield offered no other comment on the matter with Anglicans recognising the "one plain duty" as "earnest prayer"[180] and the Methodists going even further in foreshadowing a supine public mood: "Hardly any sacrifice would be too great to avoid war..."[181]

Gallup polls do not in fact record overwhelming support for Chamberlain over Munich. A poll taken the month after the agreement recorded a 52% approval rating for him and this slipped to just below half of those questioned the following month. Active dissatisfaction with him was expressed by around 40% of those polled. The handing back of German colonies, a continuing appeasement favoured by some pacifists, was rejected

---

[176] "Hear All Sides", *ibid*, 13.9.38., p6
[177] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 12.9.38, (repeated 26.9.38.)
[178] "General Topics", The Independent, 16.9.38., p6
[179] "City Prays for Peace", *ibid*, 19.9.38., p4
[180] "The Bishop's Letter", Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXIV No 10, October 1938, p4
[181] "Between Ourselves", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 520, October 1938, p1. This reaction in the churches did not go unchallenged. Alexander, winding up for the opposition in the Munich debate in the House of Commons, said with reference to anti-Nazi Sudetendlanders: "We demand to know what the position of these people is and what steps are being taken for their protection because when I hear from the Archbishop of Canterbury or from Members in this House about the need for prayer and thanksgiving I want to remind them of the First Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah: 'When you come to make prayers do not have blood on your hands'." Tilley, John, Churchill's Favourite Socialist: A Life of A.V. Alexander, Manchester, 1995, p45

by 75% of those questioned and of these 72% declared themselves ready to go to war over the issue.[182] William Rock reports that a section of the British press were critical of the Godesburg memorandum in the slightly less than a week between Chamberlain's return form Germany and his flight to Munich.[183] Public reaction to the 29th September settlement appears to have owed more to psychological relief than to any schematic approval.[184] Sheffield felt very close to war with local authority employees "busy all night assembling gas masks" and unemployed men being paid to dig air raid trenches in the Porter Street district. An undercurrent of distrust was suggested when both groups were asked to resume their tasks after the agreement was announced, and both uncomplainingly did so.[185] In the aftermath there was a general mood of more critical reappraisal. The Bishop wrote of this in disparaging terms: "We are united, resolute and calm when a crisis comes; but when it has passed we go back to petty squabbles, and rather foolish and unrestrained language, and so give the nations a very wrong idea of what we really stand for".[186] Benson Perkins, the Methodist Superintendent, on the other hand admitted: "Now that the immediate crisis has passed and there has been time to think over the issue, scarcely anyone can feel content".[187]

The activist Left, with a strong theoretical basis for its policy decisions and a vanguardist philosophy, did not waver in the face of Chamberlain's popularity. The STLC, while internally using the crisis as an underpinning for their demand for a Labour Party Conference, released to the press a statement expressing: "Belief that the high and powerful office of Prime Minister has been shamefully betrayed and exploited, and that

---

[182] Gallup, *op cit*, pp9 - 12

[183] Rock, W.R., Appeasement on Trial - British Foreign Policy and its Critics, 1938 - 1939, New York, 1966, pp132 - 133

[184] Watkins writing in the early sixties described Munich as leaving Chamberlain: "...in a position of unassailable power as far as influence on the opinions of the majority of the population was concerned". While this does not accord with the evidence in Sheffield or nationally, under the influence of a Conservative dominated press, it may well have been the impression of those living at the time. Watkins, K.W., Britain Divided, London, 1963, pp133 - 134

[185] "How Civic Leaders Received the News", The Independent, 30.9.38., p1

[186] "The Bishop's Letter", Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXIV No 11, November 1938, p3

[187] "Between Ourselves", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 521, November 1938, p12

the people of this country have been partially committed to the support of Fascism..."[188] The Sheffield Communist Party and Park DLP passed similar motions.[189] On Sunday 25th September meetings were held by the parties in the City Hall and in Barker's Pool which together attracted an audience of 4 000 people. At the outside meeting Labour and Communist speakers appeared on the same platform.[190] No 2 Branch AEU, in a resolution at the beginning of October, voiced the view that, far from pacifying Germany, Chamberlain's agreement with Hitler was: "...helping to build a force against which it will be difficult for us to defend ourselves".[191]

The Left was not alone in these criticisms. "Cantab", the voice of the Anglicans in the local press, viewed Munich very differently from his prelate:

> If our prayers [for the Czechoslovakians] are to be effective they must be free from all cant. Let us not pretend that we have made any sacrifices. We have not. Rightly or wrongly only time will tell, Czechoslovakia has been sacrificed.
> Let us not pretend either that we have acted in some great moral principle. War has been staved off - at a price. The full reckoning has yet to be computed.[192]

The root cause of "Cantab's" suspicion of the Munich Agreement was that, like his colleagues on the Left of the peace movement, although on different premises, he viewed the differences between Nazi philosophy and his own to be unbridgeable:

> Christ said that we should be prepared to sacrifice ourselves in a good cause. Nietzche said that we should be prepared to sacrifice others in a good cause.
> In brief you have the principles of the two world forces today. Which side are you on?

After the barbarities of *Kristallnacht*, says Andrew Chandler, a horrified Anglican leadership moved towards "Cantab's" view and recognised in the words of The Church Times (18.11.38) that: "It is not merely the Fatherland that is in danger, it is Christian

---

[188] STLC Minute Books, 13.9.38. & "Czechs Betrayed", The Independent, 21.9.38., p3
[189] "Mass Protests", *ibid*, 23.9.38., p7
[190] "'Czechoslovakia Sacrificed to Naked Force'", *ibid*, 26.9.38., p7 & "Men of the North March with Tom Mann", The Daily Worker, 27.9.34., p4
[191] "City AEU Critics of Premier", *ibid*, 7.10.38., p3
[192] "Church of England Notes", *ibid*, 24.9.38., p10. In the Anglican hierarchy, only the Bishop of Durham agreed with "Cantab's" verdict on Munich.

civilisation".[193]

Parliamentary Labour Party opinion, while not deviating from a *pacificist* criticism of the settlement, was noticeably more responsive to what was believed to be overwhelming public approval and more circumspect in its criticism of Chamberlain. Alexander, whose support for collective security had predated that of his party, while accusing Chamberlain of pursuing "peace at any price" spoke conciliatorily of the Premier: "He wanted to be fair to Mr. Chamberlain and admit that in the last week or two, he had expended much physical and moral energy to avoid conflagration but they were entitled to examine what happened".[194] Acknowledging public relief, he went as far as to say: "The Labour Party has nothing to be ashamed of..." George Lathan pursued a similar line. Like Alexander he reminded his audience that the Labour Party had been warning of Hitler's designs upon Czechoslovakia since the spring. Lathan bluntly stated that: "...this country, with others, was in honour bound under the Covenant of the League of Nations to go to the aid of Czechoslovakia if an act of unprovoked aggression occurred".[195] He also warned that the takeover of the Sudetenland was part "...of a scheme of conquest, planned plotted and prepared" and wrote of the "...burden of shame which so many feel now rests upon us". Nevertheless, like Alexander, he felt it necessary to state: "Let there be no mistake, Labour's policy throughout, nationally and internationally, has been directed primarily to the avoidance of war". A further indication of the difficulties the Labour and Cooperative Parties felt they faced is given by a letter which appears to have been written in the week before the crisis broke urging Harold Ward to encourage the unemployed to attend open-air meetings.[196] A month after the crisis had ended, the Cooperative Executive Committee remained concerned enough to purchase large quantities of a Council of Action pamphlet on the crisis for insertion in The Sheffield Cooperator "in view of the necessity of propaganda on this matter..."[197]

The stress under which the parties' reactions were being toned down was indicated by a letter in The Independent. "JF" expressed dismay at the result of the vote

---

[193] Chandler, A., "Munich and Morality: The Bishops of the Church of England and Appeasement", 20th Century British History, 5 (1994), p95
[194] "Peace At Any Price Critic", The Independent, 8.10.38., p9
[195] "The International Crisis", The Park and Heeley Gazette, October 1938, p3
[196] Letter dated 7th September in Cooperative Party Records, No 12. The year of this letter is not given but evidence suggests it was probably 1938.
[197] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 3.11.38.

of confidence in the House of Commons which Chamberlain's Government had won by 366 votes to 144:

> Surely this opposition of 28 per cent does not truly voice the views of the electors they represent. Is it not time the Opposition took stock of their foreign policy? It is sadly out of date.
> No matter how long the recriminations and wrangles may now be, Mr. Chamberlain's policy is acclaimed by thinking and grateful people all over the world. Because he happily sensed the indisputable fact the peoples do not want war.[198]

Further down the Labour hierarchy the wavering was palpable. The old St Paul's churchyard was renamed as the Peace Gardens by the Labour Lord Mayor, E.G. Rowlinson, in commemoration of the Munich Agreement: "...dedicated to the peace for which we are all so grateful". In the statement taken by The Independent from Rowlinson as Lord Mayor on the morning after the agreement two paragraphs were devoted to possible future disarmament.[199] Hallam DLP were sufficiently disgusted at his attitude to ask: "That a vote of censure be passed by the Labour Group, on the Lord Mayor, Alderman E.G. Rowlinson, for his pro-Nazi conduct at the Bramall Lane football match on Saturday October 1st 1938".[200] With long-time scourge of the Left, Asbury, supporting Rowlinson the usual roles within the Labour Party were temporarily reversed with the left-wing STLC, forwarded a "...congratulatory letter to the Headquarters of the Labour Party on the stand that they had taken in the Crisis".[201]

Although popular pressure did impact on the Sheffield Labour Party's reaction to the Munich Agreement, no one, apart from the pacifist C.H. Wilson, publicly broke with party policy. What is rather startling about the situation in Sheffield is that no statement

---

[198] "Hear All Sides", The Independent, 11.10.38., p6

[199] "How Civic Leaders Received the News", *op cit*. Thompson quoting from a speech by Arthur Henderson junior MP (21.2.38.) suggests that the Labour Party was not so firmly opposed to appeasement as it retrospectively portrayed itself: "There is no honourable Member on this side of the House who has any objection to the policy of general appeasement..." Thompson, N., The Anti-Appeasers, Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s, London, 1971, p40. The change in the way in which the word was used after the resignation of Eden throws doubt on the significance of this remark, although a number of historians have suggested that the Labour Party was not opposed to the exchange of colonial territory for German guarantees of existing borders in Europe.

[200] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 10.10.38.

[201] STLC Minute Books, 4.10.38.

condemning the agreement appears to have been forthcoming from the Left's *pacificist* allies in the League of Nations Union. Birn indicates that the Munich Conference left the National Executive of the LNU similarly: "almost paralysed with uncertainty" and suggests that the most difficult aspect for those whose policies had been based on "the fundamental soundness of public opinion" was that they believed that "Chamberlain had that opinion behind him". Nationally, however, although the Executive took no decisive action, they issued what Birn describes as the "harshest statement it had ever issued about a Government policy" which repudiated "seeking peace by surrender to force".[202]

The explanation for the silence of the Sheffield Branch may lie in the number of prominent pacifists in its leadership. Pacifists favoured Chamberlain's settlement. Peace News described his first flight to Germany as: "...by far the wisest and most hopeful step in the whole business to date".[203] The only leading figure from the LNU quoted by the press at the time of the crisis, Revd Alfred Hall, although not speaking as an LNU representative, supported this view. Pacifists criticised efforts by the Czechs to defend themselves by mobilisation. Labour Party policy was roundly condemned and individuals, divisional parties and ward parties were asked "to make their voices heard in our columns... to show effectively that when the Labour leadership promises national unity for war, there is in fact no united party behind it".[204] In Sheffield this was no more successful than earlier efforts by pacifists to capture the Labour Party. Continuing his claim that pacifism represented the true spirit of Labour, Wilson quoted from the 1920 publication Labour and the Peace Treaty to demonstrate that the incorporation of the Sudeten Germans into Czechoslovakia had been opposed by the party at the time of the Versailles Treaty. "I do not know", he wrote, "that there has been any declared change of view since 1920 in regard to self-determination..." In words which echoed an oft-quoted comment of Chamberlain's which had belittled the importance of Czechoslovakia, Wilson added: "But until a very short time ago few people in this country had any concern for Czechoslovakia, and now there is a demand for some kind of strong action". In a direct challenge to Labour policy he finished: "If there is an alternative to the Chamberlain method, can it be stated in unmistakeable terms, and with

---

[202] Birn, Donald S., The League of Nations Union, 1918 - 1945, Oxford, 1981, pp194 - 196

[203] "Public Affairs Commentary", Peace News, 17.9.38., p1

[204] "Labour Leaders Sell the Pass", *ibid*, p2

a clear indication of their possible implications".[205]

At a PPU meeting just after the crisis Elizabeth Thorneycroft stressed the unworkability of collective security on the basis that, since international disputes would always exist and "people who believed that they were right would never submit to force", it was a recipe for war. The removal of any judgement as to the moral validity of individual disputes revealed once again that the immovable principle of non-violence was often partnered with an inconsistent moral relativism in those pacifists who wholeheartedly supported appeasement. James Avery Joyce, editor of the Peace Book Club, stressed the other strand of pacifist thinking on the Munich Crisis, that it must be followed by a new international settlement to supersede the Versailles Treaty.[206] Calls for a wider settlement began early in the crisis amongst Sheffield's Churches[207] but it was in its aftermath that such proposals began to dominate debate among those who had welcomed the settlement. There was an element of guilt in their enthusiasm. Peace News wrote:

> We believe that we have no right to demand concessions from Czechoslovakia without being ready to make real sacrifices ourselves. We therefore urge that our Government should at once invite representatives of all nations to meet in conference with the immediate object of revising existing treaties. Such a conference can succeed only if the Government of this country goes into it prepared to regard the question of colonial possessions and our economic policy as open to drastic revision.[208]

In December Frank Dawtry of the PPU argued that Britain could not emerge from its imperialist past at a world conference by transfer of its colonies to other European Powers. He urged the creation of a "world civil service responsible for the constructive development of backward peoples".[209] By November Benson Perkins, whose second thoughts about the agreement were revealed earlier, was already collecting signatures in favour of such a conference.[210] Support for the proposal was not

---

[205] "Attercliffe MP on the Crisis and Chamberlain", The Independent, 24.9.38., p6
[206] "Peace Union", *ibid*, 10.10.38., p3
[207] C.P. Pitt, Secretary of the Sheffield, Rotherham, and Doncaster District of Congregational Churches called for a "convention of the nations" in "Our Readers' Views", *ibid*, 17.9.38., p8
[208] "War Settles Nothing", Peace News, 1.10.38., p1
[209] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 17.12.38., p6
[210] "Sheffield Push to Sign Peace Petition", *ibid*, 16.11.98., p6

necessarily allied with such doubts. The Revd H. Tyler Lane wrote a very belligerent letter supporting a speech by General Smuts urging a wider settlement. Describing Churchill, who had opposed Munich, as: "this sinister disappointed and dangerous Imperialist" he went on to declare him "the leading political barrier in this country to peace" and, presumably half-seriously, urged his internment.[211] In late November the LNU re-entered the debate with a letter from Lyon who, in more measured tones, supported the calling of a world conference using the League's Secretariat. Lyon, who was not writing in his official capacity as LNU Branch Secretary, did not offer direct support for the Munich Agreement although he wrote of the "universal relief" when it was signed. He expressed concern at "ominous signs that another crisis is being engineered" and described the "temptation which so constantly besets dictators to demand concessions, just or unjust, at the point of the sword". His reading of the mood following Munich was that there was a "general feeling that peace cannot be assured by a repetition of the Munich technique".[212] Sheffield LNU's paralysis during the crisis may have been induced not by disagreements between pacifist and *pacificist* members but by the inability of its membership as a whole to choose between two evils. J.H. Freeborough, speaking a fortnight after the crisis had ended, poured scorn on the idea that the Munich Agreement represented a prayer answered: "To attribute to the immutable justice of God in any way the surrender to the arrogant, unjust claims and demands of violence was to him unbelievable".[213] He was unable to support, however, the rearmament that alone, many felt, could enforce decent standards in international relations. One detects uneasiness about the agreement even among pacifists. At the second PPU meeting held after the crisis Herr Premsyl Pitter of the Czechoslovakian Fellowship of Reconciliation offered harrowing details of Sudeten Czech refugees' sufferings who, refused admittance to Czechoslovakia, "dragged out a miserable existence in the no-man's land between the two countries".[214]

Conservatives and their Liberal National allies were not slow to take advantage of public relief and Sir Ronald Matthews, leader of the Conservative Party in Sheffield

---

[211] "Support for General Smuts' 'Wide Settlement' Plea", The Independent, 20.10.38., p6

[212] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 22.11.38., p4

[213] "Peace Not Due to Prayer", The Independent, 17.10.38., p5

[214] "Czech Speaker Tells of Nazi Terror", The Telegraph, 21.11.38., p10

(and, coincidentally, Vice Consul for Czechoslovakia), sent Chamberlain a congratulatory telegram: "Sheffield Conservatives hail you as saviour of world peace. History knows no such splendid achievement. You have earned the abiding gratitude of mankind".[215] The newly amalgamated local morning papers: "...had the happy thought of making available to readers in Christmas Card form, an art photograph of Mr Neville Chamberlain, who saved Britain from the horrors of war".[216] This premature canonisation was continued in an article by Leonard O. Mosley on the eve of Armistice Day: "When we stood before the Cenotaph in 1937 most of us must have been wondering on what day the next war would begin. Tomorrow I feel we will be wondering instead on what date permanent peace will be secured".[217]

Conservative triumphalism was not, however, universal. Proceedings at a Conservative Women's one-day political school suggested a more thoughtful approach to the crisis.[218] The Telegraph reported that in the Derbyshire High Peak Constituency Hugh Molsen, the Prospective Conservative Party Candidate, had caused a furore by publicly repudiating the Munich Agreement.[219] While there was no open dissension in the Sheffield Conservative Party, Thompson believes that the party as a whole was "...badly shaken by the arguments and recriminations of September to October 1938".[220] Party discipline was rigorously applied by local Conservative Party Associations to dissenting MPs[221] and lack of local criticism cannot be taken to indicate concurrence. Louis Smith felt it necessary to publicly attack Eden and Churchill for their opposition to Munich[222] and Sheffield Liberals reported that a membership campaign had attracted "a considerable number of dissatisfied Tories".[223] Although The Eccleshall Divisional Conservative Association Annual Report for 1938 was written after Hitler's invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia had encouraged a reappraisal of Munich, it suggests

---

[215] "Saviour of Peace", The Independent, 3.10.38., p5
[216] "Premier's Picture Makes Ideal Christmas Card", The Telegraph, 5.11.38., p9
[217] "A Young Man's Thoughts on Armistice Day", *ibid*, 10.11.38., p8
[218] "Women Go To School", *ibid*, 22.11.38., p6
[219] "High Peak Unionists Free Speech Fear", *ibid*, p10
[220] Thompson, *op cit*, p191 The reader should be wary for Thompson quotes Churchill writing a decade later when it was politically essential that the Conservative Party had not wholeheartedly supported appeasement.
[221] Watkins, *op cit*, p133 & Thompson, *op cit*, p192
[222] "Anti-Nazi's Irresponsible Speeches", The Telegraph, 8.11.38., p3
[223] "City Liberals Forecast Revival", *ibid*, 4.11.38., p3

that an unease was felt among sections of the Conservative Party: "So long as the heart of the Nation is sound there is no cause to be downhearted about our authority in the World, nor to be sensitive to how other nations regard us".

Although C.S. Darvill, selected as prospective Labour candidate for Hallam, delighted in asking: "How long has the Conservative Party been affiliated to the Peace Pledge Union?",[224] the identification between pacifist and Tory appeasers should not be overstated. While the prospective Conservative candidate for Hillsborough, Dr W.S. Russell Thomas, favoured the kind of revised League supported by pacifists,[225] the anti-imperialist rhetoric upon which Dawtry and others based this call was never going to be heard from the Conservative Party. Nor had the party embraced a defence policy with which pacifists could concur. Agreement with Hitler was accompanied by greater rearmament and a national voluntary service scheme which pacifists rightly saw as the forerunner of conscription.[226] The section of the peace movement closest to Government policy was the People's Peace Party who viewed the popularity of Chamberlain's flight to Munich as a vindication of their belief that: "If there is to be a lasting peace it will come through the will of the peoples, and from no other source".[227] However despite the fact that the party produced a booklet discussing the crisis and held a public meeting, Munich did not make them a significant centre of peace activity in Sheffield.

Munich revealed the weakness at the heart of an apparently flourishing LNU. The rigorous, consistent and holistic *pacificist* policy expounded by the national LNU leadership, painfully accepted by those on the Left in the face of unyielding political realities, appeared not only to have been rejected by the general public in favour of the easier option of Chamberlain's Appeasement but also to have been rejected by the union's own membership. The local LNU's difficulties were the legacy of a membership policy that had valued numbers above commitment and a consensual approach which the growing ideological rift between *pacificists* and pacifists had rendered obsolete. It was important, therefore, for its future direction that the re-evaluation of events that took place once the euphoria had gone added grist to the mill of the *pacificist* critique of

---

[224] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 9.11.38., p15
[225] "Premier Working for Revised League", *ibid*, 26.11.38., p12
[226] "Betrayal of Peace", Peace News, 22.10.38., p1
[227] "Lasting Peace", The Independent, 24.10.38., p4 & "City Peace Plea", The Telegraph, 10.11.38., p9

Chamberlain's foreign policy. *Kristallnacht* demonstrated that the Munich Agreement had not signalled a change of agenda in Germany. In December the Sheffield District of the LNU heard a speech on the dangers posed by German economic hegemony in Central Europe.[228] In the same month Beverly Baxter MP, one of Chamberlain's back bench supporters, addressing Sheffield Publicity Club, leavened his conventional praise for Chamberlain's foresight with the significant aside that by flying to Berchtesgaden Chamberlain had "gained time". And, in what has become the standard argument of apologists for Munich, he added: "The cynic would say 'to rearm'".[229] By February an opinion poll suggested that almost half the population agreed with this view, while a further 24% believed that Munich had actually brought war closer. Only 28% of those questioned felt any confidence that it would lead to "enduring peace".[230]

The end of 1938 witnessed the Sheffield peace movement in a state of flux. Alongside the principled arguments between *pacificists* and pacifists there existed a similar psychological reaction in the peace movement's constituency to that observed amongst the wider public, a turning away from the political realities of the time in the hope that the consequences would go away. The eleven members of Hallam Ward Labour Party who voted to accept the necessity for ARP also decided not to contest the local elections owing to the "general apathy of members". Amongst students at the University antipathy to the commitment of their immediate forebears had reached such a pitch that during the Christmas term the URC passed a motion forbidding political comment in the editorial of The Arrows.[231] After Munich Sheffield ASLEF 1B Branch had protested: "...at the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia to satisfy the demands of the German dictator" and pledged "...to support any action that might be taken by the Trade Union movement to displace the present Government".[232] Just three months later, however, they resolved:

> That this branch strongly protest against the action of the LNER Company, in requesting Passed Cleaners to volunteer for Gas Training under ARP as we consider the duties they will be called upon to perform

---

[228] "Germany's Trade Drive", *ibid*, 6.12.38., p9
[229] "Mr Beverly Baxter's Visit", *ibid*, 13.12.38., p7
[230] Gallup, *op cit*, p13
[231] "Editorial", The Arrows, No 30 Christmas Term 1938, p9
[232] ASLEF Branch 1B Minute Books, 25.9.38.

in case of emergency is [sic] a violation of our National Agreement.[233]

The historical context of the rejection of dilution and state control is readily comprehensible, but in the light of the awareness the branch had demonstrated of German expansionism, there was an inescapable contradiction in this ostrich-like resolution. Psychological rejection of the conditions of the time produced "utopianism" as well as apathy.

It is impossible to know to what extent this wider psychological reaction was responsible for the catatonia of Centre-Right and particularly LNU members of the peace movement in Sheffield at the time of Munich. Within the churches relief momentarily overcame commitment to the higher moral claims of equity and justice in international affairs to which Church leaders normally expressed adherence. It is clear that strong political commitment, particularly on the Left, combated this tendency with regard to Munich but offered less protection against unrealistic responses on equally difficult questions of national defence. The LNU did resume normal service post-Munich with regard to meetings but its failure during the Crisis marked the end of centrist attempts to formally unite the peace movement in Sheffield.

While the ideological impetus for a popular front and the more pragmatic attitudes taken by the Communist Party to ARP and the League and by the Labour Party leadership to ARP, the League and rearmament had laid the foundations of a consensus among *pacificists*, the consolidation of the *pacificist* viewpoint owed much to the fruitful contacts initiated by centrists with the Peace Ballot and continued through their cooperation in the locally coordinated Peace Weeks. The lack of further efforts by the Centre-Right to unite the peace movement reflected not the local LNU's failure at the time of Munich (which was to an extent counteracted by continuation of the *pacificist* critique by its national leadership and the Labour Party) but the precipitation by events of the *pacificist* viewpoint into a dominant vision. Ironically, therefore, the historical function of the consensus among *pacificists*, built by that section of the peace movement which supported the IPC, was to provide one of the main moral and theoretical underpinnings of the refusal by the British government and people to accept German domination of Europe and to continue prosecuting the war even at that point after the

---

[233] *Ibid* 18.12.38.

fall of France when Britain's position appeared to be almost hopeless.

Summary:

At a national level the convergence of views within the majority *pacificist* constituency of the peace movement is generally dated from the LNU General Council's acceptance of a statement endorsing rearmament in June 1937 and the decision, in the following month, by the Parliamentary Labour Party to abstain rather than vote against the service estimates. In Sheffield the growing identification of view in this sector of the peace movement only became clear several months later over the issue of Eden's resignation and was made possible by the avoidance of the issue of rearmament. Pacifists on the other hand found themselves allied to Conservatives in endorsing Chamberlain's strategy of appeasement in opposition to their former *pacificist* allies. The *Anschluss* provoked less clear cut reactions because it placed fascist expansionism within the context of self-determination but the criticism that concessions to the dictators were simply whetting an appetite for further conquest was clearly voiced by *pacificists*.

Efforts to embody the growing *pacificist* alliance in a coordinating structure were thwarted nationally by the continuing objections of the Labour Party leadership. The UPA undoubtedly represented a broader acceptance of anti-fascist *pacificism* but the situation in Sheffield suggests that the initiative was more influenced by communist strategy than is sometimes supposed and that for the dissident Labour Left it was the continuation of a long running battle with the leadership over the united front rather than the adoption of a new stance which was prepared to take a less ideological view of issues such as rearmament. The influence of the CPGB on the Labour Left in this matter does not appear to have been lessened by reactions to the Moscow Trials. The defeat of the UPA initiative took place within Sheffield itself, however, as well as at a national level. The committees of the satellite organisations of the Labour movement viewed neither the situations as being so critical, nor the UPA as being so efficacious, that they were prepared to defy the national leadership.

The view that the LNU's involvement with the IPC was unhelpful to its larger role in the peace movement is not borne out by the situation in Sheffield. The LNU was the only body under whose umbrella the new *pacificist* consensus could coalesce in the city and its third Peace Week was an embodiment of the growing popular front on peace. The increasing isolation of the pacifists and the growing recognition of common goals

amongst the disparate *pacificist* groups ensured that for the first time Peace Week events endorsed elements of a common peace policy. Fundamental agreement on the sanctions issue continued, however, to be overlaid with specific disagreements in other theatres of peace movement interest. During the 1938 the trend was for these to be decreasingly divisive.

The strength of the Left within the Sheffield peace movement and the weakness of the pacifists had ensured that Spain was a less divisive issue than in some other localities. As non-intervention became discredited and concerns about fascist expansionism grew, the Left's support for the Republic became shared by other elements of the *pacificist* grouping who moved away from the neutral position that they had originally adopted towards the war. Practicalities dictated that the Left's support for the Republic was expressed through humanitarian aid and this was coming to be a characteristic response of the peace movement to groups suffering from unprovoked aggression. To an extent this was a reaction to the lack of success the peace movement was having in influencing the British government in the political field. Humanitarian aid was not, however, divorced from the wider schema within which the peace movement viewed the deteriorating international situation and efforts in Sheffield to isolate aid to the Chinese from condemnation of the Japanese failed. Humanitarian concerns were increasingly focussed on those displaced by conflict and the arrival of the Basque children in Sheffield was followed by that of other individuals, including Jewish children, fleeing fascist persecution. Some of the aid given in this form was an expression of a distinctive *pacificist* solidarity. The presence of European refugees in Sheffield, however, coupled with the Left's concentration on an anti-fascist response within the European arena and particularly in Spain, diminished the aid sent to the Chinese. This reflected a continuing eurocentricity within the peace movement.

The growing realism of the *pacificist* response was best seen in Sheffield not over the issue of rearmament, where reaction remained ideological, but on the question of air raid precautions. While continuing to reject the government's preparations, the Left was able to encapsulate its own wider agenda in detailed criticism of official ARP. The involvement of the Labour City Council in these matters renewed the tensions that had existed over the local administration of unemployment benefits. The STLC's refusal to involve itself continued the local conflict over gradualism. Outright opposition to ARP continued only within pacifism and was expressed in the PPU and the churches.

Public expressions of pacifism continued to be channelled through the nonconformist churches. During 1938 pacifism was increasingly separated, not only from the rest of the peace movement, but also from the broader Labour Movement. Efforts by the PPU, and by pacifists remaining in the Labour Party, to reverse this trend failed. This may have increased the insularity and individualism of the typical pacifist but there is simply not enough evidence in Sheffield to characterise its pacifist constituency. It is not clear, however, that pacifism was actually losing supporters at this point. Evidence of disenchantment with both the *pacificist* insistence on the need for united international action both economically and militarily against the aggressors and of absolute pacifism's refusal to utilise arms even in self-defence is to be found in the growth of a populist pro-appeasement lobby within Sheffield. This does not appear to have had much impact or to have been able to intellectually withstand the general acknowledgement of the failure of appeasement after the invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. It nevertheless possesses interest as the one element of the Sheffield peace movement which was not affiliated to a national organisation.

Munich revealed that the growing *pacificism* endorsed by the majority of the peace movement was neither strongly enough felt within it, nor widely enough disseminated outside of it, to resist public relief at the removal of the threat of immediate war. In general in appears that those most ideologically committed to *pacificism* found it easiest to resist the symptoms of public rejoicing. Nationally the LNU leadership produced a strong statement against Chamberlain's methods but was unable to commit their branch organisations to this view. In Sheffield the disarray in the LNU branches was such that they disappeared temporarily from public view. Within the Labour Party those on the left were most adamantly against the settlement, while the publicly elected leaders of the council came closest to endorsement of it. Pacifists welcomed Munich and their strength within the churches, coupled with the establishmentarian views of the Anglican hierarchy and a general predisposition to peaceful coexistence, ensured that the churches responded positively to the agreement. The few outspoken critics were rapidly joined, however, by others voicing doubts about the morality of the treatment of the Czechs. Although these doubts did not initially lead to the repudiation of either pacifism or appeasement within the churches, *Kristallnacht* retrospectively convinced many within the churches that appeasement of Nazi Germany was not a morally defensible policy. Efforts to validate the moral position adopted at Munich by the calling of a redistributive

world conference on economic resources were particularly attractive to pacifists and those in the churches but were endorsed by some Labour politicians (including those in the national leadership) otherwise resolutely *pacificist*. The commonality of support for such a conference could not hide the fact, however, that by the end of 1938 the peace movement had split into pacifist and *pacificist* groupings and that in Sheffield the latter were the dominant force in the Labour Movement.

Chapter 7

Amid the Ruins

From the Invasion of Czechoslovakia to the Outbreak of War

(January - September 1939)

Although in the last months of peace the National Government was forced to adopt the defencist version of Collective Security through pacts of mutual assistance, which had already been accepted by the majority of the peace movement, this did not lead to a new national unity. Divisions within the movement were exacerbated by the Labour Party's opposition to conscription, which was the first policy it had adopted in contradiction to the pragmatic realism which had characterised the overall direction of its peace policy since 1934. The strong social and political divisions which lay at the root of this opposition proved an insurmountable obstacle to a unity of purpose between the government and the Left of the *pacificist* peace movement. These divisions and those between supporters of the League of Nations and Chamberlainite Conservatives were exaggerated by electioneering in advance of what was expected to be an election year. Pacifists, however, proved unable, despite the superficial similarity of their policies on conscription, ARP and rearmament, to draw the Left away from its *pacificist* commitment. In a contradictory few months therefore, beneath a surface of continuing conflict the consensus among *pacificists* opposed to fascist expansion in Europe widened.

The End of Appeasement:

As January 1939 dawned signs of the confusion that Munich had induced in the peace movement were widely visible. Among the churches there remained wholesale enthusiasts:

> I think we are all realizing that the Prince of Peace is leading us on to higher views as to International Statesmanship and that notwithstanding the perverseness of certain types of men who persist in going their own way, He is showing the nations that the best way to Peace is by conference and arbitration.[1]

The National Peace Council's petition for a world conference which was the practical

---

[1] "The Vicar's Letter", The Sharrovian, January 1939, n.p.

expression of such sentiments was completed on 4th March with 1 062 000 signatures and presented to the government in the week that the Germans took Prague.[2] However, in Sheffield amongst Methodists, the denomination most closely associated with the petition, enthusiasm for a wider settlement co-existed uncomfortably with a lack of confidence in both the workability and moral probity of Chamberlain's deal with Hitler. The Revd H. Tyler Lane suggested that: "...1939 would bring either the collapse of modern civilization or the strengthening of fraternity and goodwill".[3] As the Bishop of Sheffield indicated *Kristallnacht* continued to undermine religious leaders' confidence: "Terrible deeds of ferocious cruelty have shocked the whole world and left a great stain of dishonour on the pages of powerful nations..."[4] Even the PPU were strangely silent at the moment of their closest identification with national policy. Alfred Hall's remark in February that: "The more armaments we make the more terrible it will be when war comes",[5] suggested that even in this constituency doubts about Hitler's intentions remained.

The imminent defeat of the Spanish Republicans sharpened the Left's view that Munich proved that:

> The Chamberlain Government has as its primary objective the preservation at all costs of the Fascist regimes in Germany and Italy, and that it is prepared to connive at every imaginable injustice to ensure this and to ensure that forces hostile to Fascism are destroyed.[6]

Both the best-known spokesmen for the younger, pro-Communist Labour activists in Sheffield, A.J. Murray and Howard Hill, wrote to the press during January extolling this view. Murray said that appeasement had "...undermined altogether the defensive position of France and of our own country", and that neither Hitler nor Mussolini could be trusted "...to observe any undertakings they may give, as has been proved time and again during the past few years". Hill's letter, while employing the same slightly histrionic tone was more definedly Popular Front in emphasis and, not only quoted Churchill, but also ended with a plea to: "...every right-thinking man of whatever political creed and religion

---

[2] Peace News, No 145, 24.3.39., p1
[3] "World Lead for Peace Urged", The Telegraph, 2.1.39., p7
[4] "The Bishop's Letter", The Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXV No 1, January 1939, p1
[5] "Fear Induced by Armaments", The Telegraph, 27.2.39., p5
[6] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 21.1.39., p17

to end this suicidal policy of this Government".[7] More graphically than Murray he outlined the consequences of Munich: "The policy of appeasement is resulting in every one of our allies being, in turn, served up on a plate to the Fascist aggressor". The result would be, he opined: "We shall be left to fight without an ally against Fascist Powers, made powerful and mighty with their material successes which we have so obligingly helped them to get".

Chamberlain's accommodation with Hitler had intensified rather than resolved the *pacificist* Left's distrust of rearmament. Despite their adoption of the language of patriotism (Hill quoted the national anthem at one point!) in pursuit of a Popular Front the Left's view remained: "When we have such a Government and only when, will we be prepared to give all the military requirements necessary to pursue such a policy".[8] This contrasted with a resolute anti-fascism which had replaced the Left's earlier quasi-pacifist defeatism. Hill wrote: "But I, along with thousands of other youths, would sooner die fighting on our knees for freedom and democracy now, when there is a chance of winning, than become the slaves of Fascism at a later stage when defeat is made inevitable".

The mainstream Labour Movement's review of Munich, while remaining critical, was less openly confrontational. Councillor W.G. Robinson in an article in Labour's Sheffield Forward, subtitled "A Great Betrayal", argued that Munich had strengthened Hitler, making his regime less susceptible to pressure from blockade by opening access routes to raw materials and food supplies. Robinson claimed that Chamberlain had exaggerated the danger of war: "Playing on the fears of the nation, Mr Chamberlain in his broadcast was able to create the impression that Britain wanted peace at any price, and it was so broadcast in France and Germany. Hitler's victory was foreshadowed".[9] Robinson's analysis was no less overtly ideological than Murray's and Hill's, agreeing with them that "...Fascism has always cringed away when faced with open and honest opposition to its plans of aggression", and describing the international crisis as: "...a struggle between the would be imperialists, Germany, Italy, Japan, against the old imperialists such as Britain". Sensitivity to public opinion dictated, however, that he did

---

[7] *Ibid*, 27.1.39., p5
[8] *Ibid*. 2.2.39., p5
[9] "The Meaning of Munich", Sheffield Forward, No 9 Vol 1, January 1939, p2

not reject appeasement's supporters' call for a world conference.[10]

Although a syndicated feature in the same issue, "Government's Foreign Policy", voiced the Labour leadership's claim that their criticism of the unpreparedness of Britain's defences went as far back as 1935, even such committed *pacificists* as Alexander offered a coded assessment of the situation, concentrating, for instance, during the annual arms debate, on the accusation that Conservatives were giving arms orders in exchange for party donations.[11] This reflected the doggedly constitutionalist strategy of the party. The leadership talked of Chamberlain's government in apocalyptic terms, claiming that: "...Britain's rearmament programme indicated that war was expected" and that: "Behind the scenes in London there was great commotion and fermentation, for the Government had realized that war was inevitable if it continued with its present policy"[12] while continuing to act as if normal political life would continue until at least the General Election of 1940. In seeking to foster a sense that: "A Labour Government can yet save peace", the party undermined the urgency of its own warnings about the consequences of appeasement and limited its ability to give an alternative *pacificist* leadership.

Most of those participating in the debate on foreign policy understood immediately that the German invasion of the rump of Czechoslovakia on 15th March initiated a major change in the European situation, although A.J. Foster has argued convincingly that Chamberlain himself did not intend the guarantee to Poland to mark an absolute break with appeasement.[13] On 20th March "Current Topics" announced unequivocally: "The policy of appeasement is dead..." That same evening Sir Ronald Matthews, chairman of Sheffield Conservative and Unionist Federation, called for a "British united front against aggression".[14] Matthews offered no substance to his proposal beyond the ending of "Party rifts" and "petty playing for position" but his misappropriation of the language of his political opponents gestured at the fact that his

---

[10] Attlee's speech in the House of Commons during the debate after Munich had endorsed the summoning of an international peace conference. Shepherd, R. A Class Divided, Appeasement and the Road to Munich, 1938, London, 1988, p237

[11] "Giving Arms Orders", The Telegraph, 6.3.39., p7

[12] "Mr. Alexander Says War is Expected", *ibid*, 11.3.39., p11

[13] Foster, Alan J., "An Unequivocal Guarantee? Fleet Street and the British Guarantee to Poland 31 March 1939", Journal of Contemporary History, 26 (1991)

[14] "Fears Danger of Sudden Flare Up", The Telegraph, 21.3.39., p7

was not a call to the opposition to back government policy, but an acknowledgement that the government were adopting the policies of the opposition. He went so far as to say: "Nothing would give me greater pleasure at present than to learn that the leaders of the Opposition Parties had been incorporated in the British Government". Matthews, who had been identified with appeasement, acknowledged that: "...it might appear that the Prime Minister's work at Munich lay in ruins at his feet..." but repeated the argument, already heard in Sheffield the previous December, that the policy had "gained a respite of six valuable months" and increased Germany's isolation. Matthews agreed with "General Topics", however, that Hitler's action had removed any possibility of a second Munich: "We could never again negotiate on those lines".

Writers of standard texts on the period[15] have argued that the Government's conversion was both precipitate and half-hearted. Its fatal flaw remained Chamberlain's aversion to a pact with Russia. At a local level, the indecent haste with which Matthews and others in the Conservative Party sought to bury the corpse of appeasement reflected political exigencies. Despite what Thompson and others have described at a national level, in Sheffield there had been no Conservative critics to whose prescience the faithful could appeal. Indeed Matthews' analysis of Hitler's untrustworthiness repeated almost word for word what Murray had said almost two months before the invasion. The temptation for critics of appeasement to say "I told you so" was unlikely to be resisted. Reader Charles Williams offered a forthright personal attack on Chamberlain:

> It is strange that an idea which was pooh-poohed as being incapable of preventing war in September should now be hailed as the only method by which we can hope to win one. It is also strange that in going into this new "collective system" we should be asked to unite behind a Prime Minister who referred to these things as "midsummer madness"...

When Mussolini invaded Albania in early April letter writers turned on The Telegraph itself. Criticising the paper for offering: "...not one word of sympathy for the innocent, defenceless Albanian people..." "H.B." continued:

> Yet it is more horrible to think that the sufferings of these people are the direct result of the policy of Mr Chamberlain and his supporters who have stumbled blindly on their way in spite of the warnings of all intelligent

---

[15] C.L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars 1918 - 1940, London, 1956, pp637 - 641

people who foresaw clearly enough what would happen.[16]

The communist C.E. Mason made the point more directly: "If 'the policy of appeasement is in ruins' and measures of collective security have to be devised, honesty requires that it should be acknowledged that the opponents of 'appeasement' were correct". The Telegraph's unwillingness to apologise was indicated in the answers it appended to both letters. Indeed, despite Matthews call for a coalition and the paper's own acceptance that: "...the leaders of the Labour Party are supporting the National Government in the policy it is now pursuing", the paper's commentary consisted largely of an attack on Labour policy. Its defence of appeasement consisted of two points, firstly that "only by experience" had Chamberlain learned "beyond doubt" that the promises of the dictators were "worthless", and secondly that the policy of collective security had collapsed in 1935 and that Britain was the only country which had tried to make it work.

Sir Stafford Cripps expounded an exactly opposing view when he spoke in support of the Popular Front movement on 22nd March. Cripps identified the rejection of Russia's proposal for a nine-power conference as the crucial indication that, despite the failure of its policy of appeasement, the government was: "...still unprepared to take any decisive step which will assist in the survival of democracy and freedom in the world".[17] Not unexpectedly, Cripps dismissed calls for Britain to "rally round Mr Chamberlain". His remarks went further, however, in distancing the Popular Front from the kind of coalition supported by Matthews: "The theory of national unity, Sir Stafford said, should have no place in a democratic country, for it was a theory of totalitarianism". While some historians have indeed sought to draw parallels between the National Government and the one party states which developed in Europe, a speech by a supporter of the Popular Front which dismissed national unity as "totalitarianism" was a further example of the kind of apparent contradiction which had consistently weakened the Left's efforts to lead the *pacificist* consensus. The STLC resolution, equally forthright in its call for the resignation of Chamberlain and in demanding "collective action" with France and Russia, limited its objections to the observation that: "there can be no National Unity behind a Government which cannot be trusted..."[18]

---

[16] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 11.4.39., p6
[17] "Nazi Aggression brings Danger nearer to Britain", *ibid*, 23.3.39., p9
[18] STLC Minute Books, 28.3.39.

The German invasion confronted pacifism with what Ceadel and others have described as its ultimate dilemma. Hitler's rejection of the blandishments of appeasement left groups who could accept no other form of pressure without a political role in the pacification of Europe. Edward Fisher, when interviewed, said that the decline of PPU membership in Sheffield occurred before and at the introduction of conscription, suggesting that the period around the fall of Prague was a crucial moment in defining those who would continue to hold to their pledge. Remaining pacifists rejected the collective security of defensive pacts which their former allies in the Conservative Party had been forced to adopt as the only pragmatic alternative to appeasement[19] and refused to accept that a Rubicon had been crossed. An editorial by Humphrey S. Moore in Peace News after the fall of Prague suggested: "For it [the pacification of Europe] is still possible if consultation between this and other countries were to include arrangements for a joint approach to Germany on the basis of a genuine generosity to which even an encircled country could not fail to respond".[20] George Lansbury, speaking in Sheffield just six days after the invasion, referred to his meeting with Hitler two years before, when: "Hitler would, he believed, have attended a conference to discuss territories, raw materials and markets then, if he (Mr Lansbury) had had the authority of the British Government to act". Attempting to demonstrate how this would have restrained fascist aggression Lansbury added: "If he [Hitler] had not accepted he would have lost the people's support". As late as July many of the proposals put before the National Peace Congress continued to advocate appeasement.[21] Benson Perkins, Chairman of Lansbury's meeting,[22] rejected the Archbishop of Canterbury's *pacificist* view, given in the House of Lords the day before, that Germany's invasion must be answered: "in the only terms which the German rulers appear to understand - that is to say, that as against their claim that might is right there must be a massing of might on the side of right". Benson Perkins retorted:

> Right is a moral obligation and cannot be upheld by might. The issues of conflict where might is the determining factor are lacking in moral

---

[19] "Pacifists and the Crisis", Peace News, No 146, 31.3.39., p1
[20] "What Can we Do?", *ibid*, No 145, 24.3.39., p6
[21] *Ibid*, 14.7.39., p1
[22] "The Way of Peace", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 526 April 1939, pp7 - 8

> justification. As against any such claim there are many who are talking in these days about Moral Rearmament. In other words, there is a growing feeling that what is necessary is the building up of a deep sense of the supremacy of moral and spiritual power.

Although Moral Rearmament survived the war, it was at this point quintessentially a post-Munich phenomenon. First noted by The Telegraph as a national movement in the previous November, it had received notice in "Free Church Notes" during February after local ministers had devoted a sermon to it.[23] It had made some impact outside of the churches and in March an article appeared in The Sheffield Transportman. Harold C. Wilson's exposition revealed the extent to which, at this juncture, it was seen as embodying the pacifist credo. He interpreted the striving for "material security" as being the underlying impulse behind the need to: "arm - arm - ARM".[24] Wilson contextualised this within the quietist view that change was dependent upon "the moral readjustment of individuals". Quoting Dr Frank Buckman, he linked this to disarmament:

> Change the individual and you change the nation. Change the nation and you change the world. "Change? Yes, the hearts and thus the minds of men and women. Replace hate, greed and selfishness by absolute love, honesty and purity. All thoughtful people will admit that a world based on these standards would result in peace and brotherhood".

Those critical of the movement found that, like pacifism, it had no short-term answers to the problems that had promoted it. Canon S.T.G. Smith reviewing H.W. (Bunny) Austin's Moral Rearmament - The Battle for Peace wrote:

> What one finds, however, in regard to this call for "Moral Rearmament" is not that there is any lack of sympathy with this objective, or want of desire on the part of individuals to achieve it in their own experience of life, but, unfortunately the circumstances of the present moment are not at all conducive to this end.[25]

Benson Perkins denied that support for moral rearmament was "a vague and merely idealistic attitude" claiming that there were "constructive measures which are the expression of a belief in the supremacy of the spiritual and moral realities of life". The

---

[23] "Free Church Notes", The Telegraph, 14.2.39., p5
[24] "Moral Rearmament", The Sheffield Transportman, March 1939, p19
[25] "Moral Rearmament Is Only Solution", The Telegraph, 9.3.39., p3

measures were a continuation of appeasement: "Who is to say what Hitler would do if brought into a World Group where nations sought with mutual regard and a sense of equality to find the way of justice and right?" While Moral Rearmament did not attract much support in Sheffield after this initial flurry of interest, its adherents' reluctance to accept the failure of appeasement was widespread in the Nonconformist churches. At the end of March, Tyler Lane said: "I have a feeling which I still retain in spite of the happenings of the last fortnight that there is no politician in our modern age who has such a moving passion for peace as Mr Chamberlain" while Benson Perkins continued to see a solution to the European crisis in the revision of the Versailles Treaty.[26] There were signs too of disengagement from intractable difficulties. A month after the invasion Free Church Ministers wrote to the press to declare: "...that the most important thing at the moment is prayer".[27]

National Voluntary Service and the Introduction of Conscription

On 26th April, as part of the signalling of a break with appeasement, Chamberlain's Government introduced conscription for men of 20 and 21. The introduction of such a measure during peacetime was to a large extent symbolic. Its initial effect in Sheffield was to intensify the activities of those who had opposed the National Voluntary Service introduced after the Munich crisis. There were essentially three grounds on which the Register of Voluntary Service had been resisted. Firstly, like ARP and rearmament, it was seen as giving further power to: "...a Government pursuing a policy inimical to the interests of the working class and of Democracy", as the STLC resolution succinctly put it.[28] This was tied in particularly to the government's refusal to limit armament profits, its unwillingness to introduce a wealth tax to fund defence expenditure and to opposition to its foreign policy. Secondly, it raised old fears amongst trade unionists of industrial conscription and dilution. And thirdly, it was seen as embodying the militarisation and regimentation which underlay the neo-fascist values of Chamberlain's administration. When Ernest Brown, the Minister of Labour, spoke in Sheffield on 7th March in support of the National Register to what was allegedly a hand-

---

[26] "An Open Letter to Current Topics", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 528 June 1939, pp5 - 6
[27] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 13.4.39., p4
[28] STLC Minute Books, 10.1.39.

picked audience,[29] C.E. Mason saw sinister evidence of the government's political tendencies: "A drilled and regimented audience is a familiar feature of Fascist politics".[30]

The Labour Party in Sheffield was divided on the voluntary register. Asbury, on the platform with Brown, reiterated his party's opposition to other government policies but was present to indicate official Labour support. The TUC were cooperating in the scheme and the STLC complained loudly, but without effect, that the consent of affiliated organisations should have been "democratically obtained" before the movement was committed to this "fateful policy". Sharrard was indignant and described the leadership's action as: "...a blatant misuse of power, Nazi-like in character".[31] At the STLC itself industrial delegates endorsed the Executive's opposition to the register by 72 - 14. Even the traditionally moderate Cooperative Party, after initially deciding to "seek representation on any local committee", followed the STLC in "protesting against the giving of National Service unless proper safeguards were forthcoming".[32] While it was unsurprising that Hallam DLP listened attentively to Darvill's account of the STLC and resolved even before April to "...oppose the principle of conscription in all forms",[33] that the generally docile Brightside DLP deferred discussion of the National Council of Labour's request that they seek representation on local Voluntary Service committees[34] suggests general dissatisfaction with the Labour leadership's support for the scheme. ASLEF's Branch 1B recorded its opposition at two separate meetings, supporting not only the STLC's January decision but also later reacting to what the union described as: "...the proposals in the Capitalist Press for Industrial Conscription".[35] Even amongst non-political organisations there were reservations. The Sheffield Ramblers had asked if they might be useful "in some sort of observer capacity for Moorlands". The Sheffield National Service committee's unenthusiastic response promoted a rapid disillusionment and on the very day that conscription was announced the Federation Committee voted 9 - 3 that: "...no further action be taken whatever..."[36]

---

[29] "Current Topics", The Telegraph, 8.3.39., p6
[30] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 10.3.39., p5
[31] "Current Topics", *ibid*, 26.1.39., p6
[32] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Books 2.2.39. & 18.2.39.
[33] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 16.1.39. & 24.3.39.
[34] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 18.1.39.
[35] ASLEF Branch 1B Minute Books, 29.1.39. & 26.3.39.
[36] Sheffield and District Ramblers' Federation Minute Book, 22.3.39. & 26.4.39.

Some in the Nonconformist churches rejected National Voluntary Service. The Methodist, Tyler Lane, said: "It leads the public mind to thoughts of war and defensive measures. Without criticising the legitimacy of these methods, it is deplorable that many newspapers, politicians, and even parsons, are, through this concentration, feeding the mass mind with the war idea".[37] Pressed by "Current Topics" to defend his remarks, Tyler Lane offered a pacifist version of the Left's view that National Service could only proceed if it was reciprocated by a change in Government policy: "That means there is no moral justification for national service unless the common people have the full assurance that the politicians are showing even greater energy and resolution in the active and just promotion of peace".[38] This last letter appeared after the Czechoslovakian invasion had started and pressed once more as to whether he would advise people that National Service was a duty, Tyler Lane replied: "...I am prepared to leave it to the individual conscience as to the term of national service, and to respect personal sincerity whatever channel it may take".[39] The Quakers had been applauded by Revd B.M. Eason in "Free Church Notes" a few days before for making a similar declaration of dedication to National Service which they defined as:

> ...a challenge to throw ourselves more devotedly into every form of service for the community that makes for reconciliation between man and man, class and class, nation and nation, in the sure faith that justice, understanding and good will are the only foundations of lasting peace.[40]

While pacifists' definition of national service within freedom of conscience was a consistent stance, *pacificist* trade unionists' opposition to voluntary service was difficult to square with their political goal of containing fascism. The foundations of national unity remained elusive and the National Government's rhetoric concealed an attempt to define the parameters of unity in such a way as to wrong foot their political opponents. The self-important public debates amongst a certain type of ex-serviceman,[41] the production of the Dowager Lady Reading as spokeswoman for the movement amongst

---

[37] "Sheffield Critic of Services", The Telegraph, 13.3.39., p8
[38] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 18.3.39., p8
[39] *Ibid*, 23.3.39., p6
[40] "Free Church Notes", *ibid*, 14.3.39., p5
[41] c.f. for instance the debate about ARP volunteers in "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 16.1.39., p2

women[42] and the temper of the Ernest Brown meeting offered no hope of genuine national unity. It might encourage the six organisers and missioners to whom the Conservative Women's Advisory Committee offered a few hours off each week to train in the W.V.S.[43] but without concessions of tone and substance to a wholely different constituency Voluntary National Service remained divisive.[44]

The Left's opposition was equally ideological. The transmutation of the old Youth Peace Council into the Sheffield Committee of the National Youth Campaign of Service for Peace and Democracy suggested a communist party presence. Although this was denied by the secretary, Joyce E. Hunter,[45] the involvement of Howard Hill as one of 200 young people from Sheffield who joined 2000 demonstrators in Trafalgar Square on 19th February[46] corroborates this. Continuing the appropriation of the Right's rhetoric: "We will be patriotic, all right", wrote Hunter, "if patriotism and justice to others are compatible", the demonstration linked opposition to calls for National Service with opposition to Chamberlain's foreign policy: "This huge meeting of youth will voice a declaration that it will give its full support to a foreign policy based on the defence of democracy and freedom and co-operation with other law-abiding Powers to that end".[47] Although National Voluntary Service was a feature of the months between Munich and the fall of Prague it revealed the apparently unbridgeable gap which was to continue in the months after March 1939 between paradigms utilising a common language of unity and national purpose.

The introduction of conscription moved the battle lines already laid out by the debate on National Voluntary Service because the Labour Party nationally opposed it. There has been some debate as to whether the practical benefits of the call up of men before the war was worth the cost in national unity. Mowat believes that the measure

---

[42] "City Women Responding to Call", *ibid*, 11.3.39., p8
[43] City of Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee Minute Books, 22.3.39.
[44] Middlemas views this as one of the general failures of the appeasement period: "The failure of Chamberlain's government to enlist public support or to prepare for the possibility of failure laid it open to the accusation that a united national consciousness might have added to the bald calculations of British and German military strengths". Middlemas, K., Diplomacy of Illusion, The British Government and Germany 1937 - 1939, London, 1972, p412
[45] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 16.3.39., p5
[46] "National Campaign of Youth", *ibid*, 20.2.39., p3
[47] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 8.2.39., p5

was introduced in part, at least, as a sop to Conservative Party opinion.[48] In the local theatre its effect, along with Conservatives' inability to acknowledge that appeasement had been a mistaken policy, was to hinder the building of the wider coalition including *pacificists* that the failure of appeasement should have made possible.

Asbury was indignant and, castigating Chamberlain for having broken with "the many assurances given" that such a move was not intended, he likened Chamberlain's introduction of conscription to Hitler's repudiation of the Munich settlement. Asbury adopted the arguments of those who had opposed him over voluntary service, contrasting the purpose of the defence of democracy with the means of compulsion: "It [conscription] would mean that we have lost faith in democracy and instead of strengthening our position in the eyes of the dictator powers would tend to weaken it".[49] He also repeated the terms of conditional support which had formed the opposition method with regard to the earlier scheme: "In any case conscription which does not include the conscription of wealth is bound to raise most bitter opposition in the country, and, judging by the Budget, equality of sacrifice is not a phrase understood or appreciated by the present government".

In March Louis Smith, MP for Hallam, died and C.S. Darvill, who had been selected to fight the seat for Labour in June 1938, fought a by-election with Roland Jennings, the Conservative Party candidate. The campaign began on 27th April and this accident of timing ensured that conscription was, as Chamberlain described it in his message to Jennings, the "predominant issue".[50] Chamberlain wrote that the Government saw compulsory military training: "...as an essential contribution to its policy of so building up our defences so that in our strength we may make peace secure and save the world from the outbreak of war". The measure, Chamberlain stated, was intended to indicate the serious purpose of the new foreign policy and: "...our capacity and our determination to carry them out, if the need should arise, must be established beyond question in the eyes of the world".

There was little here to which the Labour Party could object. The nub of Labour's objections was a libertarian opposition to compulsion, particularly as regards industrial labour which was its primary sphere of influence. This sat uneasily with Fred

---

[48] Mowat, *op cit*, p640
[49] "Conscription Generally Welcomed", The Telegraph, 26.4.39., p8
[50] "Premier's Call to Hallam", *ibid*, 5.5.39., p10

Marshall MP's acknowledgement during the campaign that modern warfare took place between whole populations and whole economies: "In the horrible event of war, industry was going to be more important than at any time in previous history. 'Don't make any mistake, the man in the workshop is going to be very important. Now that conscription has been brought into force the man in industry is not going unscathed'."[51] While the Labour Party's concerns reflected the inequitable and inefficient manner in which conscription had affected industry during the Great War, this was not an argument against compulsion but rather an acceptance of the key role that the direction of labour had in modern warfare. Darvill, put on the spot as to whether the Labour Party objected to the principle of conscription or only its application, replied: "My case is based on the way conscription has been introduced... We had a voluntary system working quite satisfactorily, and that is much better than compulsion".[52] Darvill's words were consistent neither with his support for the principle of compulsion in the conscription of wealth nor with the longstanding opposition of both himself and the STLC to the voluntary system. Sheffield's Labour Party devoted a great deal of time to opposition to conscription with the STLC organising a conference[53] and forwarding resolutions criticising the TUC's support for the voluntary scheme and its refusal to take industrial action against conscription.[54]

The problem with the arguments on both sides was that, despite agreement that the international situation had taken a desperate turn with the invasion of Czechoslovakia, acknowledgement of the seriousness of the position was largely rhetorical. Chamberlain's letter to Jennings indicated that he still believed that the introduction of conscription would, on its own, be enough to deter Hitler. Jenning's own remarks about the effect of conscription on unemployment were bound to revive fears about the Fascist tendencies of Conservatism[55] and his appeal to the views of ex-Servicemen who agreed that "some form of compulsory service is essential" reinforced the view that the introduction of conscription was a political gesture intended to expiate

---

[51] "Labour's Aversion to Conscription Puzzling", *ibid*, 6.5.39., p12
[52] "Premier's Call to Hallam", *op cit.*
[53] No press coverage of this has been found but various organisations report being invited, c.f., for instance, Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 12.6.39.
[54] STLC Minute Books, 23.5.39. and "Conscription as a Disease", The Telegraph, 3.7.39., p5
[55] "Candidates Say 'Yes' to the League", *ibid*, 3.5.39., p8

the failure of appeasement.[56] The Labour Party's attitude displayed, not only a similar playing to their own constituency, but also a parallel underestimation of Hitler's determination. The STLC resolution said: "...we believe that conscription should not be necessary under a system of Full Collective Security with Russia acting in alliance with Great Britain".[57] The tense of the crucial verb in this statement varied. In the following month's resolution from NUDAW, for instance, it was stated that if a policy of "genuine collective security" had been followed "inclusive of full cooperation with the USSR there would not have arisen the necessity for compulsory service".[58] To an extent the Left's belief that an alliance with the Soviet Union would deliver them from the thorny political problems of rearmament and conscription mirrored a hope, observable across the spectrum of opinion in Britain at this point, that some *deus ex machina* would emerge to retrieve the situation. However comprehensible the Left's opposition to conscription was in the context of Chamberlain's administration, it was not of a piece with the pragmatic *pacificist* response to aggression with which both the Labour leadership and the Communist Party had associated themselves.

While, in accordance with the dominant ethos of his church, Sheffield's Anglican bishop was prepared to go as far as to describe "Measures of defence against aggression as in accordance with the will of God"[59] the leadership of non-conformist churches demonstrated a continuity of opposition from voluntary national service to conscription. Benson Perkins repeated almost exactly the Labour Party's view that the measure was "a blow at the fundamental Constitution of our Country, a definite breach" of the undertaking not to introduce conscription except in wartime and introduced "without a mandate".[60] Revd. Pendril Bentall, a Congregationalist, wrote of the introduction of conscription in even stronger terms:

> It shatters the very liberty it purports to defend. In the matter of principal we have no case against the dictators now, on the contrary, we show that we approve their ways by imitation which is the sincerest form of flattery. Thus whatever may happen in the material sphere, Hitler has triumphed

---

[56] "Hecklers Sing Red Flag", *ibid*, 10.5.39., p6
[57] STLC Minute Books, 25.4.39.
[58] *Ibid*, 23.5.39.
[59] "The Bishop's Presidential Letter", Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXV No4, April 1939, p7
[60] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 28.4.39., p3

> over us, imposing his methods and mentality upon us. Of all the humiliations England had suffered in recent years, this is incomparably the greatest.[61]

Sheffield Methodist Church Synod in May revealed, however, that this represented only a minority of local leaders' views. A resolution expressing disapproval of the "...principle of conscription applied to the Military Training bill, as incompatible with the Christian conception of community and contrary to the British tradition of civil and religious liberty..." was lost by 79 votes to 42.[62] The synod opted instead for a freedom of conscience proposal that offered young men: "the fullest possible service, alike in the conditions of military training or under the circumstances of conscientious objection". Although the General Association of Unitarian Churches in London[63] and the local Wesleyan Reform Union Conference[64] passed resolutions protesting against conscription, Methodists were starting to question their church's identification with pacifism. While the Methodist Peace Fellowship were co-sponsors with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Sheffield sections of the PPU of a meeting on "The Pacifist and Conscription" on 15th May,[65] at Petre Street Methodist Church a member "strongly objected" to the giving of a notice indicating where conscientious objectors could get help unless the Minister and Steward were "...prepared to give notices concerning the other side".[66]

Conscription was the ultimate test for the political effectiveness of the Peace Pledge. Peace News wrote in the week after Chamberlain's announcement: "The nationwide opposition to conscription has during the past week swelled to such dimensions that the Government may well find that the proposed Military Training Act will prove fundamentally unworkable".[67] In Sheffield itself, while one member of the Congregational Young People's Union was reported as saying that: "He thought that the ever growing witness of the pacifists would win in the end",[68] there was no sign that the PPU really expected to have a decisive effect on conscription. Rather there was a quietist

---

[61] *Ibid*, 29.4.39., p7
[62] "Synod Defeats Conscription Critics", *ibid*, 18.5.39., p10
[63] "Unitarian Churches Appeal for Out of Works", *ibid*, 20.5.39., p3
[64] "Split Vote on Forced Service", *ibid*, 6.7.39., p4
[65] "Pacifist Critic of Militia Bill", *ibid*, 16.5.39., p5
[66] Petre Street Methodist Church Minute Book, 2.6.39.
[67] "Opposition to Conscription is Spreading", Peace News, No 151, 5.5.39., p1
[68] "Pacifists Forecast Victory", The Telegraph, 15.5.39., p4

response embodied in the setting up of an Advisory Bureau for conscientious objectors at the end of June.[69] Outside of the youth groups there was no sign that common opposition to conscription repaired the gap between pacifists and *pacificists* which had opened up during appeasement. Indeed, although a number of Labour organisations recorded receiving correspondence from the No Conscription League, none appear to have responded.[70] The Labour Party in Sheffield did not encourage conscientious objection as a form of protest against conscription, although they supported freedom of conscience.[71]

As with opposition to the voluntary service register, those associated with the Youth Peace Council provided the most vociferous protests. The fact that half of those in the first call up were too young to have the vote provided an underlying theme to the Youth Campaign's activities. While this might be viewed as a self-interested viewpoint, the contrast in the attitudes and fates of the young and old had been one of the mainstays of the literature of the Great War, perhaps best summed up in Siegfried Sassoon's couplet:

> And when the war is done and youth stone dead,
> I'd toddle safely home and die - in bed.

The attitude survived amongst some ex-servicemen, as Labour Councillor Darrell H. Foxon, who had served in France in 1916, indicated: "An international agreement ought to be reached whereby, on the declaration of war, all men over 60 years of age, including members of the respective Governments and oppositions, should be the first to be called up and told to fight it out amongst themselves".[72]

Unlike their adult counterparts, youthful opponents of conscription continued the earlier tradition of consensual opposition. Although the Sheffield Secretary of the YMCA had already written to the press expressing a Christian pacifist objection to conscription,[73] the first meeting of protest which was held on his premises was Leftist in tone with a *pacificist* resolution calling for: "...a Peace Bloc based on full cooperation

---

[69] "Advisory Bureaux", Peace News, No 158, 30.6.39., p13
[70] Brightside and Burngreave Labour party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Books, 22.3.39., Brightside Divisional Labour party Minute Books, 22.3.39.
[71] STLC Minute Books, 4.7.39.
[72] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 13.7.39., p7
[73] *Ibid*, 29.3.39., p8

with the Soviet Union".[74] A fortnight later the British Youth Peace Assembly, meeting on the same premises, heard 25 speeches in opposition to conscription.[75] A protest demonstration in Endcliffe Park added the AEU Apprentices' Fellowship Committee and the Young Liberals to the list of those supporting the campaign. Hill, the principal speaker, used the same libertarian arguments as adult opponents couched in a Popular Front language of patriotism which indicated how far from a blanket anti-militarism the *pacificist* Left had moved: "The British Army was regarded as the best in the world because it was a free army. One British Tommy was worth two soldiers of any other country because they had joined because they wanted to, not because they had to".[76] Asked about the General Strike which had been the Left's preferred anti-war method, Hill replied: "I am prepared to go to any measure to avoid conscription but I do not think a strike would be very good for our defence". The University Socialist Society attempted to avoid some of the inner contradictions of *pacificist* opposition to conscription by disavowing libertarian arguments: "To us the question is not the justice or injustice of conscription as an abstract idea, but the role it plays in relation to the present internal situation and the foreign policy of the National government". They argued that Chamberlain had not in fact changed policies and cited the fall of Memel and Albania, German interference in the Rumanian economy, the Federation of British Industries "pact with Nazi industry", the return of the British Ambassador to Berlin, "the hints of a new 'Munich' over Danzig", and the failure to conclude a pact with the USSR, as evidence.[77] The Youth Campaign's protests continued for about a month although they appeared to be losing support by the end of May.[78]

In the same month the Conservative candidate won the Hallam by-election with a majority of 6 094, revealing a drop of 5 265 votes on the nearly eleven thousand majority achieved at the 1935 election. This was proportionally five times more votes than were lost by Darvill who slipped by only 407 votes from the result achieved by Grace Coleman at the same date. As Darvill himself pointed out, the majority was actually lower than

---

[74] "They Don't Want Conscription", *ibid*, 28.4.39., p10
[75] "Pacifists Forecast Victory", *op cit*
[76] "Conscription Blow to Democracy", *ibid*, 1.5.39., p7
[77] Letter from the Committee of the Socialist Society dated 22.5.39., The Arrows, No32 Summer Term 1939, p35
[78] "10 Year-Old Boy Heckler", The Telegraph, 22.5.39., p4

that at the 1929 General election which had produced a minority Labour Government.[79] Nevertheless, given the disruption that conscription was introducing into family life (even amongst Conservative Women there was sufficient discussion to allow for a debate on its introduction[80]) and the abject failure of the Government's foreign policy, the result was nothing like the rout that The Telegraph's exhortations to voters had suggested was expected. Gallup polls reveal that opposition to conscription was not as widespread as Darvill believed it to be. In April a poll showed 48% in favour of conscription and a month later, after its introduction, the measure was attracting 58% approval.[81]

Opposition among the young appears to have been lower than among the population as a whole. From Sheffield University "A Fresher" wrote in the spring of 1939: "The apathy of the present day student is particularly apparent in politics".[82] An article in the summer edition of The Arrows described the Student Union as "nauseated by the word politics" and revealed that, despite the apparent strength of the Youth Campaign's response to conscription, the meeting organised by the University Socialist Club and the Peace Pledge Union had attracted less than twenty people.[83] The figures for the first registration of 20 year-olds which appeared in June confirmed that those directly affected by conscription were not strongly opposed to it. Some 218 000 young men had registered of whom only 3 893 had declared a conscientious objection. This was not particularly damaging to the *pacificist* Left and Centre of the Peace Movement which had not encouraged personal refusal and which had, alongside their opposition to conscription, campaigned for an adequate defence. For the pacifists, on the other hand, it was a devastating revelation of the level of support that the campaign for the individual renunciation of war had amongst those who were going to be called upon to fight. While

---

[79] "Hallam is Held for Government", *ibid*, 11.5.39., p9. It was indeed, suggest a number of commentators, the variableness of government support in by-elections following Munich, even before the Fall of Prague, which had prevented Conservative managers from ordering a snap-election. e.g. Middlemas, *op cit*, p417 & Shepherd R., *op cit*, pp251 - 271. Public opinion polls in February and December 1939 and February 1940 all showed the government achieving the just over 50% support in an election which they had enjoyed in 1935, while Labour support fluctuated wildly. Gallup, George H. (ed), The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain 1937 - 1975, Vol: One 1937 - 1964, New York, 1976, p14, 26 & 30

[80] Conservative Women's Association Central Division Minute Book, 22.5.39.

[81] Gallup, *op cit*, pp17 - 18

[82] "The Apathy of the Modern Student", The Arrows, No 31 Lent Term 1939, p48

[83] "Editorial", *ibid*, No 32 Summer Term 1939, pp8 - 9

Peace News might continue to urge that: "...pacifist opposition to the act is not confined to those who registered as conscientious objectors",[84] and cite the estimated 30 000 thought not to have registered, the hopes of those who had seen the pledge as a credible obstacle to war were dead.

The Roles of the Two Peace Unions:

During the last days of peace while the public face of pacifism in Sheffield continued to be the well-publicised views of individual Methodist and Nonconformist ministers who represented a quietist tendency,[85] there were some PPU members who looked to spreading the pacifist message in a more directly political way. There was a Sheffield PPU bulletin The Pacifist[86] and the main address at a Summer School in June was entitled "Spreading the Pacifist Message" . The speaker, John Barclay, was part of a national group which toured Sheffield for three days in a loudspeaker van before moving on to the mining villages around Rotherham, Doncaster and Worksop.[87] No "large crowds" were reported.

The PPU had a major problem of presentation since to continue to argue the case for appeasement it was necessary to excuse the behaviour of the Nazi Party. While calls for the revision of Versailles continued to an extent to serve as far as German foreign policy was concerned, the Nazi regime's Jewish persecution presented a greater difficulty. Richard B. Gregg's The Power of Non-Violence, which had popularised Gandhi's ideas in the West, had used Jewish History as a historical exemplar of the success of non-violence. By January 1939 this appeared as a gigantic mistake and Peace News used an article from Gandhi's own publication Harijan to justify continuing support for a non-violent philosophy in the face of the stark events of *Kristallnacht*:

> ...if the Jews summon to their aid the soul power that comes from non-violence, Herr Hitler will bow before the courage which he has never yet experienced in any large measure in his dealings with men, and which,

---

[84] "Conscription in a Nutshell: Turning Men into Robots", Peace News, 9.6.39., p1

[85] cf: "Letters to the Editor", Peace News, 21.4.39., p4 & 16.6.39., p9 and "Youth Throws up Job for Pacifist Faith", *ibid*, 26.5.39., p7. Edward Fisher confirmed in his interview that he regarded the Sheffield PPU as more interested in individual opinion than in group action.

[86] "What the Groups are Doing", *ibid*, 28.7.39., p10

[87] Leonard I. Sidwell, "On Tour with the Publicity Van", *ibid*, 21.7.39., p10

> when it is exhibited, he will own is infinitely superior to that shown by his best storm troops.[88]

The case against Gandhi's argument was succinctly put in a following correspondence:

> Non-violent resistance can only be effective in resisting people who are capable of being moved by moral and humanitarian considerations. Fascism not only is not moved by such considerations, but openly scoffs at them as signs of weakness. It has no scruple in wiping out all resistance, and in employing any degree of brutality in order to do so. Non-violent resistance therefore stands no chance whatever against Fascism.[89]

Gandhi replied that since members of the Nazi Party showed "...in their family circles the same tenderness, affection, consideration and generosity as other humans", the question was only one of degree and pacifists needed to discover "...the exact amount of non-violence required to melt the harder hearts of the Nazis..." Gregg followed Gandhi's line in stating that the Nazi Party was the product of the Allied "bullying" of Germany after the war: "If this be true ['that we would be wiser to remember who created that abnormal and sadistic state in the German mind'] the long run problem becomes not so much how to stop the Nazis as to how to change ourselves and how to prove to Nazis that the change is sincere and lasting".[90]

There were well-known figures within the British movement enunciating similar views. Vera Brittain, for example, wrote: "The present aggressions of Germany, while they cannot be excused, should be judged in the light of history as a whole".[91] There were those in the pacifist camp unwilling to simplify the moral complexities of their dilemma in this way. Rose Macaulay wrote:

> Faced on one side with a regime more brutal than any we have had in Europe since Alva and his Spanish torturers held the Netherlands down, on the other with a horrible and inhuman war (which our Government would not wage to save the Czechs, but would to save our own empire) what is the pacifist to feel or do? What attitude is possible that shall be neither callous, bellicose nor silly? Or rather that shall be as little of all three as is humanly possible in a callous, bellicose and silly world?
> It is, no doubt, because I am not a good pacifist that I cannot answer my

---

[88] "The Jews Have never Practised Non-Violence". Peace News, 13.1.39., p9
[89] "Mr Gandhi's Support for the Peace Pledge", *ibid*, 12.5.39., p3
[90] "Pacifism and the Pogroms", *ibid*, 3.3.39., p6
[91] Vera Brittain, "Are We Fascists?", *ibid*, 2.6.39., p6

own question.[92]

Macaulay expressed herself "disappointed" in Brittain's article and asked: "Is (for example) membership of the Nazi society the Link compatible with real thought-out pacifism?"[93] Nationally the PPU was compromised and discredited in the last days before the war by its connections with this Anglo-German association.[94] In the confused and rapidly deteriorating situation of the later thirties, underestimation of the determined malevolence of Hitler's regime was a common element. What has continued to discredit the pacifist movement was that in its efforts to justify the German viewpoint it provided a medium for the anti-Semitism which resulted in wartime genocide. Ethel Mannin, for instance, in a couple of articles in Peace News was permitted to express the quasi-Nazi view that: "The intensity of Jewish racial feeling in partnership with Jewish financial interests makes a formidable alliance; either alone is dangerous enough".[95] Mark Gilbert has pointed out that it was, paradoxically, only as the public perception of the morally indefensible nature of the Nazi regime grew that Peace News "felt compelled to add lustre to Germany's name". He dates this from the repression in Austria following the *Anschluss* and suggests that it was the need for pacifists to demonstrate that "...the differences between capitalism and fascism were too slight to justify war" that led Peace News to act as an apologist for Nazism.[96] As late as August 1939 prominent PPU personnel like Canon Stuart Morris, a frequent speaker in Sheffield, still held membership of the Link.[97]

No records suggest that the sinister Nazi fellow-travelling of those like Mannin was a current in the Sheffield peace movement but at the beginning of August long-time germanophile, C.H. Wilson MP, was involved in a controversy over a memorandum he

---

[92] Rose Macaulay, "The Pacifist Dilemma", *ibid*, 19.5.39., p4
[93] *Ibid*, 9.6.39., p9
[94] Watkins, *op cit*, p89n
[95] Ethel Mannin, "This Atrocity Business", Peace News, 11.8.39., p5
[96] Gilbert, M., "Pacifist Attitudes to Nazi Germany, 1936 - 1945", Journal of Contemporary History, 26 (1991), p508
[97] Andrew Stewart, "Stuart Morris, the Link and the PPU", Peace News, 18.8.39., p7. Griffiths argues that this was not the product of naivety but that pacifists like Morris "...continued to work for Anglo-German Rapprochement, not in blindness as to the nature of Germany's internal regime, but because they thought that the cause of peace overrode all other considerations". Griffiths, R., Fellow Travellers of the Right, British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933 -1939, London, 1980, p149

had circulated to Labour MPs suggesting that Germany did not want war and would respond to peace gestures.[98] Wilson's views, which it was claimed had angered the Labour Party Executive,[99] were part of a pacifist campaign begun by Peace News. The paper had urged its readers to visit and write to Germany during the holiday season believing that: "...at the bottom a great part of the present tension is due more to lack of real understanding on both sides than to evil intent".[100] Tyler Lane visited Germany in July and held an Anglo-German service of reconciliation when he returned.[101] Both the sending by a Sheffield reader of the Peace Service Handbook (in whose apparent endorsement of the Link originated some of the PPU's difficulties) to a correspondent in Germany[102] and the contents of a letter which Helen Wilson had received from an German friend[103] were also reported. Angela Schwarz believes that far from lessening tensions these contacts contributed to the "dangerous underrating of the Third Reich" as British visitors failed to perceive the extent to which internalised repression and the symbolic trappings of Nazism had influence on the German public's psyche.[104]

Some *pacificists* shared in the hope of these illusory schemes. George Lathan, writing of a National Council of Labour message "Let There Be Peace" that was being distributed in Germany, said:

> The war clouds still hang threateningly over Europe, but there is hope that by this message of goodwill, of determination to resist aggression, and also of desire "to live together in peace and friendship", it may be possible substantially to contribute to the efforts which are being made to prevent the crowning calamity of war.[105]

However, although P.S. Gupta has written that until the invasion of Czechoslovakia some of the Labour leadership were willing to continue appeasement by the transfer of colonial territory to Germany,[106] in Sheffield there was a firm

---

[98] "Executive Angry with Labour MP", The Telegraph, 3.8.39., p7
[99] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 5.8.39., p10
[100] "How Germans Greet Tourists", *ibid*, 1.8.39., p5
[101] "Peace Service at City Church", *ibid*, 19.6.39., p4
[102] "'Peace Service Handbook' Welcomed", Peace News, no164 4.8.39., p3
[103] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 13.7.39., p7
[104] Schwarz, A., "British Visitors to National Socialist Germany: in a Familiar Country?", Journal of Contemporary History, 28 (1993)
[105] "From a Parliamentary Diary", Park and Heeley Gazette, no 48 July 1939, p1
[106] "In the minds of some of the top leaders of the Party the economic appeasement of the

differentiation between *pacificist* and pacifist views:

> The colonial question must not be solved by redistributing territories among competing powers, but by applying the principle of international trusteeship. The question of access to raw materials can be settled by a readiness to allow all nations which are willing to renounce aggression to share the world's abundance.[107]

Colonialism was a rare discussion topic in the Labour Party[108] but for the LNU, focussed on foreign policy, it was one of the key issues by which opposition to appeasement was stated even before the fall of Prague. Sir John Harris speaking in January believed that Hitler was likely to demand the return of German colonies. He suggested four main points which any talks should strive to achieve:

> No colonial settlement that was not part of a general settlement; no transfer of colonial territory without the full acquiescence of the people of the territory; no exploitation of colonial peoples and no transfer of territory to any country which desired to make racial disqualification.[109]

Sir Norman Angell went further in asserting that the colonies would indeed be given away but to those "...to whom they ought to be given - that is, to the people who live there".[110] Angell was prepared to envisage a world in which Germany, Italy and Japan shared with Britain both rights to and responsibilities for raw materials, trade and economic development. He argued, however, that rather than this being a price paid to these states for peace, resistance to Germany's overweening demands was part and parcel of the creation of a fairer world order. He stated his belief too, that the demand for access to raw materials was not, as those who supported appeasement were inclined

---

Axis powers was more important than the safeguards for natives". Gupta, P.S., Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914 - 1964, London, 1975, pp238 - 240

[107] "A Supreme National Effort for Peace", Sheffield Forward, Vol 1 No7, November 1938, p1

[108] There was a meeting addressed by George Padmore, a black West African on "British Imperialism" in February 1939 (Handbill in records of the Sheffield and Eccleshall Section of the Cooperative Party, ref: CPR 21) and a Left Book Club meeting on "Colonial Questions" in the following month ("Current Topics", The Telegraph, 29.3.39., p6) but these were rare occurrences. Gupta reports that there were no resolutions on colonial matters, outside of India and Palestine, at Labour Party Conferences in the thirties until May 1939. Gupta, *op cit*, p227

[109] "Colonies Return No Solution Of Germany's Needs", The Telegraph, 27.1.39., p8

[110] "Empire Is Being Given Away", *ibid*, 15.3.39., p7

to argue, an economic grievance but rather the pursuit of autarky. By January 1939 the LNU, through its national speakers, had recovered the ability to define the breadth of the *pacificist* consensus in Sheffield. On the issue of colonies, for instance, Angell addressed the liberal and Left wing while Miss K. M. Courtenay offered a more Churchillian perspective.[111] As the invasion of Czechoslovakia vindicated its pre-Munich position the local LNU began to reactivate itself. It might have been expected that the very breadth of the pre-existing consensus would have allowed, in the new circumstances, for an accommodation with Conservatives in the city. This however did not materialise and in the last months of peace Sheffield LNU was identified as an oppositional force continuing a war of words with the unreconstructed Chamberlainites in the editorial office at The Telegraph.

E.G.G. Lyon's first letter to The Telegraph, was prompted by an over-optimistic remark by the paper's London correspondent: "...the 'Axis' is now on the defensive, and... Britain is gradually taking control of the situation". Lyon argued that what Britain needed to do was not to maintain its own interests in a bilateral power struggle with Germany, but to seek to establish the rule of law between nations through a revitalised League.[112] Just a week after the destruction of Czechoslovakia, Revd George Needham, Chairman of the Sheffield Branch and Lyon wrote again reminding readers that the policy of Collective Security in which the National Government's supporters were taking refuge: "...has been consistently advocated by the League of Nations Union since its inception".[113] In the face of defensive rejoinders from the ex-supporters of appeasement about the League's earlier failures, they urged that Britain revert to the principles of the Covenant and the League as the basis for its defensive pacts.

In May Needham and Lyon wrote again expressing their disappointment "...at the dilatory proceedings and the failure of the Government to build an impressive peace front".[114] Picking up the argument deployed by those who opposed the Chamberlain Government's war preparations in other fields, they wrote: "It [a foreign policy based on the League of Nations] would do much to promote national unity which will never be fully achieved in this country till the people are convinced that our foreign policy is based

---

[111] "Disastrous If Empire Broke Up", *ibid*, 28.3.39., p8
[112] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 11.3.39., p7
[113] *Ibid*, 23.3.39., p6
[114] *Ibid*, 13.5.39., p8

upon moral principle and the vacillating hand to mouth diplomacy finally abandoned". This put the Sheffield LNU, almost for the first time in the period, exactly in line with its national parent organisation which by this date, Birn writes, was pursuing: "...a twofold policy which stressed the immediate need for cooperation with France and the Soviet Union to stop aggression and the long range need for creative planning in a league framework".[115] Like their Left-wing *pacificist* allies, Needham and Lyon identified the delay in coming to an agreement with Russia as the most disturbing failure of the National Government. The distance that still lay between the *pacificist* coalition and Chamberlain's most loyal followers was revealed as "Current Topics" fulminated:

> We need not waste much space over the political one-sidedness of the letter from the Sheffield Branch of the LNU which appeared on Saturday. In the eyes of that organisation the National Government can do nothing right, and we have come to take its denunciations for granted. Its political obsessions and general unfairness have weakened the faith of many of us in the League of Nations.[116]

Needham and Lyon replied restating the LNU's credentials for impartiality by reminding readers that the union had refused to express an opinion on the conscription debate. They reiterated their opposition to the creation of a parallel system of defensive pacts outside of the League of Nations stressing again the central importance of the inclusion of Russia.[117] "Current Topics" replied: "What we seek now is a league of those nations that are prepared to undertake the full responsibility of opposing aggression, even if that means war, instead of a League some members of which would be only half-hearted about it, while some would be directly hostile". Although various rationales have been produced to explain the Government's failure to conclude a pact of mutual assistance with the Russians,[118] most historians are agreed that the underlying cause was

---

[115] Birn, Donald S., The League of Nations Union, 1918 - 1945, Oxford, 1981, p198
[116] "Current Topics", The Telegraph, 18.5.39., p8
[117] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 18.5.39., p7
[118] F.S. Northedge and Audrey Wells have suggested three objections to collaboration with the Russians in the British government's mind: "that Russia was a military nonentity; that its political regime was insufferable and unreliable; and that any suggestion of collaboration with Moscow would put an end to all the hopes that Chamberlain and his colleagues entertained that, one day, once Germany's grievances had been attended to, Hitler would settle down and become a respectable member of the international community". Northedge, F.S., & Wells, A., Britain and Soviet Communism - The Impact of a Revolution, London, 1982, p65

the British Cabinet's unwillingness to countenance an accommodation with Communism.[119] The anti-communism of Sheffield's press has been observed throughout the later thirties. In January 1939 "Current Topics" wrote: "Stalin, it seems to us, is more ruthless than Hitler, and very much more so than Mussolini".[120] Opposition to a pact with the Soviet Union depended on the prioritisation of this ideological factor over the perceived danger from Germany. Like the PPU, the Conservative Party was to an extent discredited by the number of its MPs and peers who, as late as July 1939, were associated with the pro-Nazi Link organisation.[121]

Reviewing Russia's attitudes since it joined the League in 1935, Lyon concluded that: "Whatever views one may entertain about Soviet policy as far as internal affairs are concerned, it has to be recognised that Russia has pursued a foreign policy of non-aggression..."[122] In direct response to "Current Topics", Needham and Lyon posed two largely rhetorical questions: Which states had failed to resist aggression and could Britain offer practical assistance to states in eastern Europe without Russian help?[123] The LNU's emphasis on the importance of Russia restated the continuing distance between the views of those whose primary loyalty was to Chamberlain and those with a *pacificist* vision of Collective Security. The gap between the two sides remained unbridgeable with the Chamberlainites failing to display "any undue fervour for the principles of the Covenant" and those on the Left of the *pacificist* consensus refusing to believe that the animus of Chamberlain's policies had changed. Darvill wrote:

> How can we believe that a man who has revealed himself as a pro-Fascist, who has cold-shouldered the Soviet Union, who has betrayed Czecho-Slovakia, who has stabbed the Spanish Republic in the back and who has already tried to muzzle our press - how can we believe that this man can be trusted to apply the principles of Collective Security in the interests of peace and justice.[124]

---

[119] This was one of the defining differences between Churchill and other Conservatives: "For the rest of the decade [after 1934] as each German crisis arose, Churchill continued to point to the USSR as a valuable counterweight to Germany". Thompson, N., The Anti-Appeasers, Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s, London, 1971, p62

[120] "Current Topics", The Telegraph, 23.1.39., p6

[121] Simon Haxey, Tory MP, London, 1939, p203

[122] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 10.6.39., p9

[123] *Ibid*, 23.5.39., p7

[124] "President's Forward", Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Annual Report, 1938,

What is noteworthy about the position adopted by the Sheffield Branch of the LNU in the last days before the war was that it suggested an objectivity of judgement notably lacking on both Right and Left and, despite the LNU's strong church links, free from the religiosity which had reduced Christian pacifism to a state of moral catatonia. After the earlier quasi-pacifism of its leadership, the divisions over Churchill's speech and the paralysis experienced during and after Munich, the Branch ended the interwar years in a viewpoint which closely reflected that of its national leadership. The Branch's call for Britain to follow the United States in giving notice of the abrogation of its commercial treaty with Japan in response to further Japanese depredations in China during the last month of peace[125] suggested a new unity of purpose based on a distinctly *pacificist* vision.

The Defeat of Republican Spain and the Effect of the Refugee Question:

The importance of the Spanish War to the peace movement had lain in the changes of attitude that it had engendered. For the Left as a demonstration of the conditions of a necessary war and for the Right in gaining acceptance of the view that solidarity against aggression must cross ideological frontiers.[126] It was the Spanish War which ensured that the explanation sometimes forwarded by historians for the tardiness of the British Government's realisation of Hitler's ambitions, that the Czechoslovakian invasion was the first time during the Nazi period that Germany had conquered non-German speaking territory, was not an argument much voiced in Sheffield at the time.[127]

While the Left's identification of the German, Italian and Japanese regimes under

---

Sheffield 1939, p7

[125] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 9.8.39., p8

[126] William McElwee suggests that the Spanish War "...brought into a single alignment with all the leftist elements among the politically minded a great mass of non-political opinion. More than any other single issue, the Spanish War forced on the British people the knowledge that there were things happening in Europe which even a selfish and isolationist opinion could not safely ignore". McElwee, W., Britain's Locust Years 1918 - 1940, London, 1962, p254

[127] This is not to disagree with Foster's view that: "The great mass of public opinion had been profoundly shocked" by the invasion of Czechoslovakia but to suggest that among the *pacificist* peace movement the shock was not as a result of the discovery of Hitler's lack of respect for "ethnographical principles" and the principle of national self-determination. Foster, A.J., "An Unequivocal Guarantee? Fleet Street and the British Guarantee to Poland, 31 March 1939", Journal of Contemporary History, 26 (1991)

a blanket label of Fascism was an oversimplification, the merging of the Berlin-Rome Axis with the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1937 validated the linkage and highlighted the three countries' expansionist foreign policies. The war in Spain had increasingly come to be seen not as a civil conflict but as one theatre of fascist expansion in which the role of Italy and Germany typified a wider generic characteristic. From this perspective, the invasion of Czechoslovakia followed a pattern already predicted by events in Manchuria, Abyssinia and Spain and could not be viewed as a new departure. While the Chamberlainite Right disagreed with the analysis and continued to portray *pacificist* sanctions against an aggressor as "warmongering",[128] to express too great a surprise at Hitler's action in the face of this widely expressed *pacificist* critique would have suggested gullibility.

The strong emotional affinity for the Spanish Republic remained the preserve of the Left who viewed non-intervention as part of a wider scheme to "undermine the progress of the Working Class, and to shackle its members for generations to come"[129] but by 1939 the Republic enjoyed widespread *pacificist* support. A protest against the granting of belligerent rights to Franco attracted the support of representatives of 100 Sheffield organisations and "religious bodies".[130] British Institute of Public Opinion survey results published in Cavalcade fortnightly after October 1937 suggest that during its last winter a large part of the previously uncommitted began to support the Republic.

The last great public expression of support in Sheffield for the beleaguered people of the dying Republic came in the Yorkshire Foodship Campaign of February 1939 which had the patronage of both the Bishop of Sheffield and the Lord Mayor. Spearheaded by the returned men and women of the International Brigade including local man, Alf Sterling, a released prisoner of war,[131] the appeal collected almost £1 000 and four lorry loads of food and clothing.[132] The generosity of the response amazed even

---

[128] As late as 11th April 1939 the editorial team at The Telegraph were writing: "We have opposed the principle laid down by some of the Labour Party that it is our duty to intervene in every international dispute regardless of our preparations for war and of the consequences to our own people". ("Letters to the Editor", p6)
[129] STLC Minute Books, 28.2.39.
[130] "Deputation to Prime Minister", The Telegraph, 6.1.39., p3
[131] Circular dated 30.1.39. from Southey, Norwood and Shirecliffe Section from Cooperative Party records, CPR 16
[132] "Fourth Lorry Load of Food", The Telegraph, 22.2.39., p7

those like Freda Tustin who had been collecting for Spain for two years.[133] From outside of the Labour Movement respondents included the Sheffield and District Ramblers' Federation,[134] the local National Union of Teachers,[135] Peter Freeman and C.W. Carpenter[136] representing diverse elements of the wider peace movement, and a number of Churches, most prominently the Methodist Church.[137] The ship M.V. *Stangate* sailed from the Humber and successfully ran Franco's blockade and discharged its cargo[138] before being seized by the Falangists.[139] On the 29th March it was being reported that Madrid had fallen, and by the end of the month Republican resistance had disintegrated in a manner startlingly at odds with the heroic language of their supporters in Britain.[140] The role call of those involved in Sheffield's efforts to alleviate the desperate plight of the defeated Republicans indicates a continuation of the alliance between the Left and those motivated by humanitarian compassion. Money continued to be raised by the Left for dependants of dead and wounded International Brigaders[141] and by the wider coalition with the aim of sending refugees from the camps of Southern France to Mexico.[142] The first ship sailed in May.[143] Three Spanish refugees were brought to Sheffield in transit for Mexico to be fed and housed at the fundraisers' expense.[144]

It might be thought that the disappearance of the Republic, and with it the controversy over Non-Intervention, would have removed an obstacle to the possibility of an accommodation between *pacificists* within the peace movement and the National Government. If anything, however, the Republican defeat increased the bitterness of the

---

[133] "City's Response to Foodship Appeal", *ibid*, 10.2.39., p6
[134] Sheffield and District Ramblers' Federation Minute Book, 21.1.39. & 20.2.39.
[135] "Food Appeal for Spain", The Telegraph, 1.2.39., p7
[136] Carpenter was signatory of the letter calling the conference at which Eleanor Rathbone spoke, Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 16.1.39.
[137] The Revd Benson Perkins was a signatory of the appeal letter which started the campaign. "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 31.1.39., p5 St Mark's Methodist Church, Malin Bridge, Leader's Meeting Minute Book, 12.1.39., Petre Street Methodist Church Minute Book, 17.1.39., and Darnall Congregational Church Minute Book, 23.1.39. all refer to collections taken for Spanish Relief.
[138] "Foodship Ignored Warning", The Telegraph, 10.3.39., p1
[139] "*Stangate* Seized by Franco", *ibid*, 18.3.39., p10
[140] Thomas, Hugh, The Spanish Civil War, London, 1961, pp883 - 915
[141] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 10.7.39., "Sheffield Help for Spain War Victims", The Telegraph, 17.7.39., p4 & "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 18.7.39., p8
[142] "Spanish Fiesta in Sheffield", *ibid*, 28.8.39., p4
[143] "Appeal for £1000 from Sheffield", *ibid*, 9.5.39., p7
[144] "Spaniards Seek Refuge in City", *ibid*, 19.6.39., p5

Left of the *pacificist* consensus towards Chamberlain. Thomas, not noted for his Left-wing sympathies, writes that the British Government, begged to provide shipping to evacuate several thousand republicans trapped in Valencia in front of the vengeful Nationalist Army: "...had neither the desire nor the means to help on so large a scale".[145] This criticism was certainly heard at the time. The Sheffield Foodship Committee were publicly critical of the size of grants to organisations feeding the near-starving residents of Madrid in the last days of the conflict[146] and in its aftermath the STLC passed a resolution protesting at: "...the failure of the Government to take any adequate measures for dealing with the refugee problem". It concluded: "We consider the National Government responsible for much suffering, persecution and death, which could have been prevented by the taking of adequate measures to solve the refugee problem..."[147]

To an extent the work of the wider peace movement with refugee groups[148] also promoted alienation from Government policy. This was despite the setting up of Lord Baldwin's Fund for Refugees, under the local secretaryship of Arnold Freeman,[149] which demonstrated the establishment's new concerns both with the plight of refugees generally and, following *Kristallnacht*, with direct efforts to remove German Jews from persecution.[150] There were a number of other funds in Sheffield concerned with German refugees including the specifically Jewish organisation that by May was said to have helped 80 refugees.[151] The committee organised to protest against *Kristallnacht*[152] was also bringing child refugees into Sheffield. It announced ambitious plans in March to

---

[145] Thomas, *op cit*, p915

[146] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 24.3.39., p3

[147] STLC Minute Books, 27.6.39.

[148] The Sheffield Coordinating Committee for Refugees included representatives of the Anglicans, the Free Churches, the Unitarians, the local synagogue, local industry, the Educational Settlement, the LNU, and the PPU. "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 18.4.39., p6. Birn records that the National LNU's Refugee Committee was critical of government policy on the admission of German Jewish emigrants to Britain and Palestine. Birn, *op cit*, pp197 - 198

[149] There appears to have been a mixed response to this in Sheffield with good results where collectors came forward but also a lack of enthusiastic fundraisers. "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 26.5.39., p7

[150] *Ibid*, 11.5.39., p10

[151] "Refugees", The Sheffield Mission Methodist Messenger, No 527 May 1939, p11

[152] The way in which indignation at *Kristallnacht* became transmogrified into practical aid can be seen in the minutes of Brightside DLP who "...concluded that we should support any efforts in this regard". Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 18.1.39.

welcome between 200 and 300 children.[153] The extensive involvement of the peace movement's personnel is demonstrated not only by the retention of Dr Maude Royden as speaker at the public meeting but also by the fact that Tyler Lane's Carver Street Methodist Chapel[154] arranged for the evacuation of the half-Jewish Werner Storm and cared for him well into the war.[155]

Surprisingly, perhaps, the largest single group of refugees in Sheffield and district immediately before the war came from Czechoslovakia. Arnold Freeman, his wife, and son Peter, already well known for his work with Spanish refugees, with the help of the local Youth Hostels Association were instrumental in settling Czech refugees at Castleton, Ilam, Ravenstor, Millers Dale and Derwent. All of these refugees were males between the ages of 25 and 58 *en route*, eventually, to British Dominions.[156] Further links with the peace movement were reflected by the support of C.W. Carpenter, an Archdeacon from the Cathedral,[157] and the Woodcraft Folk.[158] Generalised goodwill in the wider community was represented by press interest in the "attractive brunette" former ballet dancer who was acting as house matron and mentor to the Czechs at Rustlings Road.[159] By June there were at least 44 Czech refugees in Sheffield and Castleton.[160]

Although the rescue of individuals from persecution offered the likelihood of greater personal satisfaction than was to be obtained from campaigns on the intractable problems of international relations, the peace movement's concentration on humanitarian aid represented a diminution of ambition. The new focus did not, however, preclude comment. Many critics viewed the entire refugee crisis as the fault of the National Government. "Popular Front" wrote in July: "Every Jewish or German refugee, every Spanish family, every Czechoslovakian family who have lost relatives, homes, and all

---

[153] "Child Refugees in Sheffield", The Telegraph, 15.3.39., p8

[154] In Werner's case, like other adolescent refugees, the relationship with his well-intentioned hosts, was not always good. Boy Refugee Account Book and Cash Book, Carver Street Methodist Chapel. Marion Berghahn confirms that this was not unusual. Berghahn, M., Continental Britons: German Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany, Oxford 1988, pp114 - 115

[155] "Sheffield Helps Czech Refugees", The Telegraph, 2.3.39., p3

[156] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 24.4.39., p8

[157] "Czech Guests at Woodcraft Camp", *ibid*, 29.5.39., p2

[158] "First Refugee Baby in City", *ibid*, 26.5.39., p5

[159] "The Busy Refugees Are Grateful to Sheffield", *ibid*, 17.5.39., p4

[160] "Refugees Hope to Go to Dominions", *ibid*, 21.6.39., p4

worldly goods can, to my mind, blame the British National Government".[161] There was the criticism too that the British Government had not accepted its proper share of Europe's dispossessed. Harry Bramwell wrote in The Sheffield Transportman: "The case of the refugees is an outstanding case of moral, economic and political short-sightedness. With our vast Empire and wealth we could comfortably absorb the whole of these persecuted humans..."[162]

There was a concern, voiced particularly by Benson Perkins, that "...apart from the Jews in England, the population has not done anything like its full quota in this work..."[163] A less than enthusiastic response to the refugees amongst the wider population was certainly suggested by the Bishop's disappointment that by June less that half of a £1 000 pound fund had been collected.[164] There was continuing evidence of the persecution of Jews. In February Sheffield Forward had reported of Germany: "...the concentration camps were full of Jews, and murder and brutality was rife".[165] As in other spheres during the last months of peace, the unbearableness of reality may have prompted a psychological turning away. Certainly, this unfortunate conjunction of sentiments, recollected wistfully in the midst of war from the Labour Women's Advisory Council Annual Garden Party, suggested it: "Miss Kathline Smith, a German refugee, told us of life and conditions in Germany under the Nazi Regime. It was a lovely day and we all had a very enjoyable time".[166]

There were concerns that the indifference of some members of the public had turned to active hostility[167] towards the 203 refugees remaining in the Sheffield area by April 1940.[168] Those members of the peace movement involved in the care of refugees tended, however, to view the indifference and sometimes hostility of officialdom as characterising the underlying attitudes of the National Government. Events such as the

---

[161] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 3.7.39., p7
[162] "Refuge!!!", The Sheffield Transportman, May 1939, p15
[163] "Refugees", The Sheffield Methodist Mission Messenger, No 527 May 1939, p11
[164] "The Bishop's Presidential Address", Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, Vol XXV No4, April 1939, p7. The amount collected was given in June as £456 6s 8d, *ibid*, No 6, p9
[165] "The Persecution of the Jews", Sheffield Forward, February 1939, p6
[166] Sheffield Trades and Labour Council - Annual Report 1939 -1940, p17
[167] The Mayor and Bishop to wrote to the press seeking to protect refugees from "calumny". "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 27.4.40., p4
[168] "Many Refugees Now Working in Sheffield", *ibid*, 15.4.40., p3

prosecution of the Cooperative Wholesale Society for employing a Czech,[169] and the recommendation that Peter Freeman as a conscientious objector should be redeployed from his refugee work onto forestry[170] continued to push the peace movement into an oppositional stance.

Attitudes to Air Raid Precautions in the Last Months of Peace:

ARP was the issue upon which the "growth of realism" in the peace movement had been most evident and the one subject upon which by March 1939 there might be said to be almost a national consensus. January witnessed the last effort by Sheffield's Progressives to attack the "seriousness" with which the City Council were treating ARP[171] and February saw the last assault by Freeborough from the opposite perspective.[172] After the Czechoslovakian invasion had brought the possibility of air raids on Britain closer, it became difficult for any group to act in a way which undermined the preparations. When the City's Chief Warden, Captain Neville Harland, resigned at the end of May, complaining of the Council's lack of interest in wardens' welfare and the slow process of decision making, the Progressives kept their own counsel.[173]

The right of Sheffield's Labour Party had always taken a pragmatic view of cooperation on precautions but in the party as a whole disquiet lingered alongside a recognition of the necessity for involvement in ARP planning.[174] The Shiregreen Women's Section noted that an address on ARP "caused some discussion" but also included "good advice concerning safety measures if war came".[175] The leadership of the Party in Sheffield, and particularly Asbury, were closely identified with ARP and opposition on the Left continued the internal feuding in the party. The mutual antagonism is palpable in a rather sniffy letter from Asbury asking the STLC for the

---

[169] "Czech Had No Permit to Work", *ibid*, 12.7.40., p7
[170] "Student's 'Distorted Ideas'", *ibid*, 4.5.40., p5
[171] "Councillor Attacks ARP Colleagues", *ibid*, 5.1.39., p10
[172] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 2.2.39., p5
[173] "City's Chief Warden Resigns", *ibid*, 27.5.39., p12
[174] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 13.7.39. Shiregreen wrote to ask Asbury if they might participate in ARP training not provided by Labour affiliates. Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section, 28.6.39.
[175] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section, 14.6.39.

return of a rejected article on ARP submitted for publication in Sheffield Forward.[176] After the introduction of National Service the Left's opposition to ARP was expressed not in principle but through the medium of conscription. While Darvill pledged himself during the by-election to "support every effort to make the country as far as possible safe from air attack",[177] the STLC continued to stay aloof from implementation and as late as June agreed that they would "not in any way participate in ARP or National Service recruitment".[178] This was also the case with pacifists and some of the Churches. When the Town Clerk contacted churches asking for help in the recruitment of ARP wardens, Church of England vicars in some parts of the city responded enthusiastically. Revd J.W.A. Copeland, for example, wrote: "I appeal to the men of St George's who have not already done so to respond".[179] The Cemetery Road Congregational Church, on the other hand, "...felt that nothing useful could be done at this juncture".[180]

Historians of the early twentieth century have identified the St John's Ambulance Brigade as providing a non-militaristic medium through which an adventurous male impulse towards quasi-militaristic service amongst working class youth became channelled. C.H. Forster, who had given the first ARP training in Sheffield, was not only of that generation but had also followed this route.[181] In the thirties in contrast, there remained on the Left, even among some who had seen out the 1914 - 1918 war in uniform, a lasting suspicion of the militaristic and proto-fascist tendencies of those volunteering for ARP duties.[182] As late as March "Hobo" was writing:

> This ARP is another plumage job. They all need a natty little salute, something to salute, and they're complete. It is surprising how much these immature minded adult peacocks will do for any person or cause which permits them to wear a bright uniform and carry a piece of cutlery alongside, even if it's only a tomahawk.[183]

---

[176] Letter dated 20.4.39., LP(B) 18
[177] "By Election in Hallam", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 167 April 1939, p2
[178] STLC Minute Books, 20.6.39.
[179] "Enrol Now. Do not Wait for Another Crisis", St George's Church Parish Magazine, March 1939, np
[180] Cemetery Road Congregational Church: Church Meeting Minute Book, 23.3.39.
[181] "City ARP Pioneer to be Married", The Telegraph, 24.3.39., p5
[182] As late as the 1970s this remained the stereotypical view of the Air Raid Warden. The warden portrayed in the long running TV series "Dad's Army" was just such a megalomaniac.
[183] "Plumage", The Sheffield Transportman, March 1939, p16

There continued to be a strong link between the level of perceived danger and ARP recruitment. Ten days after the Czechoslovakian invasion a gigantic ARP thermometer was placed outside the Town Hall[184] and on the following Monday Asbury adjusted the figure from just below 10 000 to a new total of 12 600 volunteers.[185] In January Councillor Foxon had been quoted as doubting the reliability of ARP figures both because they counted individuals required for war service elsewhere and because they failed to record those who had dropped out.[186] Somewhat confused figures given around the time that conscription was introduced[187] suggest that Foxon was correct in supposing that some wardens enrolled in the mistaken belief that this would exempt them from full-time war service. By the end of June, enthusiasm for ARP was once again declining. In keeping with the fatalistic hedonism which has been identified with the last summer of the interwar years, not only had the recruiting thermometer not risen for some time, but there were also fears that the number of volunteers had actually fallen.[188]

The superficial national unity reflected in the acceptance of the need for ARP concealed underlying divisions. In May the local press reported that while in the more middle-class districts of Sheffield there were too many ARP wardens, in some of the poorer working class districts there were less than half the required number. Norton, Ecclesall and Nether Edge all had considerably more than their full establishment[189] while Attercliffe, Brightside, Manor, Owlerton, St Philip's and Tinsley all required large numbers of volunteers.[190] Even before the renewed crisis in March, there had been an ARP recruiting campaign in Working Men's Clubs and public houses.[191]

Substantive criticism from the Left about the quality of official precautions remained. January's Sheffield Forward reported that the Science Commission of the International Peace Committee under J.B.S. Haldane had described current shelter plans as "nearly worthless".[192] Joseph Meisel stresses that the gap between the scientists and

---

[184] "Watch it Jump on Monday", The Telegraph, 25.3.39., p9
[185] "Sheffield's Recruiting Thermometer Rises", *ibid*, 28.3.39., p3
[186] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 9.1.39., p2
[187] "Sheffield Leads County in ARP Recruiting", *ibid*, 26.4.39., p10
[188] "Sheffield Lagging in ARP Work", *ibid*, 28.6.39., p4
[189] "Where City Needs ARP Workers", *ibid*, 15.5.39., p5
[190] "Six Wards Still Need Recruits", *ibid*, 17.5.39., p4
[191] "Crowd Watch Bomb Tackled", *ibid*, 21.1.39., p9
[192] "Scientists Condemn New ARP Plans", Sheffield Forward, Vol 1 No9, January 1939, p10

architects who criticised the government's ARP plans and the government itself was one of intention. The government's concentration in the early stages on anti-gas measures and its later refusal to countenance deep bombproof shelters were based on issues of public morale, cost and the need to be seen to be pro-active rather than on providing maximum protection. The scientists' criticisms reflected a different paradigm of social commitment.[193] Although there was a populist element to the Left's position on ARP. Meisel's insight could equally be applied to its objections. There was an agitation in both the STLC[194] and Hallam DLP[195] for the provision of bombproof deep shelters rather than the splinterproof models favoured by official precautions. The cost of the provisions also remained controversial. J.T. Murphy questioned the whole voluntaryist basis of much ARP work by suggesting that the unemployed should be paid to do it.[196] The STLC's critical attitude was characterised by its efforts to achieve parity of representation on the ARP Liaison Committee with the Chamber of Commerce. All its chosen representatives, apart from the Secretary A.E. Hobson, were from the Left of the Party: Freda Tustin, C.S. Darvill, H. Hill and H. Hull.[197] In August the STLC Executive Committee asked that they be allowed to discuss any report submitted for confirmation to the City's ARP Committee before it was approved.[198]

There was a psychological dimension to the reactions of political activists which parallels the hedonistic mood commented on amongst the wider public in the last weeks of peace. For those emotionally engaged the temptation before the unbearable reality of the deepening crisis was to fall back on the security of sectarian shibboleths long since overtaken by events. March's Sheffield Forward offered this analysis of the crises of the last months:

> And so we are all caught up in capitalist war scares, due to the inherent folly of the capitalist profit making system. Isn't it true to say that ordinary work-a-day folk desire more than anything else to live at peace

---

[193] Meisel, Joseph S., "Air Raid Shelter Policy and its Critics in Britain before the Second World War", 20th Century British History, 5 (1994)
[194] STLC Minute Books, 18.4.39.
[195] The Division voted to support a resolution on deep shelters at the forthcoming Southport Conference, Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 22.5.39.
[196] "There IS Work for the Unemployed", Sheffield Forward, Vol 1 No 11, March 1939, p11
[197] STLC Minute Books, 6.6.39., 13.6.39. & 27.6.39.
[198] *Ibid*, 15.8.39.

> in all nations and I'm certain that once the profitmaking motive is prohibited in wars, then only will war become a thing of the past.[199]

The breathtaking inadequacy of this as a commentary on the events of the past four years parallels efforts at the other end of the peace movement to continue appeasement in the face of incontrovertible evidence that it had failed. Such commentaries presaged the highly sectarian responses to the outbreak of war in the Communist Party, that section of the Labour Party influenced by its policy and amongst remaining pacifists.

The Unity Question:

It is a curious fact that during a period dominated by debate about the shape, form and function of national unity, efforts to coordinate the activities of the *pacificist* majority within the Sheffield peace movement should have practically petered out. There was no Peace Week during 1939. Although agreement amongst the constituent parts of the *pacificist* movement was reinforced by the failure of appeasement, no large scale joint activities were undertaken to promote the view that Chamberlain's failure to conclude an Anglo-Soviet pact was a fatal flaw in his hurriedly patched up scheme for Collective Security.

There were a number of reasons for this. Even had the LNU's failure of leadership during the Munich Crisis not occurred, the Sheffield branch might well have had no intention of organising a further Peace Week. The national leadership had been discouraging the staging of Peace Weeks since the end of 1937, when it had become obvious that their pacifist allies were pursuing isolationist policies inimical to those the LNU were promoting.[200] To an extent, the need for a Peace Week had been overtaken by events. Foreign policy was recognised on all sides as the key political issue. This increased the divisive potential of consensual events for it put pressure on the peace movement to promote particular policies rather than generalised sentiments.

The Methodist Church had performed a similar coordinating role to that of the LNU but, by the later thirties its leadership in Sheffield had became identified with the pacifist wing of the movement. The other group which had previously taken on the leadership mantle were the promoters of the United Front who had been behind the

---

[199] "Air Raid Shelters?", Sheffield Forward, Vol 1 No11, March 1939, p11
[200] Letter from Gilbert Murray to Lord Cecil, 27.12.37., in Birn, *op cit*, p181

defunct Sheffield Peace Council. However, although the war in Spain, which had redirected much of the group's energy, ended in April and a quasi-Popular Front rhetoric of national unity was being heard on all sides, supporters of unity appear to have been unable to capitalise on the moment to regain the initiative in a rejuvenated *pacificist* movement. Their opposition to rearmament and conscription reduced their influence on the realist centre and right of the consensus. The Labour Movement, in response to the rhetoric of the United Front, had developed an alternative language of unity from within. Alfred Barnes, President of the National Cooperative Party expounded this:

> I would prefer that the three great working-class movements of Britain - Cooperation, Labour and Trade Unionism - should put themselves at the head of all that is best in the life of this people and call forth that historical love of liberty inherent in the Anglo-Saxon race.[201]

Sonorous as this was, it was almost meaningless in terms of the coordination of *pacificist* groups, whose political views covered a wide spectrum. Despite the gravity of the situation in Europe during the middle months of 1939, groups and individuals continued to define unity in terms of their own political agenda. Thus arises the apparent contradiction between a contemporary press article reporting for a Sheffield audience that A.V. Alexander had been chief speaker at the National Cooperative Party Executive against the adoption of a Popular Front policy advocated by the Cooperative Party Conference,[202] and Ben Pimlott's assertion that at the time of Munich Alexander had been: "itching for more contacts with other critics of the Government".[203] The Labour Party continued to resist the definition of national (and socialist) unity espoused by promoters of the Popular Front. January had seen the issuing of the Cripps' Memorandum to which the NEC responded in the same negative manner as it had done to all previous attempts to create a United Front. Cripps' meeting in March was

---

[201] "Cooperative Party Conference", The Sheffield Cooperator, No168 May 1939, p4

[202] "Cripps Overture to Labour Party", The Telegraph, 24.3.39., p1

[203] Pimlott, *op cit*, p163. Tilley emphasizes the personal (though not ideological) identification between Alexander and Churchill. He traces a relationship beginning with Churchill's refusal to tax the Cooperative dividend while Chancellor in the late twenties but based on some agreement over defence and Naval matters from "early 1936". Towards the end of the Phoney War, writes Tilley, even before the formation of the coalition, MPs were aware of the identification of their views on the war. Tilley, J., Churchill's Favourite Socialist: A Life of A.V. Alexander, Manchester, 1995, pp23 - 24, 44 - 45, & 48 - 49

Sheffield's effort to promote the policy. Little else reached the pages of the local press but Labour Movement records demonstrate the continuation of the long-running battle over unity.

Shiregreen Women's section faithfully recorded a meeting at which Head Office's response Unity or Sham was read to members.[204] Southey and Norwood section of the Coop Party heard a "masterly analysis" on the subject of "A United Front for Peace" by Harold Wilkinson in March.[205] Brightside DLP refused to involve themselves with the matter although the Burngreave Ward appeared to have reservations about the leadership's policy.[206] Hallam DLP, on the other hand, held a special Management Committee Meeting at which a resolution rejecting the case for a Popular Front was defeated 5 votes to 9 and a follow up motion pledging "wholehearted support" was passed 9 - 7.[207] Premonitions of difficulties ahead were suggested by a challenge: "That the minutes of the Special meeting be not confirmed until the Secretary can verify the credentials of the delegates present at the meeting". This amendment was lost, however.[208] Hallam DLP supported the conference motion readmitting Sir Stafford Cripps to the Labour Party providing: "...he undertakes to abide by the Constitution and Standing Orders of the Party in future".[209] Darvill reported back on the defeat of this motion: "The most damaging statement against Cripps was made by Dalton, who said that he had refused to sign an undertaking to abide by the decisions of the Conference, and in future to conform to the policy and Principles of the Party". There was clearly a feeling in other parts of the party that unity of purpose was more important than unity with other groups. Of the Popular Front vote Darvill said:

> ...conference appeared to be swayed by a Constituency delegate from St Albans, who said business had been held up continually in his Party by supporters of the Popular Front, and it was time the Party settled the Question once and for all, and got on with the work of the Party.[210]

---

[204] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party; Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 8.2.39. & 8.3.39.
[205] "Coop Party Notes", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 166 March 1939, p6
[206] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 18.1.39., 15.2.39. & 12.4.39.
[207] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 24.1.39.
[208] *Ibid*, 13.2.,39.
[209] *Ibid*, 20.3.39.
[210] *Ibid*, 19.6.39.

Resolutions in advance of the conference had revealed that the balance in the STLC Executive had moved narrowly to the Left. Reinstatement of Cripps was supported 10 - 8 and the Popular Front 11 - 10.[211] While the consensus among *pacificists* existed, the seriousness of these divisions should not be overstated at a local level. Central DLP minutes record that they accepted *en bloc* a list of new Labour Party members from the Cripps meeting.[212] The Labour Party nationally continued to be wary of unofficial contacts. In March a number of Sheffield party organisations reported receiving a circular letter from Labour headquarters about the Left Book Club. It warned:

> Since groups of the Left Book Club are not entitled to affiliation to Constituency Parties, joint political activities with them should not be entered into, especially when these are in the direction of a so-called "Popular Front" with any other Political Party.[213]

Although scant records of the Left Book Club survive in Sheffield, Winnie Albaya's memories of waiting in vain for Paul Robeson to make a visit to the Unity Club,[214] where the Left Book Club generally met, suggest, the importance of the book club to the Left-wing section of the peace movement. Morgan notes that by 1941 there were complaints that the Sheffield Left Book Club was dominated by the Communist Party[215] and there are signs that this may have been the case earlier. The club was addressed on the subject of the Soviet Union in both May[216] and June 1939. "Not So Dumb", a correspondent to The Telegraph, complained that the speaker at the latter event assumed the sympathy of his audience for a strongly pro-Soviet line and failed to address any criticisms levelled at Stalin's regime.[217]

Even in the last days of peace, the "Popular Front" remained ideologically wedded to policies and attitudes that in the hands of the pro-Communist Labour Left

---

[211] STLC Minute Books, 16.5.39.
[212] Central Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 19.4.39.
[213] Circular letter from G.R. Shepherd, National Agent, to Borough Divisional and Local Labour Parties, March 1939, preserved in LP(B)18
[214] "Robeson 'Adopts' Spanish Kiddies", The Telegraph, 3.3.39., p15 & writer's interview with Winnie Albaya.
[215] Morgan, K., Against Fascism and War, Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935 - 1941, Manchester, 1989, p270
[216] "Public Notices", The Telegraph, 24.5.39., p14
[217] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 7.6.39., p7

offered few of the compromises necessary to build a workable national unity. In mitigation it must be added that this intransigence and self-absorption was mirrored in the Chamberlainite Conservative Party, the Labour Party leadership and the Peace Pledge Union. The large measure of agreement among *pacificists* was overshadowed by disagreements, which owed their prominence in part, at least, to pre-positioning in advance of a General Election that was never to take place.

Reactions to the Polish Guarantee:

Mowat has described the public mood of the last few months of peace in terms of a new found resolution: "There was an awakening as from a drugged sleep, a determination that the country must unite and now, if not too late, bring Hitler's aggression to an end".[218] While Sheffield's press did not flatly contradict this, divisions over the direction of Britain's post-Munich foreign policy continued to be emphasised. After the Polish Guarantee had been issued at the end of March, comment in Sheffield had largely been confined to widespread calls for a similar pact with Russia. In April after Mussolini had invaded Albania further guarantees had been issued to Greece and Rumania, and in May a joint declaration of intent to jointly resist any further encroachments in the Mediterranean had been issued by Britain and Turkey. July and August witnessed two flurries of correspondence around these issues.

Tensions around Danzig initiated the first correspondence. On 3rd July a pro-Nazi letter signed "Nat Pro" was carried by The Telegraph along with an accompanying commentary from the Editor which began: "The situation is much too serious for a one sided statement such as the above to be published without reference to the other side of it..."[219] The next day brought a variety of responses in the letter column. E. Coombs warned Hitler of Britain's intention to fight over future violations. "Nat Contra" mocked "Nat Pro's" faith in Hitler's promises and C.E.C. wanted a General Election to adjudicate on the question of the Government's foreign policy. Meanwhile, Ernest Bradbury questioned whether Britain's proposed war on Poland's behalf could really be described as a defence of democracy.[220]

The communist George Allison's response was entirely pragmatic. He dismissed

---

[218] Mowat, *op cit*, p637
[219] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 3.7.39., p7
[220] *Ibid*, 4.7.39., p4

objections to an alliance with Poland by saying: "If Britain is to concert measures of collective security only with States which have an unblemished record, then collective security is (as the Tories have been saying for some years) impracticable. For such states do not exist".[221] Allison went on to say that Britain's own record would not stand up to such scrutiny. While welcoming the Polish alliance he reiterated the view that, without a similar Anglo-Soviet pact, the step might "...prove to be dangerous". Finally Allison laid out stark alternatives. Those opposed to aggression would support the creation of the system of mutual defence pacts. Nazi sympathisers would continue to criticise such moves. Those who, like Bradbury, from whatever motives put objections in the way of such pacts played into the hands of the Fascists and placed "...in greater peril from Nazi aggression the men. women, and children of this country". This was the standard *pacificist* view. Alfred Barnes, national President of the Cooperative Party had been reported as saying something very similar in May.[222] A further correspondent, writing under the *nom de plume* "South Riding" on 7th July repeated Allison's point with regard to one of the pro-Nazi correspondents. Such views he said were: "...playing right into the hands of the German propaganda machine".[223]

The correspondence continued with Councillor Foxon's criticism of "middle-aged and elderly gentlemen" prepare to sacrifice other people's blood in wars and Altas' contrary view that Germany was treated far too leniently and should have been "...bombed and bombed repeatedly" in 1918.[224] In answering a Chamberlainite critic, Foxon indicated the continuance, even at this late stage, of that gut pacifism engendered by the experience of the Great War, which had lain at the root of the anti-war feeling of the earlier thirties, amongst those whose official allegiances had long since changed to a *pacificist* vision of the necessity of a just war:

> I remember days and nights in 1916...
> How we used to curse Kaiser Bill, Little Willy, Lloyd George, and everybody else who had anything to do with sticking us in a waterlogged

---

[221] *Ibid*, 6.7.39., p7

[222] "Other nations should be invited to join as quickly as possible, not on the basis of ideology - for states like Russia, Poland, Rumania, Turkey and Yugoslavia were not democracies - but definitely on the basis of collective security against unprovoked aggression." "Coop Party Conference", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 168 May 1939, p4

[223] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 7.7.39., p7

[224] *Ibid*, 11.7.39., p8

> trench to be machine-gunned, bombed, and shelled, whilst they sat snugly at home and talked about the glories of war.

It is difficult to assess the significance of such correspondence. A Gallup Poll on Danzig in July supported Mowat's view of the public mood with 76% of those questioned willing to go to war if Germany invaded Poland and only 13% actively opposed.[225] The Telegraph clearly perceived a political danger to their editorial viewpoint in the correspondence and a letter from W.G. Wells contrasting the attitudes of Churchill and Chamberlain to an Anglo-Soviet pact provoked a swift reaction from "Current Topics" who proclaimed: "But we hardly see him [Churchill] in the role of saviour of this country". A Conservative counter-offensive reflected concern about public opinion. W.W. Boulton MP was reported to be touring his Division in a National Government loudspeaker van supporting the new foreign policy and conscription[226] while an article by J Gurney Braithwaite MP refuted any notion of a reciprocal conscription of wealth.[227] In the same issue under the headline "We Are Supporting Our Leaders" local Conservatives pledged continuing allegiance to Chamberlain.

Churchill's inclusion in the Cabinet (favoured by 56% of those questioned according to a Gallup poll in May) was the focus of this concern. "Current Topics" returned to the subject on 14th July revealing that an un-named local Labour leader had praised Churchill in conversation with him. The journalist replied that the politician surely did not wish to see such a "dyed-in-the-wool Tory" as Churchill in the Cabinet:

> ..."No," he replied with a cheerful grin, "a Labour government. It is nearer now than it has ever been. Doesn't it occur to you that Labour has been right all through, and that now that Mr Chamberlain has adopted the Labour policy there will be a landslide in favour of Labour when the election does come?"[228]

"Current Topics" questioned the confidence of the Labour representative but gave voice to his own fears that it was impossible to tell "...what the silent, inarticulate mass vote will do when the time comes". Three days later he returned to the topic. Averring that Chamberlainites like himself did not object to the inclusion of Churchill in the Cabinet, he

---

[225] Gallup, *op cit*, p21
[226] "Sheffield MPs Van Tour", The Telegraph, 7.7.39., p3
[227] "Conscripting Men and Wealth", *ibid*, 6.7.39., p8
[228] "Current Topics", *ibid*, 14.7.39., p8

went on: "...But we do object, and very strongly, to the cynical use that is being made of his name by a number of people - a mixed and rather motley collection - anxious to depose Mr Chamberlain".[229] This marked the end of a fortnight's correspondence although similar letters reappeared in mid-August when the paper carried a letter from Sir Henry Page Croft.

With the benefit of hindsight it is possible to see that the decisions taken in May and June 1940 in the formation of a very different kind of National Government were based upon a consensual *pacificist* view that was to a large extent in place before the Munich crisis. That the resolution described by Mowat and based upon this consensus hammered out in the *pacificist* peace movement of the time was not more in evidence in the days after the Czechoslovakian invasion was due to political manoeuvrering by both Left and Right. These manoeuvrerings were in part the result of ideological preconceptions which were difficult to contain within an overall *pacificist* strategy and in part reflected short term political considerations ahead of the expected General Election. The importance of the final stages of this July correspondence was that it demonstrated an almost unconscious awareness of the form that the consensus within *pacificism* would take in the wartime coalition.

Diplomatic histories have shown that the failure to conclude an Anglo-Soviet pact was the result of a number of factors. Fear of Soviet domination made smaller states, whose borders Britain was seeking to guarantee, reluctant to grant access to Russian forces. Alliance with Russia was, however, popular in Britain. A June opinion poll found 84% support for a tripartite military pact between Britain, France and Russia. Chamberlain's rejection of Russian overtures in the immediate aftermath of the invasion of Czechoslovakia ensured that the failure of the negotiations was blamed on him and further divided the peace movement from Government policy.[230] Resolutions urging the

---

[229] *Ibid*, 17.7.39., p6

[230] "The main criticism to be made is that the British Government dismissed what was, potentially, the second greatest industrial and military power in Europe without analytical justification. ...The politicians... committed the fundamental error of rejecting a potential ally for the sole reason that they did not feel in sympathy with her". K. Middlemas, *op cit*, p29. Thompson makes much the same point with reference to Chamberlain's speech of 22nd March 1938 which rejected an alliance with the Soviet Union. Thompson, *op cit*, p164. Corelli Barnett, on the other hand, explains the decision as a fear of inviting a westward movement of the Red Army. In potential contradiction, he also cites the Joint Chiefs of Staff report of 24th April 1939 which rated the Red Army as being of low

conclusion of an Anglo-Soviet pact were passed by Attercliffe Cooperative Party in June and by the STLC in late July.[231]

The period between the point at which it became obvious that Stalin had turned to Hitler for such a pact and the start of the war was extremely short, little more than one week. Mowat writes that the news that the two great polar opposites of the ideological struggles of the 1930s had combined shocked and surprised public opinion: "The news of the Russo-German treaty was received with horror around the world". In Sheffield on the very day that the Russo-German Treaty was concluded, 23rd August, a letter appeared from C.E. Mason, writing on behalf of the North Midland District Committee of the Communist Party, maintaining that the treaty was not in contradiction of the previous peace policy which the Soviet Union had been following and that an Anglo-Soviet pact was still possible.[232] He stated that the: "Soviet people desired good, neighbourly relations with all other countries, that they wanted to trade with them, and to live in peace with them. This applied to Germany and Japan as much as to any other country". Eventually, he argued, the agreement would be seen as: "...a big contribution to peace". Almost the only sign of continuity from previous attitudes to Nazi Germany was the belief that the treaty, by demonstrating to the German people that they had been "fed on falsehoods", would weaken the grip of the Nazi leaders on their own country. The fallacious belief that the Nazi leadership was not secure was widespread and indeed formed the basis of British war policy during the first phase of the coming conflict.

Mason repeated much of this in a letter published on 25th August arguing that only those who the communists had long suspected of "encouraging Hitler to 'have a go' at the Soviet Union" were opposed to the pact. He urged readers to press for Chamberlain to fly to Moscow to conclude a similar Anglo-Soviet treaty.[233] His tone suggested that he was conscious of being isolated. Mason later defended the bizarre view that the Nazi-Soviet Pact served the cause of anti-fascism: "They [German Communists] and their Czech comrades are already showing that they know how to use the Non-

---

military effectiveness as a potential ally. Barnett, C., The Collapse of British Power, London, 1972, p565 and p559.

[231] "Coop Party Notes", The Sheffield Cooperator, No 169 June 1939, p2 & STLC Minute Books, 25.7.39.

[232] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 23.8.39., p8

[233] *Ibid*, 25.8.39., p6

Aggression Pact for the purpose of intensifying the struggle against the Nazis".[234] While opinion polls showed a continuing desire in Britain for an accommodation with Russia even after the Nazi-Soviet Pact, support for the view that the pact had helped contain Germany ran at a lowly 8%.[235] A short letter from Arnold Freeman published a few days later voiced public scepticism: "Sir, - I claim that if it is right for Dictator Stalin to link up with Hitler it is just as right for our local Communists to link up with the Mosley Blackshirts - they can't have it both ways".[236]

Communist protestations brought forth other letters that revealed a new trend in local politics. On 29th August L. Helliwell and G. Healey replied to Mason from a Trotskyist perspective. Helliwell, prime mover in the matter, had begun to comment on local political issues in June 1939.[237] While gesturing at a wider public interest and raising important questions about Soviet policy under Stalin, the letters were aggressively sectarian. Howard Hill was described as an "alleged" socialist and his opinions as "...so utterly puerile that comment is difficult". One letter concluded: "Such hopelessly weak and confused reasoning now passes for "Socialism" among such neo-leaders as Councillor Hill but we are afraid the Marxis[t] analysis of the class nature of society and the inevitable struggle in capitalist society will not be any less effective because Councillor Hill believes he has improved upon it". Letters printed in August demonstrated a similar dichotomy. The first, while criticising "...the latest opportunistic turn-about of the Communist Party", a charge which might have been widely echoed, was a highly ideological review of "...the reactionary role of the Third International".[238] The second, while criticising the Russo-German Treaty, was largely concerned with the bitter controversy between Communists and Trotskyists.[239] The letters were significant in demonstrating for the first time since the disappearance of the ILP in Sheffield a challenge to Communist hegemony from the far Left.[240] A correspondent wrote of

---

[234] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 31.8.39., p3
[235] Gallup, *op cit*, p23
[236] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 31.8.39., p3
[237] *Ibid*, 12.6.39., p7 & 19.6.39., p7
[238] *Ibid*, 29.8.39., p3
[239] *Ibid*, 1.9.39., p3
[240] Sheffield may have been a greater centre of Trotskyist activity than this paragraph suggests. The "G. Healy" who jointly signed letters with Helliwell in September and October 1939 was almost certainly Gerry Healy, an important figure in the small Workers' International League who was sent to Ireland around the outbreak of war to

leaving the Communist Party "...in disgust and despair" and acknowledged that: "It is the Communists who are in a dilemma and not the followers of Mr Trotsky".[241] These views, however, did not impact in any great degree on either the Left or the peace movement within the period of this essay.[242]

The extent of disappointment on the Left in Sheffield at the conclusion of the Russo-German treaty is difficult to gauge. The STLC followed the Communist Party in continuing to call for an Anglo-Soviet Pact. This decision was almost unanimous with only one of 118 delegates dissenting.[243] It would be hasty to infer from this widespread approval of the Soviet move for a large section of the resolution concerned criticism of Chamberlain's government and the call for its "...overthrow and replacing it by a Labour Government". Indeed, in view of Communist opposition to the war which was to be announced within a matter of weeks, confusion of opinion at this point was suggested by a narrowly successful (8 - 6) amendment proposed to a Special Executive Meeting of the STLC by Howard Hill and A.J. Murray:

> That owing to the present conditions of International affairs of which we to [sic] some extent ignorant we should support the action of the Labour Party. Always bearing in mind that we definitely agreed to support any attempt to stop Fascist Aggression and endeavour to bring about socialist principles throughout the nations who oppose the Fascist regimes.[244]

Whatever the confusion over the Soviet Union's position, the STLC remained

---

set up a Trotskyite press. Bornstein S. & Richardson A., The War and the International, a History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1937 - 1949, London, 1986, pp9 - 11. Bornstein tape-recorded a conversation with Ajit Roy, another member of the WIL who claimed to have made a speech as a delegate at the STLC meeting which denounced the war as an imperialist conflict. *Ibid*, p9 Finally, Arthur Carford, another joint signatory of a letter from Helliwell was, with three members of the Sheffield group imprisoned for stealing medical cards from the Medical Examination Centre to provide false certificates of unfitness for military service for those avoiding conscription. *ibid*, pp11 - 12

[241] "Letters to the Editor", The Independent, 1.9.39., p3

[242] The Trotskyite line was similar to that recorded in the earlier period by the Socialist League and ILP. Trotskyists did not accept the need for "collective security" believing that working class interests were not compatible with those of capitalist national states. This is discussed from a communist perspective in Branson, N., History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927 - 1941, London, 1985, p243

[243] STLC Minute Books, 30.8.39.

[244] *Ibid*, 26.8.39.

committed to a *pacificist* approach and rejected a pacifist amendment proposed at the same time by John S. Worrall. Pacifists were continuing to call for A World Peace Conference in line with the reiterated view that the coming conflict was "...the struggle of rival imperialisms". The only element of coercion pacifists were prepared to accept was that: "...those leaders who take the responsibility of refusing such a call will have exposed themselves before their own people".[245] The overall impression of the local press and its letter page was, however, one of calmness in the face of the catastrophic events unfolding. The paucity of comment suggests, in keeping with Mowat's interpretation, public concurrence with the stand that the British Government, in line with a *pacificist* peace policy, was finally and belatedly taking against Fascist expansion. If Sheffield was a pattern for the country as a whole, Britain slipped remarkably quietly into a conflict which was to bring the most serious threat to its national sovereignty in three and a half centuries.

Summary:

After the invasion of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 Sheffield's Conservatives accepted that the policy of appeasement was finished. The *pacificist* peace movement did not, however, move into a coalition with them, although the foreign policies of the two groups, based on constructing an alliance of states opposed to fascist territorial expansion, bore many similarities. The dilatoriness of the National Government in reaching an understanding with Russia represented a substantive difference of approach, as did the radical Left's continuing refusal to countenance rearmament before the election of a popular front government. Conservatives found it impossible to admit that the accommodation of fascism had been a mistake and that Chamberlain ought to resign, while the Left, because it attributed Britain's deteriorating international situation to his pro-fascist sympathies, was unwilling to accept his leadership. These divisions were pronounced in Sheffield partly because of the strength of the Left in the local Labour movement (although the national Labour leadership itself held aloof from any official links with even dissident Conservatives) and partly because the alliance between the opposition parties and anti-appeasement Tories was not a local phenomenon.

---

[245] C.H. Wilson was one of only 9 MPs to vote against the 18 bills prepared for the declaration of war and debated on 1st September. Hayes, D., Challenge of Conscience. London, 1949, p11

Divisions were exacerbated by pre-electioneering in advance of the expected 1940 General Election.

Pacifists meanwhile, faced with incontrovertible evidence that concessions were not diminishing Hitler's expansionist ambitions, had to chose between relapsing into quietism in acceptance of pacifism's lack of short term political answers or to reiterate. as pro-Leaguers had done in the mid-thirties, that their proposals had not failed but had simply never been properly tried. The religious temper of much of Sheffield's pacifism made the recreation of it as a faith easier than it would have been had it flourished in a more secular context. Although it is suggested that this realisation of the political impotence of pacifism began the period of exodus from the Sheffield PPU, publicly pacifists continued to stress the populist message that wars were between governments and not peoples. This was indicative not only of a desire to continue with appeasement but also of germanophilia, a legacy of the period during which the peace movement had regarded Germany as the victim of an unjust Versailles Treaty, rather than the outright pro-Nazi fellow-travelling of some of the PPU's national spokesmen and women. Some *pacificists* continued to see the matter of economic concessions as a live issue, although they regarded concessions to the present fascist regimes as destabilising. This encouraged efforts, paralleling the pacifists' friendship campaign, to engage the German population in a discussion offering economic concessions in return for a change of government. Birn finds the LNU National Executive belatedly confronted the possibility of breaking up the Empire to achieve this end but there was no sign that in Sheffield, which displayed on all sides almost a complete indifference to imperial issues, that this was a topic of conversation outside of LNU public meetings. Underestimation of the extent to which the Nazi regime had the support of the German public was a miscalculation apparent in the policies of all the groups that was to continue to underpin their strategies into the Phoney War.

The introduction of conscription, in what was nominally peacetime, deepened the divisions between left-wing elements of the peace movement and the government. On both sides there was further evidence of attitudinising for the benefit of core voters. In Sheffield, where the Left was sensitive to the issue because of its importance in the engineers' protests during the 1914 - 1918 War, the measure had a particularly deleterious effect. It reinforced doubts about the nature of Chamberlain's commitment to democratic values and setback the cause of national unity by alienating the moderate

leadership of the Labour Party who had given their support to a voluntary system of national service. As far as the peace movement went opposition to the measure united the left and right of the Labour Party and gave it common cause with the pacifists. The gap in attitude between *pacificists* and pacifists was, however, far too wide at this juncture for the peace movement to re-unite. Even in Sheffield, where protests were vociferous, the Labour Party and the Left did not suggest that conscientious objection was the appropriate response. More importantly, for the first time since July 1937, the introduction of conscription encouraged the Labour Party to pursue a policy against the realist trend of its *pacificist* allies, throwing into doubt the alliance of attitude which had grown between the *pacificist* peace movement and dissident Conservatives.

The Sheffield LNU, like its national leadership to whom it had moved closer in attitude, stayed out of the conscription debate. It re-emerged after the invasion of Czechoslovakia as a united *pacificist* voice, freed of its dissident pacifists and of the former pacifist doubts of its leaders. It shared the Left's concerns about the omission of the USSR from the pacts of mutual assistance which were the new vehicle of collective security and this issue helped to continue the *pacificist* alliance despite divisions over conscription.

The last months of the Spanish Republic also promoted *pacificist* unity. Its defeat came to be seen, even by the wider public, as a further step towards the fascist domination of Europe. The disappearance of the Spanish cause following the defeat did not, however, ease tensions in Britain. Spain was seen as the epitome of Chamberlain's toleration and encouragement of fascist ambitions and the Left blamed both him and the Labour Party leadership's half-hearted challenge to his policy for the defeat. In Sheffield these criticisms undoubtedly later contributed to the local Labour Party membership's less than enthusiastic support for the war and the electoral truce.

It could be argued that the failure of a new *pacificist* coordination of the non-pacifist peace movement to emerge after March 1939 indicated that this strand of peace movement policy had ceased to be an oppositional force and had become accepted as the dominant ethos. Beguiling as this portrait of a growing national unity is, in Sheffield it is clear that the period of time between the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the declaration of war was too short, the sense that the urgency of the international situation should take precedence over domestic politics was too lacking, the distaste of the Labour leadership for alliances with groups outside of their affiliates was too great, the Methodist Church's

identification with pacifism was still too strong and the peace movement's efforts to provide humanitarian aid was too distracting, to allow a public expression of the underlying unity of strategy to emerge. Between the *pacificist* peace movement as a whole and the government and between the Left and the Centrist leadership of the *pacificist* peace movement, there lingered ideological differences that made agreement on immediate realist goals extremely difficult. The sense of national danger had not yet reached such a pitch that the protagonists were ready to compromise on ideological fundamentals.

The announcement of the Nazi-Soviet Pact occurred too close to the declaration of war for the full reaction of the peace movement to be developed. Local communists support for the treaty was clearly likely to complicate the reaction of the local Labour Party which had revealed itself over the previous three years as a sphere of influence for the CPGB. The emergence of a new Left opposition critical of the slavishly pro-Soviet attitudes of communists and their sympathisers offered a pertinent critique of this strand of peace movement opinion. It was, however, numerically too small and its criticism was couched in too sectarian terms to allow it to acquire any influence within the movement.

Chapter 8:
Doing So Regretfully
From the Phoney War to the Fall of France
(October 1939 - July 1940)

While the situation in Sheffield corroborates Ceadel's view that by the outbreak of war only absolute pacifists, Communists and Fascists actively opposed the conflict, the strength in Sheffield of communist influence on the Labour Party gave the rump of the pre-war peace movement potentially more influence than in many other localities. Communist opposition to the war, predicated upon Soviet foreign policy, was expressed through vanguardist support for the grievances of Labour's constituency and was validated both by divisions within the party and by the failure of Chamberlain's government to adopt a unifying national strategy as war approached. These factors combined with the activities of a small number of covert communists within the Labour Party exaggerated the extent of opposition during the relative calm of the Phoney War. The activities of pacifists meanwhile, given a press coverage disproportionate to their small numbers, and the wide ranging discussions among *pacificists* prompted by the artificiality of the conditions of the time added to the impression that Sheffield was a centre of opposition. The end of the Phoney War and the realisation of the possibility of invasion and defeat, however, revealed the underlying strength of the consensus among *pacificists*. Labour leaders' firm action to enforce support for the war was endorsed by the large majority of a reduced membership. Amongst pacifists something analogous occurred with well-publicised defections to the cause of a *pacificist* resistance. These events cut off remaining pacifists from their former allies but shared concerns kept communists in touch with their Left-wing colleagues ahead of their rehabilitation after the Nazi invasion of Russia in June 1941.

Supporters of Britain's Declaration of War:

While historical tensions continued to exist between the National Government and the *pacificist* peace movement, they were both part of a broad consensus which supported the declaration of war stretching, for the first fortnight of September, from the Conservative Right, including those who had formerly supported Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, to the Communist Left. Angus Calder lists the individual reasons for the

elements of this consensus' support for the war, which tends to stress an underlying disunity:

> There was by now some purpose in this for almost everyone. Jews, of course, had a special stake in the struggle; but anti-Semitic right wing patriots hated Hitler as a reincarnation of Kaiser Wilhelm, if nothing worse, and fought to defend the British Empire from the Huns. Catholics, after the Nazi-Soviet pact, could deceive themselves for a while that they were fighting Russia, and most Christians identified Nazism with paganism. Conservatives fought to conserve Britain's power; Liberals on behalf of liberty; Socialists to preserve the modest gains of trade unionism.[1]

There was a difference, however, between this support and public acquiescence to a governmental decision based on considerations of power politics. It represented a widely shared disapproval of the morals and methods of Nazi Germany which had originated in the political antagonism of the Left, but which grown within the *pacificist* peace movement as a whole and their dissident Conservative allies, before spreading to the public at large. The government had only begun publicly to endorse this view at a late stage after their strategy of accommodation had failed.

No statistical surveys of Sheffield exist but there is anecdotal evidence to confirm that the war enjoyed majority support in the city as in the rest of Britain. As the real war began Sheffield students were reported to already be "...about 98% for the war"[2] and the local NALGO Branch went so far as to offer to give up part of their annual leave "...as a voluntary contribution to the war effort".[3] The new Bishop of Sheffield, Bishop Hunter, wrote that he believed that: "...there is more unanimity in regard to the necessity for this war than there was in 1914".[4] National opinion polls suggested that after the broad initial acceptance of the war, opposition increased during the Phoney War to fall away dramatically after the Nazi offensive began in April. A Gallup poll showed 77% disapproval of immediate peace proposals in the month that war was declared. Although those in favour of an immediate ceasefire rose to 29% in February, the following month saw this figure drop to 25% and the number of those disapproving of such a proposal increase from 61% to 69%. By December 1940 only 7% of respondents said they would

---

[1] Calder, A., The People's War - Britain 1939 - 1945, London, 1969, p57
[2] "Sheffield Grim and Tough", The Telegraph, 1.5.40., p4
[3] NALGO Minute Book, 15.5.40.
[4] "The Bishop's Notes", Sheffield Diocesan Gazette, XXVI No5, May 1940, p1

agree with someone urging a negotiated peace.[5] Many who had played a part in the *pacificist* peace movement had reluctantly come to the conclusion that opposition by force to Germany's aggrandisement was the only tenable foreign policy. Through the political ascendancy of the Churchillian wing of the Conservative Party and of the Labour Party after May 1940 this view retrospectively became the dominant vision of events since 1934.

Although some commentators complained that this reluctant acceptance of the necessity for war led to a half-hearted approach during the first eight months, the general population's response demonstrated greater political maturity than had been evident during the naive enthusiasm of 1914. Revd J.W.A. Copeland, vicar of St George's, recalled the xenophobia of that time:

> Many of us remember with shame how common, even in our own generally tolerant land, were the cases of real or alleged "aliens" being subjected to abuse and social persecutions for the sins of those for whose actions they had no real responsibility whatever.[6]

Others saw such jingoism as lying at the root of the failures of the inter-war years:

> Not the least of our duties is to do all that we can to prevent the development of that mass-hysteria, so prevalent in the last war, which culminated in a revengeful peace, and which, if it is allowed to develop during this war, will result in yet another Versailles, containing the seed of a Third Great War.[7]

There was almost no jingoism in Sheffield. North Wing, the University Medical School magazine, whose readership were ironically responsible for the one well-documented incident of jingoistic rowdyism of the period, attributed this to the contrast between "...the mass hysterical hatred of our enemies so prevalent in the last war" and the "...cool clear logical determination present universally" in relation to the second European conflict.[8] The inter-war peace movement, through its widely promulgated interpretation of the events of the Great War, could undoubtedly claim some of the credit

---

[5] Gallup, George H. (ed), The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain 1937 - 1975, Vol: One 1937 - 1964, New York, 1976, pp22, 30, 32 & 37
[6] "In Time of War", St George's Church Parish Magazine, October 1939, np
[7] "Editorial", The North Wing - The Magazine of the Sheffield Medical School, Winter 1939, p11
[8] *Ibid*, Spring 1940, np

for this.

The Phoney War encouraged the widespread discussion of peace aims. While pacifists hoped that this might lead to the cessation of hostilities, *pacificists* accepted that these plans were for the long term. Such conditions encouraged utopianism[9] but were to an extent prompted by the rationalist belief that the stalemated war of attrition of 1915 - 1918 could have been avoided if both sides had stated clear War Aims upon which a ceasefire could have been negotiated. Time was both to demonstrate that this was an unrealistic hope with regard to the Second World War and to vindicate the wartime coalition's refusal to accept the peace terms offered by the victorious Nazis in October 1940.[10] As important in delineating the changed attitudes brought about by the Great War was the fact that neither certain parts of the political establishment nor a large section of the British population saw anything inherently incompatible in the wholehearted prosecution of the conflict and a wide ranging discussion of its aims. This relaxed attitude was put under severe strain by the desperate position of Britain in the period from the summer of 1940 to the summer of 1941. Nevertheless, widespread speculation on the shape of the post-war world was allowed to continue amongst the civilian population throughout the war and, to an extent, positively encouraged amongst service men and women. It has been credited both with the establishment of the post war consensus on social policy and the Labour General Election victory which produced the legislation which underpinned it.

---

[9] Paul Addison quotes a contemporary Mass Observation report to this effect: "It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of wishful thinking in Britain. It colours every day of the war both for the masses and for the leaders. It makes it all the more difficult to deal with the reality situations and dangers in the future". Addison, P, The Road to 1945, British Politics and the Second World War, London, (revised ed 1994), p57

[10] Clive Ponting has recently argued that Churchill's reputation as a "diehard" in relation to German peace offers is not supported by Cabinet documents. Churchill, he writes, wanted to fight on for a few months to get better peace terms after the disasters of the early summer but rejected Nazi offers to talk terms in October. The argument adds more to the myth of Ponting's iconoclasm than it does to our understanding of Churchill's pragmatism. Ponting, C., "Peace?", 1940 Myth and Reality, London, 1997, pp96 - 119. Guy Esnouf describes the attitude of the cabinet as "Wait and See" and believes that Churchill was unwilling to close the door absolutely, in advance of the Battle of Britain, until he knew whether the RAF and the Navy could keep sufficient control of the Channel to deter an invasion. Esnouf, G.N., "British Government War Aims and Attitudes Towards a Negotiated Peace, September 1939 to July 1940", Ph. D. thesis, King's College, London University, 1988

(a) The League of Nations Union: The Sheffield Branch of the League of Nations Union remained active after the declaration of war and was prominent in the discussion of war aims. While some of its members may have harboured hopes that the cup of war might thus be snatched from them, E.G.G. Lyon, writing to the press in March 1940, made it clear that the first of two essentials he could discern in the necessarily vague "settlement after the war was that: Germany shall abandon her policy of armed aggression and shall withdraw her troops from Poland and Czechoslovakia".[11] The Sheffield LNU broke completely with its former pacifist stalwarts. The Revd George Needham, speaking at the AGM in March 1940 declared: "Pacifism at the present moment is hopeless, since it would simply mean handing over the lambs to the wolves".[12] He supported the *pacificist* method with an analogy[13] that would appeal to his Left-wing allies:

> It seems to me that the growth of trade unionism is a splendid example of the working out of the idea of collective security. Collective bargaining supersedes the smashing of machinery.
> Even so the strike is retained as a weapon to be used if necessary. It is the method of sanctions.[14]

The nub of Needham's argument was, however, contained in a simple question to the pacifist C.H. Wilson: "Would the complete and immediate disarmament of Great Britain lead to peace, freedom and justice?"

The disappearance of pacifism from the Sheffield LNU was in part an accident of history. Alfred Hall, minister at the Unitarian Upper Chapel and Sheffield LNU's most prominent pacifist, was replaced by Leslie Belton who did not share his absolutism. Belton expressed impatience with the commonly reiterated view that Britain was fighting the German Government, not the German people: "Of course we are fighting the German people! But - and this is my point - we are also fighting with them: we are fighting in the company of all those Germans who have come to loath a regime which destroys the

---

[11] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 12.3.40., p3
[12] "Vicar Says Pacifism Means Handing Over Lambs to Wolves", *ibid*, 18.3.40., p6
[13] E.H. Carr's The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919 - 1939, London, 1939 does not appear to have impacted on commentary in Sheffield. Carr was particularly critical of the use of internal national models for the understanding of international relations (e.g. p178).
[14] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 21.3.40., p8

values of personal life..."[15] Meanwhile, J.H. Freeborough, another prominent figure who had helped to set the quasi-pacifist tone of the Sheffield Branch, died in October. The growing *pacificism* of Sheffield's LNU had been long in evidence and neither Hall nor Freeborough might have dissented from it in the new situation of war. Both, contacted by the press in the days immediately after the declaration, had expressed views in line with the mainstream of LNU policy.[16]

Despite the clear *pacificist* rationale for the situation Britain found itself in after September 1939, there was some fall in LNU membership immediately after war was declared. Frank Thraves, whose views had never been consistent with either his LNU membership or his Labour loyalism, speaking in June 1940, voiced the disappointment of those in the LNU and other peace organisation whose views had not moved beyond the generalised quasi-pacifism of 1933: "...the nation was not fully prepared for war and he was probably partly responsible for our unpreparedness as a supporter of the League of Nations. He had thought that nations would never go to war again..."[17] The majority of the membership appear to have concluded that the ideals which had spurred the creation of the League were an essential part of British war aims. The end of 1939 saw a return of interest which left membership at 815, 113 less than the 1938 figure but still 23 more than in 1936.[18] Records suggest that there were renewed concerns about LNU membership once the invasions of Norway and the Low Countries began the real conflict with Germany.[19]

The discussion of the role of the League in future peace terms continued the debate between the LNU and Chamberlainite journalists in the local press who had

---

[15] *Ibid*, 27.10.39., p4

[16] "Christians Must Smile" & "Churchmen Divided on Armistice Day", *ibid*, 4.9.39., p3 & 3.10.39., p5

[17] "Unpreparedness for War", *ibid*, 24.6.40., p5

[18] Annual Report of the Sheffield Branch of the League of Nations Union, 1939, Sheffield, 1940

[19] Five churches and the Shiregreen Women's Section all received letters offering an LNU speaker: Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 15.5.40., Chantry Road Methodist Church Leaders' Minute Book, 4.6.40., Oak Street Methodist Chapel (Heeley) Leaders' Meeting Minute Book, 5.6.40., Ann's Road Primitive Methodist Church Council Minute Book, 17.5.40., Deacon's Meeting Minute Book, Darnall Congregational Church, 26.6.40. & Petre Street Methodist Church Minute Book, 4.6.40. An advertisement also offered members the chance to pay their subscription direct to the local office, "Public Notices", The Telegraph, 15.6.40., p2

diffused criticism of appeasement by blaming the international situation on the failure of the League of Nations. In mid-October Lyon and Needham replied to The Telegraph's London correspondent who had written of the necessity of "...our not committing the world a second time to reliance upon tragic failures such as the League of Nations became". While clearly unimpressed with the League's response to the declaration of war, they nevertheless stressed the need for Britain's resistance to be placed in the context of the ideals of the League: "...resistance to aggression and the substitution of third party judgement in international disputes. Another Peace Treaty will succeed no better than the last unless this country along with others is prepared to honour its pledged word".[20] In March Lyon, promoting a meeting addressed by Gilbert Murray, widened his call for a League framework to any peace settlement to include social and economic issues:

> Economic prosperity and social justice are not less important for world peace than political security. The international authority should establish machinery working in the interest of people, to promote the freeing of international commerce with due regard to standards of labour and wages and to promote increased consumption and better distribution of the world's resources.[21]

"Current Topics", quoting from Murray's essay, "A League of Nations: the First Experiment" could not, as Lyon put it: "...resist the temptation to harp on the old string that the failure of the League of Nations was due to the withdrawal of America and her policy of non-intervention". Lyon's riposte was succinct: "We are now at war with but one ally, largely because we have failed to use the League machinery for the pacification of the world and collective resistance to aggression".[22] The argument continued with Lyon supporting the *pacificist* Article XVI of the covenant which permitted collective military action: "In common with other supporters of the League, I should have backed the British government against Japan had such action been necessary".[23] Although Lyon's public utterances recorded in the opening chapters of this thesis do not appear to endorse this later view, the debate revealed the continuation of fundamental differences between those supporting the war which extended not only to war aims but also to

---

[20] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 16.10.39., p4
[21] *Ibid*, 11.3.40., p4
[22] *Ibid*, 12.3.40., p3
[23] *Ibid*, 16.3.40., p10

whether war aims ought to be discussed at all. Following Sir Norman Angell's meeting in November, "Current Topics" expressed doubts about pursuing a debate on the causes of the war. Lyon's reply revealed that the *pacificist* analysis promoted by Angell, calling for a tough international response to aggression, had already become the dominant historical view even amongst LNU members who had earlier promoted a pacifist response.[24]

Although the debate expressed key ideological alternatives on, for example, national sovereignty and British imperialism, diametrically opposed political exigencies were the immediate prompt here with "Current Topics" and Lyon fighting for the survival of the equally discredited organisations to which they owed allegiance. If the debate was to move forward, discussion needed to focus on concrete proposals for the improvement of an international regulatory body. It was into this space that those supporting Federal Union stepped.

(b) Federal Union: Federal Union was a "new" idea. The chronology given in the anonymous Federal Union, London, 1941 which is among the Cooperative Party's records in Sheffield, gives a start date for the idea promoted by "a group of three" as September - December 1938. The first pamphlet, the formation of a Panel of Advisers and indeed the choice of a name for the movement did not occur until the first half of the following year. The first public meeting in Britain did not take place until immediately pre-war and Lord Lothian's The Ending of Armageddon, Oxford, 1939, did not appear until after war was declared in September, although it had been written before the declaration of hostilities. Popularisation of the idea in Britain followed the publication of W. B. Curry's Penguin Special, The Case for Federal Union, London, 1939, which by the summer of 1940 had sold 100 000 copies.

The key concept of Federal Union was that national sovereignty prevented the establishment and preservation of peace. Economic rivalry, viewed by Hobson and Lenin as the driving force for war, was regarded by Federal Unionists as symptomatic. Lord Lothian was not proscriptive about the economic system under which his Federal Union would exist: "We are only concerned to make it clear that it is sovereignty which is the basic cause of our economic distress and that so long as it exists it will be impossible

[24] *Ibid*, 18.11.39., p4

either for capitalism or socialism or any variant of them, to work properly".[25] The principle of a Federal Union would be: "...that while every nation is completely self-governing in its own internal affairs all the people are united into a single commonwealth for their common affairs". Lothian went on to explain:

> The principal common affairs of this commonwealth of man would be order and defence, the regulation of international trade and migration, citizenship, currency, and some forms of debt and taxation, inter-state communications, and the administration of the common assets and responsibilities of the federal union.[26]

If the failure to contextualise national sovereignty suggested an ahistorical approach, the view of the necessity for a federalist world government depended heavily upon a vision of an evolutionary growth of democratic representation of which the federalist American Constitution was the summation. Democratic institutions were thus viewed as an essential requirement of states to be federated, although Lothian proposed an affiliation mechanism for non-totalitarian countries. By the same rules, states entering Federal Union would hand over responsibility for their empires to the Federal authorities who would promote increasing stages of self-government eventually leading to the satellite states becoming full-members of the Federal Union.[27] Andrea Bosco roots Lothian's federalism in his association with the Round Table group and its efforts to modernise the empire. Lothian thus tended to be associated with the federation of the English speaking Dominions. The younger founders of Federal Union were keen to deny this link and looked to European federation. Although their immediate efforts to suggest this in the months before and after the outbreak of war looked hopelessly impractical, Bosco believes that in the longer term: "...they were able to inspire federalist resistance to nazism and fascism and to promote the birth of the European federalist movements during and after the war".[28]

---

[25] Lord Lothian, The Ending of Armageddon, or the Federal Principle as the Only Basis for International Peace, Liberty and Prosperity, Oxford, 1939, p7
[26] *Ibid*, pp8 - 9
[27] *Ibid*, p12
[28] Bosco, Andrea, "Lothian, Curtiss, Kinder and the Federal Union Movement (1938 - 1940)", Journal of Contemporary History, 23 (1988), p497. Bosco places the British offer to pool sovereignty with the French on 16th June 1940 (described in Shachtman, T., The Phony War 1939 -1940, New York, 1982, pp247 - 248) within the context of Federal Union.

Although Federal Union presented the same difficulties for pacifists as the League, initial interest came from pacifist groups. As early as June 1939 Peace News carried an article explaining the idea.[29] The PPU had already decided not to join but recommended debates at a local level between members of the two organisations. The Editor delineated a pacifist response:

> The issue, it seems to me, is quite clear. If the main purpose of Federal Union is to improve the existing method, in the conduct of international affairs, of massing force against force, a pacifist could not give it another moment's thought.
> But if the main purpose is to remove an undoubted cause, not only of actual war but also of friction generally, then not even the question of fighting for the new organisation need prevent pacifists from supporting Federal union as a practical policy.[30]

The first local notice of Federal Union occurred in October when Stuart Morris, advocated the idea at a PPU Meeting in Sheffield.[31] Ceadel's chronology of the ideology of the peace movement does not accord here with that of Sheffield. He writes: "After Hitler's seizure of Prague in March 1939 most former appeasers became disillusioned (or focussed their optimism on the Federal Union movement instead)..."[32] In the city, not only did the interest in Federal Union post-date the declaration of war, but those involved were not simply former appeasers. At an LNU meeting in November, Sir Norman Angell declared himself all for the idea, if it was practicable. He warned, however, mindful of the way in which the idealistic hopes of the pacifists had undermined the LNU's commitment to sanctions: "...let us be careful that we don't make this very ambitious scheme the enemy of less ambitious schemes; that we don't make the best the enemy of the better".[33] As a test of the practicality of Federal Union, Angell suggested two steps which Britain could take with a minimum of international agreement: Pool the British and French Empires under the administration of an international authority and federalise the British Dominions. The first of these steps was in keeping with objectives pursued by Angell for many years. It emphasised the links between wider *pacificist* views on the economic causes of war and the FU's proposals which, while eschewing economic

---

[29] Leyton Richards, "What Federal Union Stands For", Peace News, 30.6.39., p5
[30] "From the Editor's Notebook", *ibid*, 7.7.39., p2
[31] "Sheffield Peace Pledge Meeting", The Telegraph, 18.10.39., p6
[32] Ceadel, *op cit*, p281
[33] "Should We Share Our Empire?", The Telegraph, 13.11.39., p6

determinism, acknowledged the centrality of imperialism in world pacification. Of the second, Angell said simply that: "If we could not federalise the Dominions it was doubtful whether we could federalise 15 or 20 foreign States".

Charles Kimber, Secretary of the national Federal Union, spoke in Sheffield five days later. Although Angell had included Germany in any new system of pacification, a large part of his speech repeated his theme that: "Until we [Britain] made it clear that our policy was to stand against aggression as such, and in favour of the law which would forbid war and aggression and defend its victim, there could be no building up of an international system to eliminate war". This was in line with LNU policy that Germany must renounce its conquests before peace talks could begin. Kimber, on the other hand, saw his proposals as being of more immediate impact: "A peace conference might result if Britain should propose a Federal Union, inviting Germany to participate".[34] A local branch of the union was announced on 9th December with a mass meeting proposed for January 1940. W.B. Curry was main speaker at the meeting which attracted a British record audience for an FU meeting of one thousand. He identified a differential development as underlying the problems of national sovereignty: "Technically and scientifically the world had become an international world, but politically and psychologically it was still not an international world, and it would perish unless it organised itself as a community".[35] Curry also emphasised the distinction between the FU and the LNU:

> There were certain vital differences between the Federal Union idea and the League of Nations idea. Whereas the League was a representation of nations, Federal Union called for an actual government which would control worldwide questions but not matters which should be handled by local government.

The impact that FU was having in Sheffield was illustrated by the fact that, among the usual list of the great and good attending, were the names of Maurice Cole, the pacifist, Councillors Bingham and A.E. Hobson of the STLC and Revd Pendril Bentall, the Congregationalist. A letter in late January revealed that Curry's meeting had attracted ten times the number of listeners that Kimber's meeting had just seven weeks before. It also claimed that: "Since the outbreak of war the Sheffield group has

---

[34] "May Bring Peace", *ibid*, 18.11.39., p6
[35] "Federal Union's Cure", *ibid*, 5.1.40., p6

multiplied its active members by twelve".[36] Although the level of interest appears to have been high, the number of those actively committed to the idea was small. By June 1940 the FU had a membership of some 200 in the city.[37]

A fortnight after the meeting, Councillor Bingham answered questions handed in to Curry which had gone unanswered because of limited time. Some questions were sceptical: "How are you going to eradicate the virulent strain now rampant in the strongly nationalised European States dragooned as they are now and have been for years?" ran one of those quoted. Bingham's answers, while suggesting the optimistic idealism indicated by Ceadel, saw federation as a long term goal: "...they expected their movement to be rational, mental, and spiritual in the direction of preaching that Federation was a far better thing than nationalism".[38] Bingham was asked whether Russia would be included. His answer that Russia was not a democracy highlighted the fact that, both in the genesis of its ideology and in the centrality of liberal democracy to its conception, Federal Union was not a vision that appealed to the Marxist Left. Henry Dubb wrote in The Sheffield Transportman: "The last prop for a collapsing capitalist system is Federal Union. It is devised to maintain in Europe primarily, and the rest of the world secondarily, capitalism".[39]

The idea was criticised from the Right too. In late January and early February 1940, C.F. Pike, former Conservative MP for Attercliffe, criticised Federal Unionists' intention of breaking up the British Empire. He opposed not only federation of the Dominions but also self-government for the colonies. Continuing the debate between the LNU and "Current Topics" he mistakenly identified those supporting FU with those who had urged a strong *pacificist* line before the war and heaped abuse upon their heads on both counts. Pike asked two important questions: Firstly what would the economic implications of such a union be, and secondly whether the model of American federalisation was applicable to Europe and the wider world.[40] The secretary of the FU group in Sheffield, C. Harland, in replying dismissed Pike's contention that the British Empire was an "existing peace-bloc" pointing out that its existence had encouraged

---

[36] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 23.1.40., p7
[37] "Fifth Column of Freedom", *ibid*, 24.6.40., p3
[38] "Better Than Nationalism", *ibid*, 18.1.40., p6
[39] "Notes", The Sheffield Transportman, February 1940, p6
[40] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 29.1.40., p3

Britain to seek a balance of power in Europe and that: "In pursuit of this policy we have fought every major European Power in turn".[41]

The exchange provoked so many further letters that The Telegraph printed only extracts from them but another correspondent added: "The fact that we are now engaged in the second major war in twenty-five years at the end of a ten years' armed truce is eloquent testimony to the value of our 'peace-bloc' and is in itself a recommendation to Federal Union".[42] Neither of Pike's questions were answered, however, and the practical steps which could be taken to set up what one correspondent described sonorously as "a free association of the free peoples of free nations" were not delineated. This undoubtedly enhanced its appeal as a pacifist panacea and limited its appeal to more pragmatic *pacificists*. Needham of the LNU attacked the FU organisation on the very day a branch was announced in Sheffield precisely for its failure to offer a solution to the problem that had sabotaged the League of Nations: "...it could not serve a useful purpose unless it had some mechanism not possessed by the League of Nations for making Governments honour promises".[43] Efforts were made to distance the two organisations. A motion that "Federal Union is the League writ large" was defeated at a debate between Sheffield Literary and Debating Society and Sheffield University in March.[44] Contacts between the two organisations continued, however, and in the same month Sheffield LNU Youth Fellowship was addressed by a member of the FU.[45] The situation within the FU was analogous to that within the LNU around 1936 with competing pacifist and *pacificist* visions of the organisation. These difficulties were compounded because supporters had differing views of its basic tenets. One, for instance, during the Pike debate, appeared to see no incompatibility between Federal Union and a "well-ordered and developed Empire".

The very woolliness of FU's prescription was its greatest strength at this point. Gilbert Murray, speaking in the city in late March described the need both for a continuing League of Nations and a Federated Europe. With considerable prescience he foresaw an occupied Germany being encouraged to enter a federated Europe on an equal

---

[41] *Ibid*, 30.1.40., p3
[42] *Ibid*, 31.1.40,, p7
[43] "League Work Must Go On, Says Vicar", The Telegraph, 9.12.39., p10
[44] "League or Federal Union", *ibid*, 5.3.40., p6
[45] "Federal Union Plea", *ibid*, 2.3.40., p8

footing with the war's victors. This was a long way ahead and the immediate effect of the German victory was to push the FU away from the pacifist position to a *pacificist* view closer to that of the LNU. Charles Kimber back in the city in June 1940 was reported to have said: "Until Nazism was overthrown there could be no peace".[46] It was on this basis, as a long-term peace aim rather than as a negotiating strategy for the immediate cessation of hostilities, that Federal Union enjoyed a popularity among Cooperative Party members later in the war.[47]

(c) The Labour Party: While the bulk of this chapter is concerned with Labour Party opponents of the war, the majority of members in Sheffield, like those in the LNU, accepted the *pacificist* logic of their pre-war position and offered conditional support to the conflict with Germany. One of the clearest statements of this view was offered by an editorial in Co-operative News:

> Congress and Party Conferences during the last four years have demanded with increasing vigour that a stand should be made against aggression as typified in the crimes of Hitlerism. The quality of the British political leadership today making that stand and its reasons for so doing are open to grave co-operative objections - but the stand is being made.
> For the Co-operative Movement to 'contract out' (if such were possible) of international obligations, which it has time and time again demanded should be undertaken, would be a betrayal of everything for which co-operation has striven.[48]

A.V. Alexander, speaking in October 1939, laid out some of the conditions on which this support was given:

> After the war they must be prepared to fix the blame for the present disaster in Europe and also to make their constructive proposals for the reconstruction of Europe.

---

[46] "Fifth Column of Freedom", *op cit*

[47] CPR 44 holds records of the Cooperative Party's contacts with Federal Union. These suggest interest began in the autumn of 1940 with talks in October and December. Discussion groups were meeting in the winter of '40 - '41 but were disrupted by the bombing. Ballard and others became official supporters in July 1941. Membership in August 1941 was 50. This seems to contradict details given earlier by the press and suggests either major upheavals in the organisation after the end of the Phoney War or that there were a number of FU Branches in the city.

[48] Quoted in Carbery, T.F., Consumers in Politics, A History and General Review of the Cooperative Party, Manchester, 1969, p44

> Labour would not support a war which had no other objective than the defeat of Hitlerism. The essential thing for peace was all-round disarmament.[49]

Attlee, meanwhile, outlined a domestic dimension urging equality of sacrifice and the pursuit of a reforming agenda. He described the "big difference" between his party and the Conservatives as: "The Government was seeking to preserve the old society; Labour was out to build anew". Labour supporters of the war were prepared to accept an electoral truce but urged that party organisations continued "...in readiness for any emergency in the way of election work".[50] Conditional support, dependent upon "the full right of criticism", did not diminish the leadership's belief that "...we must win this war".[51] When Alexander was asked: "...if he was prepared to stop the war and carry on the fight for democracy at home", he replied to applause: "...that if they really wanted to see the mass of the population and the Cooperative Society under the heel of Nazism it would be well to take the line suggested".[52] Herbert Morrison, who visited the city in February, said on the same theme: "We cannot compromise with the Nazi regime. We cannot make peace with it. I would sooner die than live under the horrible Nazi system in Germany". Alexander similarly said that he: "...believed that we had to defeat this menace to our freedom and our movement before we could construct the new system which was our goal".[53] Morrison continued Labour's pre-war criticism that the government were not wholeheartedly pursuing the defeat of fascism but supported their underlying Phoney War strategy which was predicated upon the likelihood of a revolution in Germany:

> ...if the German people destroy the Nazi Government and substitute an enlightened, democratic regime, anxious to cooperate with other nations in the building of a free and tidy Europe, then the purpose of the war will have been served, and there will be no need for its continuance.[54]

The successes of Labour rebels were in part explained by the dualistic attitude

---

[49] "Labour Warned to be Ready", The Telegraph, 16.10.39., p6
[50] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minutes, 21.9.39., and circular dated 22.9.39. in CPR 12
[51] "Labour's Function is New Says Mr Attlee", The Telegraph, 29.4.40., p6
[52] "Coop MP Attacks Delayed Start of Food Rationing", *ibid*, 11.12.39., p3
[53] "Facing the Facts", The Sheffield Cooperator Bulletin, No 2 December 1939, p7
[54] "No Compromise with Barbaric Nazi Rule, Says Labour Leader", The Telegraph, 12.2.40., p7

displayed by sections of the party who, while officially supporting the war, continued to waver before the full implications of the *pacificist* method. The loyalist Shiregreen Women's Section, for instance, enquired about providing soldiers' comforts in October but discussed a peace demonstration in November. In December they protested to the STLC about an article in Sheffield Forward, "Light on Moscow", which they considered to be communist propaganda but in February they were addressed by a Mrs Lenthall on her visit to the USSR. A week later, presumably in response, they passed a resolution that: "...no correspondence be read or speakers be allowed to address us who are of a communistic outlook".[55] In the records it is difficult to distinguish between this dualism and symptoms of the struggle between competing factions. Even in the minutes of the loyalist Cooperative Party, there exists, alongside support for Alexander and his entry into Churchill's cabinet, an awareness of internal dissent.[56] One can find pragmatic expression of *pacificist* acceptance. Councillor Foxon, for instance, Great War veteran and trenchant critic of old men conscripting the young to die for them, was to be found by March 1940 in Leicester, editing an army magazine, having re-enlisted.[57] The clearest sign of this concordance, however, was the distancing of party organisations from Hitler's new Russian allies by the acceptance of resolutions supporting the Finns in their war with the USSR. This became a litmus test of loyalty. Motions supporting the Finns were passed by the Cooperative Party, the Brightside DLP and the Shiregreen Women's Section.[58] More significantly, in view of the partial preservation of such records across the city, only Hallam DLP defeated such a resolution (by 9 votes to 6).[59]

Once the real war began practically the whole party, including Hallam DLP, accepted the leadership's view of the primacy of the need to prosecute the war. In the meantime, it has been suggested that a fall in membership reflected disillusionment with the compromise with the government, particularly over the electoral truce. The right of the party made conscious efforts to use the departure of Russia from the fold of

---

[55] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 11.10.39., 29.11.39., 13.12.39., 14.2.40., & 21.2.40.
[56] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 13.3.40, 18.4.40., 23.5.40. & 25.7.40.
[57] "Councillor in Uniform", The Telegraph, 4.3.40., p5
[58] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 13.3.40., Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 9.3.40., & Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 20.3.40.
[59] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 10.3.40.

collective security to inflict a final defeat on the communist-inspired left of the movement. Disparagement by Attlee of the Russian economy as: "...a long way off from anything that could really be called Socialism" was echoed by R.A. Palmer, General Secretary of the Cooperative Union, with regard to the Russian Cooperative Movement: "The Consumers' Movement in the towns is a department of the state. Societies pay no dividends and their arrangements regarding capital are fantastic".[60] Alexander offered an ideological overview: "Now that the Russian Revolution has rotted and lost its soul because it has been unable to combine collectivism with personal freedom, it rests with the liberal thought of the Atlantic World to take over the task".[61] Empathy with the Soviet Union was dependent, however, on a far wider raft of concerns than foreign policy and as the Moscow Trials had demonstrated the Left had not yet accepted that the Russian Revolution had gone wrong. From the Battle of Britain through the difficult months to June 1941 there remained a remarkable degree of tolerance amongst Labour members towards communists.

Opponents of the War:

(a) The Fascists: The fascists, whose presence in Sheffield had never attracted significant public or electoral support, had the least impact of the three groups opposing the war. Benewick describes the BU's foreign policy, which he believes was its most important consideration between 1937 and 1940, as: "...a policy of selective pacifism which had three components: nationalism, opposition to war against a Fascist power, but not against Russia, rearmament and a willingness to fight if British interests were attacked from whatever quarter".[62] In April 1940, at a public meeting in Sheffield, A.R. Thomson explained that the British Union stood for a negotiated peace with Germany. He dismissed those who argued that if Britain accepted a settlement it would become the next victim of piecemeal German aggression: "...by using the mighty resources of the British Empire we could build up the power of this country during a period of peace so Germany would be left far behind us".[63] This imperialist and isolationist message was

---

[60] "International Cooperation", The Sheffield Cooperator Bulletin, No 2 December 1939, p2
[61] "Facing the Facts", *op cit*, p8
[62] Benewick, R., The Fascist Movement in Britain, 1972, p134
[63] "If War Ended", The Telegraph, 22.4.40., p5

reinforced by the view that the war was "stalemate" and that Britain "...should be wise to negotiate a peace rather than exhaust the resources of the British Empire". Predictably Thomson blamed "international finance" for the war but his speech toned down both the BU's anti-Semitism and its admiration for the Nazi Party in the new circumstances of the war. Neil Barrett has shown that national Home Office estimates recorded a resurgence of BU membership "again touching the 1934 highpoint",[64] but in Sheffield there was no sign of pro-fascist opinion among either the ordinary population or among officials dealing with the fascists.

Despite Thomson's efforts to distance the BU from Germany, the organisation was identified in Britain with Nazi excesses. When Ernest Sanderson, 22, an unemployed labourer, accompanied by A.E. Dunn a friend from the BU, appeared at the Conscientious Objectors Tribunal at Leeds they were questioned about the "pacifism" demonstrated by the BU and particularly about attacks on Jews in Britain and Germany. During Sanderson's examination Dunn kept interrupting and, upon being threatened with exclusion, stormed out. Judge Stewart, who clearly viewed this as being of a piece with the BU's intemperance, reportedly said: "That is the type of man they are. They are completely hopeless".[65] The small coverage given them by the press indicates that fascists were not perceived as such a serious threat to the war effort as pacifists and communists. As the later appearance of Hubert Bunting[66] before Judge Stewart suggests, British fascists had become figures of ridicule. Having established that Bunting was a "Mosleyite" the chairman expressed surprise that he had not put "Heil Mosley" on his statement as another member of the BU had done. That individual, said the chair, had shouted "Heil Mosley!" and "Perish Democracy!" as he left. Bunting, to laughter, retorted: "I have not gone yet". Sure enough, to the amusement of the Tribunal, having been told he was to be removed from the register, he duly obliged.[67] If the British establishment, in the person of Judge Stewart, encouraged the mockery, it took the imitation of Nazism seriously and as Britain's position became desperate in early June ten

---

[64] Neil Barrett, "The Communist Party in Manchester and Salford, 1935 -1936", Labour History Review, 58/3 (1993), p12. Benewick, writing twenty years earlier, believed that by this time the BU was: "...spent as a political force". Benewick, *op cit*

[65] "Fascist with 'Jaundiced View' Must Fight", The Telegraph, 3.4.40., p5

[66] This was probably the individual previously reported as Herbert Bunting, British Union candidate for the Burngreave Ward in the Municipal Elections of 1937.

[67] "Sheffield Fascist Objects", *ibid*, 24.4.40., p5

leading fascists in Sheffield were arrested along with a German couple who had been associated with the Link organisation.[68] The arrest of Mosley himself had been reported in the Sheffield papers twelve days before.

(b) The Pacifists: Sheffield's pacifists were more successful in publicising their opposition to the war. Their success was the product of a combination of their own efforts and the hostility of those who supported the war.

The continuation of appeasement through the calling of a World Conference remained the political strategy of the pacifists with calls for the acceptance of German gains being repeated after the conquest of Poland,[69] the attack on Denmark and Norway,[70] the invasion of Holland and Belgium[71] and even after the Fall of France of which "Observer" wrote: "The truth of the situation is that France has realistically accepted her destiny, and decided to cooperate in the new continental order under German leadership".[72] The lack of interest pacifists showed in those falling under occupation was criticised at the time: "I should like to ask... would there be any chance for Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Jews at a Conference Table?"[73] asked one correspondent. Exceptions were the Russian occupation of Eastern Poland of which Wilfred Wellock offered a naive socialist justification and Denmark which had adhered to an official policy of non-violence and where it was argued, in vindication of Gandhi's teaching, the populace were better treated than in countries which had tried to resist by force.[74]

Appeasement through a World Conference was commonly expressed in the early stages of the war in terms of new federalist theories. Pendrill Bentall called on Britain to state that:

> ...She is ready to confer and submit the causes of the conflict to neutral arbitration; that she is prepared to work for a European Federation, and

---

[68] "Scores of Fascists Arrested", *ibid*, 5.6.40., p2
[69] "Pacifist Commentary", Peace News, 22.9.39., p2
[70] "Germany's Move Presents No New Challenge" & "Our Task Now", *ibid*, 12.4.40., p1
[71] "What is equally impossible from the point of view of common humanity, is to isolate and pass judgement on each new crime..." "A Pacifist Commentary", *ibid*, 17.5.40., p2
[72] "The New Continental Order", *ibid*, 12.7.40., p2
[73] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 9.9.39., p4
[74] George E. Whitman, "The Significance of Denmark", Peace News, 26.7.40., p3

> as an earnest of her good will, offer to put the strategic points and crown colonies in her possession under the control of the Federal Government, when formed, if other nations would do likewise.[75]

Not all pacifists looked favourably on Federal Union. Lord Ponsonby, for instance, wrote that federating the Dominions risked the creation of armed camps and a Federal Union police force or army was "simply impossible".[76] Later in the war, as the FU position became increasingly identified with the *pacificist* viewpoint, pacifists distanced themselves from it. They continued to fight a rearguard action against the dominant *pacificist* ethos with C.H. Wilson questioning Needham on the relevance of the term "Collective Security" and a number of commentators in Peace News blaming the conflict on efforts at the League of Nations to introduce sanctions.[77] Pacifists continued to suggest that appeasement could circumvent the need for sanctions:

> Such a generous offer would cut the nerve of aggression, largely dispel the sense of injustice under which Germany professes to labour, and, in fine, "take the wind out of the sails" of her inflated dictator, who might even abdicate for lack of anything to rage against.[78]

In the same vein pacifists continued to believe that personal contacts could undermine the belligerent intentions of governments. In the late autumn of 1939 Tyler Lane was still speaking of "a fundamental kinship", with the youth of Germany[79] and Grace Clements was writing to the press that: "...we women must believe whole-heartedly that peace will come only through kindliness and sacrifice".[80]

Much of the rump of the pacifist movement was Christian in inspiration and inclined to a spiritual view, but its political propaganda relied heavily on the rationalist assumption that, once aware of the human cost of warfare, both sides would prefer a negotiated alternative: "If we go blindly on, refusing to contemplate any possible alternative, the best we can hope for is to accomplish the tragedy of Samson, who, as he overwhelmed the Philistines 'pulled down the same destruction on himself'", wrote Pendrill Bentall. He viewed the declaration of war as a duel based on nothing more

---

[75] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 23.12.39., p6
[76] "Monthly Comments", Peace News, 2.2.40., p3
[77] e.g. Laurence Houseman, "Force Cannot Secure World Peace", *ibid*, 15.3.40., p1
[78] "Letters to the Editor", 23.12.39., *op cit*
[79] "Kinship with German Youth", The Telegraph, 16.11.39., p6
[80] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 7.12.39., p4

substantial than a "conception of honour", and called for "the two sides to do the equivalent of shaking hands..."[81]

The self-abnegation of pacifists, which led them to take responsibility upon themselves for the conflict, caused a division among churchmen over the first wartime Armistice Day. Pendrill Bentall and others called for acts of "penitence" to mark the occasion, a suggestion which J.H. Freeborough described in his last, and characteristically forthright, public utterance as "...a piece of sentimentality we could well do without".[82] In the political sphere the impact of such views had diminished with the declaration of war. C.H. Wilson's contrast between the British Government's calls for Collective Security and its denial of self-determination to India offered little by way of solution to the difficulties Britain found itself in during March 1940. To an extent pacifists acknowledged as much and Wilson abstained, rather than voted against, his party's entry into the wartime coalition.

As Britain faced up to invasion after June the PPU leadership advised its members to cease political action recognising that: "The pacifist idea of peace by free negotiation can be realized only when the will to negotiate is present".[83] This enforced quietism was pragmatic. The absence of moral differentiation between the two regimes in the conflict which permitted the continued endorsement of appeasement did not end until the genocide of the Jews became public knowledge later in the war.[84] John Middleton Murry had warned at the end of May that if the pacifist movement wanted "...the relative freedom necessary to maintain its values otherwise than by martyrdom, then it must reject the notion that its business is to impede the Government in the prosecution of the war".[85]

Although critical commentary on pacifism was motivated by fear of its effects, pressure from majority *pacificist* opinion was relentless. In October the PPU supported a candidate in the Clackmannan and East Stirling by-election who polled just 1 060 votes (6%) against the winning Labour candidate's 15 645 (94%). While Peace News asked its readers not to "...allow themselves to be discouraged", the result indicated the extent of

---

[81] *Ibid*, 8.9.39., p4
[82] "Churchmen Divided Over Armistice Day", The Telegraph, 3.10.39., p5
[83] PPU Statement: "What is 'A Successful Issue' to the War", Peace News, 7.7.40., p3
[84] Gilbert, Mark, "Pacifist Attitudes to Nazi Germany, 1936 - 1945", Journal of Contemporary History, 27 (1992), p508
[85] "After New National Government", Peace News, 24.5.40., p4

pacifist isolation.[86] There are strong reasons to question the consistency of The Telegraph's attacks on pacifism but its ringing endorsement of *pacificism* indicated that with the declaration of war that view had become the dominant vision of an overwhelming majority:

> This war is not just a war between Germany and Britain and France. It is, in truth, a war for an ideal. It is a crusade, one of which we can be proud to serve now, one of which those who come after will be proud.
> From a purely materialistic point of view we can gain nothing from this war. Indeed we must lose - even if the objects we desire are achieved within a few months. But, spiritually, we triumph even though defeat on the field were our lot.
> We fight for international law and order, for a state which will ensure greater happiness, liberty, and happier living conditions for the peoples of this Continent and for the rest of the world.[87]

Criticism of the pacifist position appeared as soon as the war began and after Canon Stuart Morris opened the PPU's new Dick Sheppard Centre, Peace News complained that the meeting, although well attended, had attracted only four lines of press coverage.[88] The Telegraph's Editor's hostility was signalled by the description of Morris as "a former member of 'The Link'". The Telegraph's antipathy had been in evidence earlier when notice of a meeting of 27 Sheffield clergymen (fourteen Methodists, five Congregationalists, five Anglicans, two Unitarians and a member of the Christian Brotherhood Mission) to re-affirm pacifist opposition to the war had been confined to its editorial comment column.[89] As early as October the press's attitude to pacifists was succinctly summarised as: "- Keep your opinions to yourselves". While acknowledging the "...complete right to act as the spirit moves them" of Christian Pacifists, The Telegraph regarded as "indefensible" the "...spreading of what we feel is a

---

[86] "Result of Clackmannan By-Election" & "Victory Will Come", Peace News, 20.10.39., pp 1 & 12. Although at the Stretford by-election in December "Stop the War" candidates from the ILP and Communist Party gained a combined 5 943 votes (25%). David Childs believes that because the Communist Party candidate was a former Labour Party member, this was an unreliable test of local opinion. "Stretford By-Election", *ibid.* 15.12.39., p2 and Childs, D., "The British Communist Party and the War, 1939 - 1941, Old Slogans Revived", Journal of Contemporary History, 12 (1977)
[87] "Our Answer to the Pacifists", The Telegraph, 11.10.39., p4
[88] "Pacifism Was Censored at Sheffield", Peace News, 3.11.39., p8 & "Sheffield Peace Pledge Meeting", The Telegraph, 18.10.39., p6
[89] "Current Topics", *ibid.* 9.10.39., p4 & "No Peace Through Victory - Says Clergy", Peace News, 6.10.39., p7

'peace at any price' propaganda... which has as its design the weakening of the democratic front and the acceptance of an international burglar's possession of his loot". As the Phoney War ended in April hostility to those openly preaching pacifism increased.

Hayes notes that a Mass Observation document of March 1940 "...reckoned that for every registered C.O. there were two 'latent' objectors whose 'private doubt' was largely concealed by social pressure".[90] It is clear, however, that not all the weakening of pacifism was due to external forces and that in Sheffield even before the end of the Phoney War a number of prominent pacifists experienced doubts which led them to reconsider their position. The Revd Percy Mitchinson, signatory to the October letter that had caused The Telegraph to urge silence upon pacifists, resigned as a National Council observer for the PPU in March. While repeating his loyalty to the pledge he was reported as saying: "Can there be any such thing as 'absolute pacifism'?" and "Can you honestly go before a tribunal and claim complete exemption?" The issue of convoyed food had raised the extent to which pacifists could insulate themselves from total war. Mitchinson's words suggested the continuation of a personal refusal to bear arms within an acceptance of a *pacificist* context: "We have to look for something which is not absolute pacifism, but which is something like a reconstructed League of Nations".[91] L. du Garde Peach, whose peace plays had been performed regularly in Sheffield during the mid-1930s, produced a new play in April 1940, "Napoleon Couldn't Do It", which drew a patriotic historical analogy between Hitler and Napoleon.[92]

The Moral Rearmament Campaign, which had seemed to be an expression of pacifists' views, had, by the end of 1939, deserted them. The Earl of Athlone's "Call to our Citizens" broadcast in December, supported by 350 Lord Mayors including that of Sheffield, had moved to a neutral position, desiring to "...ensure a just and lasting peace" while displaying a concern for "...the morale of the country". Its only real stated aim was

---

[90] Hayes, D., Challenge of Conscience - the Story of the Conscientious Objectors of 1939 - 1949, London, 1949, p7

[91] "Frank Talk to Pacifists", The Telegraph, 13.3.40., p6

[92] "The Way of Dictators", *ibid*, 15.4.40., p6. Du Garde Peach was not a simple case of pacifism versus patriotism. His pre-war production included 400 radio plays many "of a patriotic nature" and post-war he became identified with an imperialist outlook. Mackenzie, John M., "In Touch with the Infinite, the BBC and the Empire, 1923 - 1953", in Mackenzie, J.M. (ed), Imperialism and Popular Culture, Manchester, 1986

for "...one hundred million people listening to God".[93] By the end of the Phoney War Moral Rearmament was allied to the war effort and in July a meeting at Hillsborough heard from several industrial workers "...how their contact with Moral Rearmament had made them more efficient workers in the drive for production".[94]

Pressure on pacifists increased after the German attacks on Denmark and Norway began their spring offensives. A debate at the University to consider the motions: "That this house considers the Communist Party and the PPU to be unpatriotic" and "That this house considers that the Communist Party and the PPU should be suppressed" degenerated into jingoistic rowdyism not reported elsewhere in Sheffield. Although The Arrows report has a hearty and jocular tone, pacifists at the University were intimidated both verbally and physically at this meeting and at an earlier PPU meeting that ended with a pacifist being thrown into a pond.[95] Pacifist speakers were pelted with tomatoes and the atmosphere of the meeting became such that: "...all speakers from the floor of the house prefaced their remarks by denying any association with either the Communists or the PPU". The STLC wrote to complain about the treatment meted out to members of its Peace Council.[96] In June the Revd P.M. Medcraft, Superintendent of Sheffield Methodist North East Circuit, wrote to the press to declare that his "quarter of a century" of pacifism was over. He agreed, he wrote, with Bertrand Russell who had said: "Ever since the war began, I have felt that I could not go on being a pacifist, but I have hesitated to say so because of the responsibility involved. If I were young enough to fight I should do so". Medcraft distanced the Methodist Church from the pacifist position: "The Great majority of the people in my own Church, while believing that war is not the Will of God, also feel that it is their immediate duty to render all help they can towards the overthrow of an evil power that is bestial and barbaric".[97] By this date the Christian basis of pacifism was itself under attack. In May the Revd Cyril G. Lane, vicar of St Andrew's Church, Sharrow, wrote:

> We know that it is God's will that we fight with all our might against Evil in the world. There is no one, who has full faculties, who could deny that

---

[93] "Moral Re-Armament Appeal", The Telegraph, 2.12.39., p5
[94] "Benefit from Moral Rearmament", *ibid*, 22.7.40., p5
[95] "The Debate", The Arrows, No 35, June 1940, p21
[96] STLC Minute Books, 7.5.40.
[97] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 12.6.40., p4

> this mad aggression, bringing murder and savage treatment of men, women and children in its train, is EVIL, in fact, the work of the DEVIL. It must be stopped by Force and this means WAR.[98]

Medcraft himself offered a striking image of the move of his own Church away from pacifism:

> It is doubtful today whether 10 per cent of our Church members and adherents are pacifists, for most of us feel that our nation is in its present parlous state, not because of any lack of love, but on account of our having too few ships, planes munitions and fighting forces.[99]

While there was a *pacificist* moral justification to be made for the war, some clerics repudiated two decades of soul-searching and rediscovered the tribal deities who had supported opposing sides in the Great War. Provost A.C.E. Jarvis said:

> ...that he considered the thunderstorm in Flanders which had hampered the German air force in the early part of the retreat, and the abnormal calm which made possible the evacuation of such huge numbers of men from Dunkirk, to be undoubted dispensations of Providence, and answers to prayers.[100]

By June Peace News was admitting that pacifism was losing its adherents. During May 210 new members of the PPU had enrolled against 627 resignations.[101] "During the last few weeks I have had letters from old friends, men and women who I should have been ready to "Back my shirt on", who have written to say that they can no longer hold to their pledges of personal renunciation of war", wrote John Barclay.[102] By the end of July the paper was writing more bitterly: "It is now painfully obvious that the list of peace pledge signatories has been swollen by names whose owners thought that the Kingdom of Heaven could be achieved on earth merely by glib talk of 'a world conference', 'remove tariff barriers' and the like".[103]

For Sheffield itself no figures exist to calculate the decline in the pacifist

---

[98] "Vicar's Letter", The Sharrovian, May 1940, np
[99] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 2.7.40., p4
[100] "People Turning More to Prayer', *ibid*, 10.6.40., p5
[101] "PPU Council Meets", Peace News, 7.6.40., p7
[102] "And Some Fell...", *ibid*, 14.6.40., p3
[103] "The Acid Test", *ibid*, p2

movement between September 1939 and July 1940.[104] The change in Methodist opinion, formerly divided roughly equally between the two peace methodologies, with a slight majority in favour of *pacificism*, was indicated when the July Conference passed an appeal to the USA for military support by a ratio of 4 - 1.[105] By this time it was obvious that those rejecting support for the war must ask themselves with Peace News: "Have we looked frankly and fearlessly on the prospect of domination?" Such defeatism was unlikely to attract much support even from those communist former allies who continued to oppose the war. Medcraft, the former pacifist, declared: "In the interests of national security it is time that the Government... took action against pacifism".[106]

(c) Conscientious Objectors: Those seeking exemption from war service were, almost exclusively, either self-defined as pacifists or from churches with doctrines which prohibited participation in secular war. Some fascists did go before the tribunals, but communists entered military service and sought to continue their political work through the formation of cells of those with similar views.[107] On the non-communist Left, of Sheffield objectors only Peter Freeman declared himself a "Left-wing humanitarian".[108] Hopes among pacifists that the pledge might seriously hamper the prosecution of another conflict were already dead before war was declared. According to figures published in The Telegraph in December 1939 for the local call up of men between 20 and 23, those applying for registration as COs amounted to 1.375% of the total (55 of 4000).[109] Study of the 220 men whose cases were recorded in the local press shows that overall 65% of those applying were either removed from the register and thus required to perform full

---

[104] Fisher's view that the shake out of membership had already taken place before the war does not necessarily conflict with the national view of a crisis in PPU resignations around May 1940. As has been noted of a number of other organisations related to the peace movement, there was a difference in intention between quietly dropping involvement with a group and publicly resigning from it and this was utilised by individuals as a method of stating personal realignment within the movement.
[105] "Methodists' Secret Session", The Telegraph, 18.7.40., p5
[106] "The Acid Test", *op cit* and "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 17.7.40., p2
[107] This response to conscription appears to have been accepted very early. Massey of the Sheffield YCL indicated as early as May 1939 that his organisation would attempt to continue its work within the army despite the risk that such activity might, as another young speaker pointed out, be considered "sedition". "Pacifists Forecast Victory", The Telegraph, 15.5.39., p4
[108] "Student's Distorted Ideas", *ibid*, 4.5.40., p5
[109] "55 Objectors", *ibid*, 12.12.39., p3

national service or registered as non-combatants with liability for national service with the Armed Forces. Since Sheffield's figures were roughly proportional with national trends,[110] the net effect of the legal protection of conscientious objectors was to remove 0.5% of manpower from the Armed Services. Analysis of the figures included in press reports suggests that only 0.07% of those called up in Sheffield during the period achieved complete exemption from National Service of some kind.

Problems experienced in dealing with conscientious objectors during the Great War, documented by John Rae in Conscience and Politics, The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service 1916 - 1919 had been addressed within the Military Service Act which had provided for three types of exemption by Tribunals and given them discretion over the specification of civilian work in the case of those conditionally registered. Tribunals judged the sincerity of the conscientious objection and they looked for consistency, truthfulness and, to an extent, originality. Objectors were routinely questioned at Leeds about the carrying of gas masks, eating convoyed food, their willingness to aid the wounded and their employment in war related industries. *Pacificist* objections to a particular conflict were not acceptable. The fairness of tribunals was questioned: "It is difficult to know why this tribunal exempts one applicant while another, equally sincere, is removed unconditionally from the CO's Register" wrote Peace News of the Leeds Tribunal at which men from Sheffield appeared.[111] It was dangerous, it said, to argue the case for pacifism too forcefully but equally dangerous to be overly reasonable since this often led to a decision for non-combatant service. Three of the Tribunal members it described as "instinctively hostile". The STLC made an official complaint about the attitude of a Mr Dodgeson.[112] Of the Chairman, Judge Stewart, Peace News wrote: "He is a kindly man and his relief when a case can be easily disposed of is evident, but he is intolerant in argument". The Telegraph's reports indicate that the pressure of majority opinion was strongly felt in the tribunal and those who spoke in defeatist terms were quite often told that they were talking "rubbish".

Although appearance before a tribunal was the logical conclusion of peace

---

[110] 1.41% of those in the 26 age group registered on 6th April (the last group before the Phoney War ended) applied for CO status. "Objectors Total 35 000: Proportion Still Falls", Peace News, 3.5.40., p5

[111] "Tribunals Are Still Inconsistent", *ibid*, 1.12.39., p5

[112] STLC Minute Books, 21.1.39.

movement activity for pacifists within military age groups, as Rae found of the Great War, a surprising proportion of objectors' claims rested on the religious tenets of idiosyncratic sects. Those claiming exemption on religious grounds accounted for approximately two-thirds of cases heard by the Leeds Tribunal[113] but they included Christadelphians, Seventh Day Adventists, Members of the Four Square Gospel Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses who all claimed a millennialist exemption along with Congregationalists, Methodists, Quakers and Unitarians whose members had been part of the 1930s peace movement (see Appendix p396). Denis Hayes argues that this apparent preponderance of religious objectors was illusory: "...for if a man was asked his religious denomination... it was natural to give the family faith to which he owed at least nominal allegiance, even though the basis of his objection was not specifically Christian". Hayes believes this depressed the apparent number of PPU objectors and the extent to which objections were "...broadly humanitarian, broadly moral, broadly ethical". More favourable treatment was certainly accorded those claiming religious exemption. Secular objectors were three times as likely to be removed from the register and only half as likely to achieve conditional registration.

While the vocational profile of the group reflected Sheffield's predominantly working class character, it also accords with Rae's conclusion that intellectual pacifism was not the predominant factor in conscientious objection. Only 27 objectors (12%) in these rather impressionistic reports gave an affiliation that placed them within the activist peace movement. While the largest group came from "white-collar" employment, loosely defined, the second largest group came from a skilled manual background. This pushed "semi-professional" workers, teachers and university students, into third place. Unskilled manual workers represented almost a fifth of those applying for exemption from service. The Tribunal's decisions became harsher as Britain's position became more difficult. Those appearing after the invasion of Denmark and Norway were twice as likely to find themselves removed from the register as those appearing before.

Despite the statistical insignificance of conscientious objection as a manpower problem, COs were treated with a hostility which amounted at times to persecution. A reporter from The Telegraph infiltrated a meeting of the Sheffield Advisory Committee

---

[113] Hayes, *op cit*, pp27 - 28

for Conscientious Objectors,[114] unannounced and gave his account under the heading: "They Took me for a Worried 'Conchie'". The vocabulary used offered an insight into the conspiratorial and "unhealthy" atmosphere which opponents believed existed amongst pacifist advisers and young COs. Men were "trickling" in to "confide" within a "carpeted and armchaired sanctuary", wrote the reporter, while the clergyman who addressed him amidst the "low drone of conversation" was "leaning over" as he "whispered". Hints of undue influence were given in the demeanour of the "energetic bespectacled" adviser and the innocence of the potential COs was emphasized by their description as: "one slight and pale and the other big and rosy cheeked".[115] There was a more insidious suggestion beneath the description of another conversation: "In front of me, a young clergyman, was confidently chatting with a dark, young looking boy, with wavy hair. They were seated in a large armchair. After a while, smiling, the boy rose and left". On a number of occasions the Tribunal itself appeared to subconsciously rely on a stereotypical notion of "manliness" to define those refusing to fight as cowardly or effeminate. This was not always done unkindlily. Judge Stewart described one young man as "...as splendid example of a person who might be described as possessing a quiet nature",[116] while to a mother who appeared on behalf of her 20 year old, variety-artist son, who was described as having been "an exceedingly delicate baby", he offered the Tribunal's sympathy.[117]

A more blatant example of the atavistic attitudes underlying the hostility to conscientious objectors was a poem printed in The North Wing - The Magazine of the Sheffield Medical School, "Facts to be Faced (With apologies to Robert W. Service)".[118] "Old Stager's" conception of the conscientious objection debate as part of the perennial conflict between university hearties and their more sensitive contemporaries degenerated into a crude social-Darwinist polemic:

---

[114] Three times a week the Board offered advice to those seeking registration as COs at the caretaker's cottage of the Friends' Meeting House at Hartshead. "Guidance for Objectors", The Telegraph, 2.10.39., p5, It advertised this fact in The Telegraph. "Public Notices", *ibid*, 10.2.40., p2

[115] "They Took Me for a Worried Conchie", *ibid*, 9.10.39., p5

[116] "Never Fought Even at School", *ibid*, 5.3.40., p6

[117] "Mother's Plea for Son", *ibid*, 31.10.39., p3

[118] "Facts to be Faced", The North Wing - The Magazine of Sheffield Medical School, Spring 1940, p17

They are men who refuse to pull their weight,
Where physical danger threats,
Who fear some danger to limb or pate
And hide behind conscience - the wets!

The first three stanzas flowed easily but "Old Stager" appears to have been rather appalled at the ideas he found himself endorsing and the last two stanzas took a step back:

These primitive views in the preceding lines
Are those held without any dilution,
By nations whose pace has been slower than ours
Along that steep path, evolution.

Nevertheless, the poet's emphasis not only on a stereotypical masculinity ("Each man's a trustee for his son") but also on "practical measures" and "facts" stands in contrast to concerns long expressed within the *pacificist* peace movement about the imitation of fascist attitudes. The fact that the verses appeared in the mouthpiece of the only jingoist crowd recorded in Sheffield suggests that some qualification needs to be placed on the extent to which the *pacificist* peace movement provided the rationale for the conflict.[119]

The extent to which a genuine *pacificist* consciousness underpinned the dominant *pacificist* vision of those who supported the war was raised too by The Telegraph's increasingly hostile attitude to COs during the Phoney War. In February "Current Topics" wrote: "There are honest and sincere conscientious objectors whose views one has to respect. They probably do not amount to more than one in five of the rather dingy procession now passing before the tribunals".[120] By June the writer was expressing an opposition to the whole basis of the law on conscientious objection.[121] As Leslie Belton of the Unitarians, not himself a pacifist, and other churchmen pointed out, the right to freedom of conscience which the conscientious objectors' clauses embodied was one of the fundamental differences between Britain and Nazi Germany and crystallised the

---

[119] Sebastian Faulks describes the very different attitudes which sustained the young pilots fighting The Battle of Britain whose fate it was to uphold the *pacificist* strategy of their elders in terms very much presaged by W.B. Yeats' poem "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death", Faulks, S, The Fatal Englishman: Three Short Lives, London, 1997
[120] "Current Topics", The Telegraph, 24.2.40., p6
[121] *Ibid*, 7.6.40., p4

pacificist justification for entry into the conflict.[122] Rejection of such a principle suggested a return to the atavistic tribalism which had characterised European patriotism during the Great War and raised questions as to whether the claims made for the moral justification of Britain's position, like those quoted from "Current Topics" earlier, were a reflex propaganda.

Once Britain's situation became desperate even the respect that had been shown for religious groups' freedom of conscience diminished. In July, after the Free Church Council expressed satisfaction that Sheffield City Council had decided not to sack COs in its service,[123] "Current Topics" wrote: "We do in fact strongly resent the implied suggestion that conscientious objectors are the true representatives of Christianity and that the rest of us are at least un-Christian if not anti-Christian".[124] Medcraft, who had repudiated his own pacifism, asked: "Does that mean that they support both democracy and totalitarianism, both Churchill and Hitler, both barbarism and civilisation, both paganism and Christianity?"[125] Such views removed the possibility of conscientious objection altogether. Medcraft justified this by saying: "I take the view that whatever may be said about pacifists... their right to be pacifists would be entirely lost if Hitler won this struggle".[126] When the City Council Education Sub-Committee resolved to continue its student bursaries to three conscientious objectors, The Telegraph took the unusual step of printing a list of members voting for and against. Broadly the list suggests that while Labour and Nonconformist representatives continued to support freedom of conscience, Conservatives and clergymen from the Established Church opposed it.[127]

It is difficult to know whether the press reflected or led public opinion. Pressure

---

[122] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 17.6.40., p5 & 16.7.40., p4. "Nazi frightfulness in Germany has been principally revealed in the suppression through concentration camp and imprisonment of those who for conscience sake could not give support to the Nazi conception of the State". G.E. Johnson, "Attercliffe", The Sheffield Methodist Mission Messenger, No 540 June 1940, p31

[123] "Meeting Last Night of Sheffield Free Church Council", The Telegraph, 13.7.40., p4

[124] "Current Topics", *ibid*, 16.7.40., p4

[125] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 17.7.40., p2

[126] "Ex-Pacifist's New Church Drive", *ibid*, 29.7.40., p5

[127] "Scholarships for Three C.O.s Renewed After Protests", *ibid*, 25.6.40., np (back page)

on the City Council began in the press at the time of the German Spring offensives,[128] but was continued after June, by Sheffield and District Joint Council of Ex-Service Associations.[129] A Gallup poll of November 1939 showed that when asked whether a CO should receive the same pay as a soldier for war work, the number of respondents who answered in the affirmative (38%) was exceeded by those who believed COs should be paid "according to work" (43%). Only 4% of those questioned took the punitive position that COs ought to be paid less.[130] Sheffield's NALGO Branch was not, however, supportive of conscientious objectors in the Council's service[131] and a number of objectors at the Tribunal reported that men were refusing to work with them. By July Peace News were reporting that attitudes had hardened: "One after another pacifists are finding themselves turned from their employment, ostracised by their fellows and left high and dry in a desert of unemployment and enmity..."[132]

Despite press fears about PPU propaganda, most letters from pacifists and conscientious objectors were defensive, arguing for the right to witness their beliefs rather than proselytise them. Harry Hazlehurst, whose sincerity was attested by the Leeds Tribunal granting him one of very few unconditional registrations,[133] replied to a Mrs Widdison who attacked COs and contrasted them with the sacrifices made by her own family. Hazlehurst wrote that he thanked Mrs Widdison's family but was sorry that "...such a will to sacrifice should be prostituted to such a devilish venture as war".[134] He said that he regarded it as an honour to be labelled as a conscientious objector and that many objectors wore the PPU badge to identify themselves. He concluded: "...We are prepared to face every kind of persecution, and even death, in proclaiming our faith". This histrionic claim to witness, which was made by a number of objectors who appeared at Leeds, was difficult to sustain in a situation where those who had not objected were in far greater peril. As the Editor of The Telegraph pointedly asked: "Are conscientious

---

[128] "Current Topics", *ibid*, 5.4.40., p7

[129] Although pressure from ex-servicemen certainly reflected attitudes to the circumstances of 1940 it also reflected concern originating in the experience of returning soldiers after the Great War. "Employment of Objectors", *ibid*, 7.6.40., p5

[130] Gallup, *op cit*, p25

[131] "Municipal C.O. Workers Lose Backing", The Telegraph, 9.7.40., p5

[132] "Hold Your Breath", Peace News, 7.7.40., p3

[133] "Doubted Ability of Tribunal", The Telegraph, 29.11.39., p6

[134] "Letters to the Editor", *ibid*, 6.11.39., p4

objectors expected to 'sacrifice their lives'?"[135] Nevertheless, although the insularity of pacifists in the desperate isolation Britain faced after June 1940 irritated the press and others, in some parts of the community there continued to be respect and tolerance. Widdison's son disassociated himself from his mother's remarks and affirmed that it did indeed take: "...as much courage to be a conscientious objector as to don a uniform".[136]

If pacifism was tolerated, its political influence, which had diminished after the break with the *pacificist* movement, reached a nadir. Although the Leeds Tribunal discovered a number of objectors who had associated themselves with the PPU or the Quakers in the immediate aftermath of the declaration of war, the number of objectors fell as the war progressed and older age groups were called up. There were objectors who, having achieved exemption, relented and asked to be put on active service. Harold Lingard who had declared to the Tribunal: "You can hang me or cut my head off, but I shall never go", in December had by July gone AWOL to draw attention to his desire to be transferred from a non-combatant to a fighting unit.[137] While Lingard was atypical there are signs that for others, even at this late stage, the move was one from absolutism to relativism. Harry Bramwell, well known amongst his fellow tramway workers for his left-wing views, explained in their magazine why he had joined the Local Defence Volunteers. "I am still convinced that from a moral and sensible point of view, the CO is definitely right", he wrote:

> ...but sheer commonsense tells me that Hitler must attack Britain and that, unless met by a strong resistance, this attack will result in a considerable loss of civilian life. This is in complete accord with my previous policy of putting the welfare of the workers before all other considerations.[138]

(d) Sheffield Labour and Communist Parties: T.D. Burridge finds four phases in the national Labour Party's attitude to the war during this period. What he describes as almost the relief of the declaration of war was followed after Hitler's 6th October offer of a truce by some questioning of Britain's position. In November this led to the Peace Aims Group which included pacifists and others, as well as Stafford Cripps on the Left,

---

[135] *Ibid*, 5.1.40., p3
[136] *Ibid*, 9.11.39., p4
[137] "Objector Who Would Rather Hang", *ibid*, 2.12.39., p8 and "Objector's View Changed", *ibid*, 24.7.40., p5
[138] "I Join the L.D.V. - And Why", The Sheffield Transportman, Vol 2 No 8, June 1940, p6

showing an interest in a negotiated peace. Russia's invasion of Finland commenced the third stage and removed some of the pro-Soviet sentiment which was undermining Labour support for the war. Attitudes hardened further after February when Labour leaders began to realise that the conflict was not going to be ended by revolution in Germany.[139] Although the events that heralded these phases do seem to have had some local impact, the dynamic of opposition in Sheffield was linked to Communist Party policy which followed a consistent anti-war line from the beginning of October. The concluding chapter of the history of Sheffield Labour Party and the pre-war peace movement was, therefore, the denouement of the long inter-relationship between agitation for a United Front and peace related issues.

On 24th September 1939 Dave Springhall arrived back in Britain from Moscow with instructions from the Comintern that the Communist Party of Great Britain should cease to support the three week old conflict with Nazi Germany as an anti-fascist war and should instead urge an end to hostilities in line with Russia's conclusion of a non-aggression pact with Germany. At a twice adjourned meeting which finally ended on 3rd October and after a fierce debate, the Central Committee adjusted its line in accordance with the Comintern's view. George Allison, Sheffield's senior Communist organiser, was present at the meeting, although he was not a Central Committee member, and supported the revised policy.[140]

The CPGB's new policy did its total membership figures no good but Morgan has argued that the retention of its most active and committed members left the party in a stronger position both in the final months before Germany attacked the Soviet Union and during the period of the wartime alliance when Communist Party membership in Britain rose from 12 000 in 1941 to 65 000 in 1942.[141] Morgan remarks that not only were those who left the Party the less committed but that even they tended to "...merely let their membership of the Party fall into abeyance". This accords with the situation in Sheffield

---

[139] Burridge, T.D., British Labour and Hitler's War, London, 1976, pp25 - 47

[140] Francis King & George Matthews (eds), About Turn, The British Communist Party and the Second World War, London, 1990. Allison's views during the first part of the meeting are recorded pp190 - 196. Many years later Bill Moore reported that he too preferred the revised line in opposition to the war "...because of its continuity with the whole experience of the previous ten years". Attfield, J. & Williams, S. (eds), 1939: The Communist Party of Great Britain and the War, London, 1984, p56

[141] K. Morgan, Against Fascism and War, Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935 - 41, London, 1989, p315

and repeats what has been observed during the controversy over the Moscow Trials, that CPGB members did not generally express dissension publicly.

The history of the United Front campaign suggested that, in contrast, the Labour Party would within a very short period be rent by divisions between left and right. There had always been a suspicion that the foment in the ranks of Labour in Sheffield was the result of the dual membership. The re-organisation of the STLC in July 1940 was the result of the tough attitude of Labour officials in the new situation of the war and a Communist Party instruction to its secret members that they were to "come out" bringing with them as many Labour Party members as possible.[142] Freda Tustin resigned her positions in the Labour Party, presumably in response to these instructions, immediately after the change of policy,[143] others waited. Prior to this date the Labour Left in Sheffield had not pushed its many disagreements with the NEC to the point of disaffiliation. The headlong challenge to the national leadership's authority at this crucial time raises the question of the extent to which previous disagreements over peace policy and other matters had reflected, not popular opinion within the party, but pro-Communist campaigns orchestrated by the small number of key figures who departed from or were forced out of the party between October 1939 and March 1941.

The disarray created by the Soviet accommodation with Germany was highlighted when, even before Britain's declaration of war, Hallam DLP, previously the most radical in the city, voted to disassociate itself from the largely supported STLC resolution urging continuing negotiations for a British treaty with Russia. The resolution which originated the trouble in which the STLC later found itself was, however, passed at the next Delegate Meeting. Mr H. Wilkinson proposed a four part motion much of which indicated the continuation of pre-war attitudes and was tied in to a call to "...clear out the discredited National Tory Government". It was the final paragraph which was contentious: "That we support the move of the Soviet Union in coming to the assistance of East Poland and saving its people from Fascist aggression and tyranny. We deplore the attitude of the Daily Herald and those Labour leaders who have distorted this humanitarian act".[144] The voting record showed 35 for the motion and 28 against in a meeting of 86 delegates. There was what looked like coordinated support in Sheffield for

---

[142] Morgan, *op cit*, p198
[143] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, 11.9.39.
[144] STLC Minute Books, 26.9.39.

this view. The Sheffield Transportman carried a letter in September and an article by Henry Dubb in October endorsing it.[145] Dubb poured scorn on those who had objected to executions which had taken place after the Russian invasion in terms very like those used by Communist apologists for the Moscow Trials.

From the first those STLC leaders who supported the policy in defiance of the national leadership knew that their position was insecure. Not only was the motion endorsed by less than 50% of the delegates but also the next meeting discussed irregularities in the use of credential cards by those attending. Hallam DLP repudiated the section on Poland by a majority of 6 - 2.[146] The STLC Executive asked its affiliated organisations to give an opinion on a follow up resolution from the Railway Clerks' Association, No 2 Branch, and received 22 replies, 16 against and six in favour. It is not clear where the support was coming from for, amongst surviving records, not only did the loyalist Brightside DLP refute the resolution[147] but so, once again, did Hallam DLP Management Committee. The actual wording of the RCA resolution is not available in the STLC Minute Books. An account of the meeting appears, however, in the Brightside DLP records. This was written by Asbury, no friend of the Left. The resolution, he said, declared: "...the war to be an Imperialist War between two countries for world domination" and was in line with Communist rather than Labour Party policy. It was passed by 39 votes to 38 at 9.45pm after "a large number" of the 115 delegates attending the meeting had left. To the embarrassment of the national party, details of the resolution were broadcast by Radio Hamburg at 8.15pm on 6th December.[148]

The STLC's Executive was aware of their affiliated organisations' disquiet. Even before the resolution was passed dissenting elements of the Railway Clerks' Association made known their objections.[149] One branch of the RCA, in which a Mr Scholey was prominent, withdrew from the STLC[150] and it was he who after a "lengthy" attack

---

[145] "Letters to the Editor", & "Notes", The Sheffield Transportman, September 1939, p11 and October 1939, p4

[146] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 8.10.39.

[147] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Books, October 1939.

[148] "Appendix A, Report by Divisional Secretary of Meeting Held February 26th, 1940", LP(B) 14. Gallup polls show Radio Hamburg to have been the most popular of the enemy broadcasting stations with 50% of the audience for such broadcasts in October 1939.

[149] STLC Minute Books, 7.11.39.

[150] "Sheffield Trades Council Reconstructed", The Telegraph, 3.7.40., p5

proposed the resolution to disagree with it which Hallam DLP passed (12f - 8a).[151] This began a long dispute between Darvill and Scholey within the Hallam DLP which weakened Darvill's position.[152] By 2nd January the STLC had received a protest about the broadcast from the National Union of General and Municipal Workers Union, Number 4 Branch. By mid-February the Executive had also received a letter from the National Brass and Metal Mechanics Union calling upon the council "...to rescind a resolution in support of the USSR".[153] Somewhat disingenuously the Secretary was told to reply that the council had "not direct [sic] supported the USSR", but that the union could submit such a resolution to the council's AGM. In the same month the Executive Committee of Brightside DLP found that the January issue of Sheffield Forward contained an article "...which attempted to justify Russian action in Finland" and ordered that one copy only be given to each member of the Executive and that the rest be destroyed.[154] An effort to pass a resolution at the next quarterly meeting describing this instruction as "a grave error of judgement" attracted only three supporters.[155] The national party began to take an interest. When the Secretary forwarded a resolution calling for a National Conference, headquarters suggested that the STLC "...were influenced by circular letters from other organisations".[156] The Assistant National Agent, T.H. Windle, was sent down to meet separately Trade Union Officials and the officers of the local DLPs.

Darvill's own position was challenged. Brightside DLP supported J.W. Holland for STLC President at the 1940 AGM.[157] A constitutional resolution to defer Darvill's selection as parliamentary candidate split Hallam DLP Management Committee (7f - 7a) in September. At his selection meeting in February he was asked about his adherence to party policy and declared that he "...would be governed solely by the decisions of Party Conference regarding the attitude of the Party to the War".[158] He was unanimously selected but his assurances were worthless for the Party Conference did not meet until

---

[151] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 10.12.39.
[152] *Ibid.* 14.1.40. - 8.4.40.
[153] STLC Minute Books, 13.2.40.
[154] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 17.2.40.
[155] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Members' Meetings Minute Book, 28.4.40.
[156] STLC Minute Books, 2.1.40., 9.1.40., and 23.1.40.
[157] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 20.1.40.
[158] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 11.2.40.

May 1940.

Records of the testimony collected by Windle do not exist in Sheffield although Asbury's words quoted earlier were part of Brightside DLP's contribution. In early March the STLC Executive protested about the "manner" in which the enquiry had been conducted. Darvill's submission, which was sent both to Labour's NEC and organisations affiliated to the STLC, argued that Windle should have met the executive as a whole, that the trade unions' meeting was not representative as it had only been open to full-time officials, and that the policy of which they were in breach had not been ratified by the Annual Conference. At no point did Darvill tackle the variance between STLC and Labour Party policy with regard to the war. This constitutionalist approach was reinforced by the letter sent out with the circular which concluded: "We are confident that, whatever your attitude towards the decisions of the Council, you will join with us in trying to safeguard the traditional democratic rights of members of the Labour Party and Trade Union Movement".[159] Meanwhile allegations of communist infiltration continued. The week before a delegate called Harrington, who Asbury reports was accused of sending reports of STLC Meetings to The Daily Worker, and Preece, soon to become a recurrent thorn in the side of A.V. Alexander, were named by the Secretary A.E. Hobson. No action was taken against Preece but Harrington was reported to his trade union branch.

At the Delegates' Meeting in March the Executive had an opportunity to end the confrontation with Head Office when the resolution proposing the rescinding of that section of the motion of 26th September, which had supported the Russian invasion of Poland, was debated. The vote recorded by a majority of 61 to 47 the meeting's desire to rescind the original motion but "...the resolution was declared not carried as it required two-thirds majority to rescind a resolution".[160] At the beginning of April the Executive sent Darvill and Councillor Sterland, Junior Vice-President, to Labour's London headquarters. From this point on decisions by and about the STLC were taken against a background of the German Spring Offensive which began with the invasion of Denmark on 9th April and ended with the Franco-German Armistice of 25th June. Monty Johnstone believes that the Communist Party line was momentarily softened after the

---

[159] STLC Minute Books, 12.3.40.
[160] *Ibid*, 19.3.40.

receipt of a French Communist Party declaration on 20th June, but this did not impact on the events unfolding in Sheffield.[161]

The minutes of the STLC Special Delegates' Meeting of 16th April to discuss Windle's inquiry are uninformative, although they recorded an attendance of 203 delegates and 17 visitors. Once again Asbury's more detailed report must be relied upon. Asbury was impatient with Darvill's conduct of the meeting. No resolutions were allowed and considerable time was wasted, as some delegates unsuccessfully demanded the removal of Harrington. Darvill then spoke for 50 minutes about the STLC's problems to prove, wrote Asbury acidly, "...to his own satisfaction that it had never been in such a flourishing condition as at the present time".[162] Questioners were limited to three minutes each. It was at this meeting, according to Brightside DLP, that delegates first heard that the Labour Party intended to reorganise the STLC.[163] The extent of the trouble at the STLC claimed The Telegraph "...came as a shock to the rank and file, many of whom were unaware that the trouble was so serious".[164] Hallam DLP defeated (10f - 4a) an amendment expressing confidence in the STLC, preferring a resolution deferring the matter for further consideration.[165] Labour Headquarters, who had asked Darvill for reassurances about his adherence to party policy, refused to endorse his selection as parliamentary candidate.[166]

The next meeting of the STLC Executive heard further details of "Alleged Communistic Activities". A Mrs Nutton reported that: "...certain persons had been at her house seeking names and addresses of all delegates attending the Council".[167] Councillor Howard Hill had been in trouble with the Brightside DLP since January when Asbury had received a telephone call reporting that Hill had been seen going into a Communist Party meeting at Burngreave Vestry Hall. Asbury had himself then gone to the hall and told Hill that "...such conduct was incompatible with membership of the Labour Party,

---

[161] Johnstone, Monty, "The CPGB, the Comintern and the War, 1939 - 1941. Filling in the Blank Spots," Science and Society, 61:1 (1997), pp34 - 36
[162] "Appendix B, Report of Special Delegate Meeting of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council held Tuesday, April 16th, 1940", LP(B) 14
[163] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 20.4.40.
[164] "Trades Council Split", The Telegraph, 25.4.40., p3
[165] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 24.4.40.
[166] *Ibid*, 8.4.40.
[167] STLC Minute Books, 23.4.40.

and that the matter would be reported to the next meeting of the E.C."[168] At the AGM Hill was questioned about his attendance at the meeting. While he described himself as "disturbed about the present state of affairs" and "...referred to the resolution passed by the Trades Council a short time ago on the International Situation as indicating the dissatisfaction of the Movement with the handling of affairs by the Labour Party".[169] he defended himself in much the same constitutionalist terms as used by Darvill. Other city councillors had attended CPGB meetings without being reprimanded, Asbury and Rowlinson were responsible for actions more out of step with party policy and there was nothing in the constitution that stopped him attending such meetings. After a long discussion Hill eventually agreed that he would "...in future conform to the constitution, policy and spirit of the Labour Party". Meanwhile the Communist Party heaped faggots on the fire that would consume their supporters in the STLC. Reminded by an official of the STLC that they were "unwelcome and uninvited guests" at the annual May Day Parade, they replied with an innocent and injured air that they could see no reason for this since: "According to the Council's declaration on the war, they have the same attitude as the Communist Party".[170]

The deputation of Darvill and Sterland reported back to the STLC Executive on the 19th May that the NEC "...had already made up their mind to reorganise the Council". The Executive made a last defiant show, instructing Darvill to begin preparations for the next Sheffield Forward and, against instructions from Head Office, transacting the ordinary business of the council at the May Delegate Meeting.[171] On the evening of 10th May Labour members had been asked to enter Churchill's new Cabinet. On 13th May Labour's Annual Conference had approved the party's participation in the coalition government. At the Brightside DLP Special Members' Meeting convened on 19th May to hear a report from the two meetings on the future of the STLC Hill announced that "...he was definitely and fundamentally opposed to the present policy of the Labour Party and the decisions of Conference".[172] On 21st May Hill openly acted as chairman of The Daily Worker meeting in the City Hall. It was reported to the STLC

---

[168] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 20.1.40.
[169] "Adjourned Annual Meeting", 4.2.40. LP(B) 14
[170] "Uninvited Guests", The Telegraph, 1.5.40., p5
[171] STLC Minute Books, 21.5.40. & 28.5.40.
[172] "Minutes of Special Members' Meeting held in Burngreave Vestry Hall Sunday, May 19th, 1940", LP(B) 14

that a member of the Shop Assistants Union had been told that Hill "...had always been a member of the Communist Party".[173] On 25th May Brightside DLP Executive Committee derecognised Hill as councillor for the ward. On the following Monday an article appeared in the press disclosing the contents of a letter from the BDLP Executive Committee which were critical of Hill for not resigning following the undertaking given in February. Although Hill's "extreme left-wing views" were referred to in this and an article giving Hill's response two days later, Hill was not identified in the press as a communist.[174]

On 2nd July a Special Conference was held to reorganise the STLC. Windle described his inquiry as being into "alleged subversive activities" and named nine individuals who had been invited to meet a Mr Whitworth and himself to "...hear certain charges that had been made against them": Darvill, Gethin, Sharrard, Jeeves, Hull, Preece, Owen, Yeadon and Mrs Yeadon. Of these, he said, credentials were issued following the interview to Hull, Owen and Jeeves. No credentials had been issued to the others "...pending further consideration being given to their position by the new Executive Committee".[175] The 198 delegates present then voted to re-establish the Council without those excluded and to elect a new executive. Thraves became president, with Sterland moving from junior to senior Vice-President. The 12 industrial members elected had not been associated with opposition to the Labour Party's foreign policy but amongst the political delegates, Len Youle represented Hillsborough, J.S. Worrall, the pacifist, Attercliffe and Alderman Albert Smith, who had spoken against involvement in the war at a debate under the auspices of the Militant Socialist International in March,[176] was the City Council Labour Group's nomination.

It would be wrong to assume that the expulsion of those suspected of dual membership ended criticism of the national party organisation. Scholey, for instance, the Hallam delegate to the new Executive who had been critical of the STLC's pro-Russian policy from the first, is to be found describing a letter from headquarters about the

---

[173] Undated pencilled note on tear out notebook slip sellotaped to agenda in STLC Minute Books, 23.4.40.
[174] "Labour Won't Recognise Councillor", The Telegraph, 27.5.40., p5 & "Will Resign from Labour Party", *ibid*, 29.5.40., p5
[175] STLC Minute Books, 2.7.40.
[176] "Socialist Support for War", The Telegraph, 25.3.40., p6

reorganisation as "sheer nonsense", less than a week after the meeting.[177] However, confrontation with the national party was ended by the reorganisation and there appears to have been little support for those disciplined. A resolution to have the new Executive hold an enquiry into the circumstances of the six removed members was defeated by an amendment which accepted Windle's findings as "*prima facie* evidence" against them by 13 votes to four. At the delegates' meeting in July the amendment was endorsed by 113 to ten.[178]

What was regarded as Communist influence continued in the Hillsborough DLP. As early as October 1939 Preece, then secretary of the ward Labour Party, sent A.V. Alexander a resolution criticising Britain's position. Alexander checked with Ballard, his agent, before replying and, referring to a broadcast from Moscow attacking Labour leaders, indicated his suspicion that Preece's views were Communist-inspired.[179] Soon after the German spring offensive began F. Tuffnell, secretary of the Hillsborough and Owlerton Ward Labour Party, sent Alexander a further resolution disassociating it from Alexander's advice to neutral countries to join Britain and France in collective security pacts against Germany: "We would remind Mr Alexander that the workers' fight is against this Government, and not to assist them in their 'Spread the war' propaganda". Alexander replied that this was neither the Labour membership's view nor in "harmony" with Labour Party policy. A letter from Preece, now secretary of the Hillsborough Divisional Party, asked Alexander to state whether his advice to neutrals was: "...the official policy of the Labour and Co-op Movements or just your own personal opinion". Alexander replied in the very different circumstances of 3rd June expressing "astonishment" that Preece did not appreciate that had Belgium and Holland entered into cooperation with France and Britain as Alexander had suggested in April they "...would have avoided the collapse under German tyranny which they have suffered in such a short time". On receiving a copy of the letter Ballard informed Alexander not only that the Trades Council had been closed down but also that Hillsborough DLP was to be recreated "...without the present officials". Alexander, by this time First Lord of the Admiralty, accepted Ballard's offer to deal with any further correspondence. Ballard,

---

[177] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 8.7.40.
[178] STLC Minute Books, 9.7.40. & 30.7.40.
[179] All correspondence referred to in this paragraph is held under "Hillsborough Divisional Labour Party", CPR 25

who betrayed the impatience felt by party officials with what he described as "this 'left' element" (Harrington had also been writing to Alexander), wrote that a committee was being set up "...with the object of clearing all the folk with Communist sympathies out of the Party altogether". In July Preece forwarded a Hillsborough DLP resolution calling for Chamberlain, Sir Samuel Hoare, Lord Simon and Lord Halifax to be removed from the coalition government. Ballard handled the matter as arranged and this commenced a correspondence with Preece who remained Honorary Secretary of Hillsborough DLP until at least January 1941. The long held intention of reorganising the divisional party was carried out by March.[180]

The reorganisations within the Labour Party raised the question of the extent of Communist entryism. Bill Moore indicated during an interview that he believed that Darvill had been a joint member of the Labour and Communist Parties. Charles Darvill, himself, however, re-interviewed in the light of this information strongly denied that this was the case. To Mager he had said: "I was very sympathetic to their [CPGB] ideas. Some of the ideas I was putting forward were ideas the CP were putting forward. I did become a member of the CP later [in 1945] but anything to do with them was anathema at the time". During our first meeting Darvill reported that he had been a member of the CPGB "after the war" but refused, during a rather tense second meeting, to clarify when. Doubt is thrown over this version of events, however, because Mager was also told that Hill first became a member of the Communist Party during the same year and this was clearly untrue.[181] Andrew Thorpe writes in the more recent The History of the City of Sheffield that: "It seems likely that he [Darvill] had been and remained a Communist too".[182]

Darvill's communist membership is linked, in Bill Moore's version of events, with the alleged part played by A.J. Murray as an *agent provocateur* and eventually informer on others with dual membership. Murray disappeared from Sheffield at about the time that the Communist Party declared itself to be against the war. He is not mentioned in STLC minutes after 18th September. Darvill independently volunteered that Murray had

---

[180] STLC Minute Books, 25.3.41.

[181] Charles Darvill interview with writer 8.10.90. & Mager, J.W., "'Believing that Socialism and Peace are Indivisible' - The Attitude of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council towards Peace and War between 1919 and 1939", M.A. Dissertation, Sheffield Univ., 1983

[182] Binfield et al (eds), *op cit*, Vol 1, p104

"disappeared". Interestingly too, Asbury, describing for Windle "our difficulties as regards alleged communist activity", gave Murray's name as being the informant who had told him that Sadler, who had moved to Chapel St Leonards with at least £4 of Labour Party funds, also owed money to the Communist Party for literature obtained on their behalf.[183] While the meeting was described as occurring "shortly after" Sadler's May 1939 departure, it is an interesting coincidence that Asbury's memory should turn to Murray in this context.

Against this conspiratorial view it has to be said that the influence of communist policy on such members of the STLC leadership as Darvill and Sharrard was not a secret. Hill's adherence to CPGB policy was absolutely blatant. In September he was publicly supporting the war[184] and a couple of months later opposing it. Murray's role was hardly crucial in this context and even if he did supply information to Labour officials this falls short of confirming that he was an informer. Many CPGB members disagreed with the October change in party policy. Murray was unusual, if Moore's version of events is correct, only in that he chose to act.

It was not, however, only in the CPGB that conspiracy theories flourished:

> A Labour leader of national standing said to me tonight that Moscow is working to thwart the British nation's war resolution and for this purpose has arranged Communist cells not only in local Labour Parties and Trades Councils and in the Peace Pledge Union, but also in Cooperative associations where there cannot be a political test to exclude such underground workers - and even in the local organisations of the British Fascists.
> These cells are small but crafty and often clever. They look for all symptoms of war weariness or grievance about rationing and the incidence of taxation. They never profess openly to be pro-German, but do their utmost to provoke class jealousies and war weariness.[185]

Morgan to an extent corroborates this view. He finds a continuation of the CPGB's efforts to form a Peace Front with what he describes as some "unlikely allies" after October 1939 as well as the re-adoption of a policy of revolutionary defeatism.[186] In Sheffield there appears to have been no contact between pacifists and communist with

---

[183] Correspondence with Sadler in LP(B)17
[184] "Labour's Youth to Help in War", The Telegraph, 7.9.39., p5
[185] "Current Topics", *ibid*, 26.4.40., p4
[186] Morgan, *op cit*, pp105 - 128

the latter preferring to continue their dialogue with sympathisers on the Labour Left. Debate on the rationale for the war was eschewed in favour of vanguardist policies on joint concerns. Allison, speaking of the STLC's September debate, said: "The question of whether we supported the war or not did not appear big in debate. The big things were how to get the drive on ARP, to strengthen the fight against dilution, etc, and the line put there".[187] As Morgan points out, communists were following the Leninist lessons of the Great War when the Soviet Revolution had been based on the adoption of the populist policy of Peace, Land and Bread. The correspondence conducted by Preece and others with Alexander and Ballard moved from the openly confrontational question of other states' neutrality through a call for the removal of the "Men of Munich" to the populist issue of deep shelters. The agitation on deep shelters caused sufficient stir at the Cooperative Party Executive Committee for Ballard to obtain an official position statement from Asbury in the autumn of 1940 to counter criticism on the matter.[188] Tom Shachtman has noted that the peculiar conditions of the Phoney War heightened tensions between the classes in Britain.[189] Fear that genuine grievances were being used to create anti-war feeling caused the Labour Party to warn branches that the "People's Vigilance Committee" was a front for the Communist Party.[190] Darvill, it will be noted, was instrumental in the formation of just such a Parents' and Teachers' Vigilance Committee at a meeting on 13th April.[191]

It was not, however, simply a question of communist manipulation. Dualism with regard to the war and the reluctance with which some Labour activists had renounced the strike against war made the party fertile ground. The Nazi-Soviet Pact, followed quickly by the declaration of war and the electoral truce, increased these doubts. Signs that the re-evaluation of the *pacificist* logic for entry into the war went wider than those close to the Communist Party were evident. Hallam Ward Labour Party reported receiving a number of resolutions from other Labour Party organisations which linked a declaration of war aims with "...negotiation with Germany, other European Countries, and the United States, to agree to common pooling of Raw Materials, etc". Hallam Ward

---

[187] Francis King & George Matthews (eds), *op cit*, p193
[188] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minutes, 19.9.40.
[189] Shachtman, *op cit*, p115
[190] Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 10.11.40.
[191] "Sheffield Committee to Safeguard Education", The Telegraph, 15.4.40., p5

supported circulars of this type from both Norwich TLC and West Edinburgh DLP.[192] As late as May 1940, just two days before Labour entered the Churchill Government, the loyalist Shiregreen Women's Section was still reflecting the confusion amongst Labour members. Unable to feel justified in sending delegates to a National Peace Council conference on the "Conditions of Peace", of which they were in favour, they understatedly minuted that this was "...because the Labour Party itself, is not wholly in support of such a policy at present, there being such conflicting circumstances".[193]

The first of these "conflicting circumstances" was the party's relationship with the Chamberlain government. Even the liberal Christian wing of the *pacificist* peace movement in Sheffield believed that Chamberlain's policies had favoured European fascism. On the Left opposition was compounded by his reputation as the hard-face of capitalism: "This Government of ours has not even feelings of decency towards its own working class, to whom it refuses every social improvement until absolutely compelled by public opinion", wrote "O.R.G." in The Sheffield Transportman.[194] Labour activists were suddenly confronted in September with their party supporting a war, led by Chamberlain against the tacit, and by October, open opposition of the Soviet Union. In a party obsessed with the spectre of the "Great Betrayal" of 1931 there was suspicion of the electoral truce. The STLC Executive sent back some Government war propaganda posters supplied to them by the Labour Party with a note explaining: "...that we consider propaganda of this character as a waste of money and time and an insult to our intelligence". To the Delegate meeting they explained that they felt: "...it did not come within the preview of this council to be advertising agent for the present government".[195] Hallam DLP Management Committee, faced with two letters from headquarters, one explaining the electoral truce and the other "how to keep the party fighting fit", narrowly passed (8f - 7a) a rather tetchy resolution expressing their difficulty "in squaring these two letters". The same meeting received from Broomhill Ward a stronger resolution repudiating the action of Labour leaders in accepting the truce.[196] The first of the STLC's two resolutions to the Annual Conference which were discussed in February

---

[192] Hallam Ward Labour Party Minute Book, 22.11.39. & 24.1.90.
[193] Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party, Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book, 8.5.40.
[194] "Horrible!!!", The Sheffield Transportman, October 1939, p12
[195] STLC Minute Books, 10.10.39. & 31.10.39.
[196] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 12.11.39.

accepted the need for an electoral moratorium after the outbreak of war but viewed Labour's statement of war aims as a "direct challenge" to the government and called for "attack on every possible occasion".[197] An unnamed Labour councillor who was also said to be a member of the STLC explaining the internal difficulties of the party in April linked them with "strong resentment of the political truce".[198] While Hallam Divisional and Ward Labour Parties appear to have accepted the necessity for the truce in the more difficult circumstances of early May, both added the proviso that the PLP should not enter a coalition government.[199]

It was not only Communists who attempted, after the formation of Churchill's Government, to continue opposition to those associated with Chamberlain. In August Mr Quartermain of Hallam DLP attempted unsuccessfully to have minutes containing Hallam DLP's rejection of his resolution on the subject "not confirmed".[200] Sheffield and Ecclesall Guilds Federation, Manor Men's Guild and Brightside and Carbrook Guilds Federation, the Cooperative Party Executive were told, had all associated themselves with what was regarded as the communist inspired protest of the Hillsborough DLP in this matter. After a long discussion the Executive replied that it considered such resolutions "ill-advised at the present time" and reminded the guilds that the Party, not the guild, was the correct channel for expressions of political opinion.[201] As has been noted of Scholey, even activists who supported the Labour leadership's position were sometimes irritated by heavy-handed efforts to suppress dissent which all too often allowed the dissidents to claim that they represented the democratic impulse. The ASLEF 1B Branch, for example, in supporting the STLC in April hoped: "...they will never agree to any victimisation of any of their elected delegates and continue their policy to preserve free speech, freedom of thought and action, which we contend is our democratic right".[202] Morgan has suggested that the loss of Labour membership at this juncture, which nationally amounted to a quarter of the total and represented the whole of the gains made during the thirties, as well as what he describes as the *rigor mortis* in

---

[197] STLC Minute Books, 20.2.40.
[198] "Trades Council May Be Dissolved", The Telegraph, 24.4.40., p5
[199] Hallam Ward Labour Party Minute Book, 1.5.40. & Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 6.5.40.
[200] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 12.8.40.
[201] Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book, 25.7.40.
[202] ASLEF Branch 1B Minute Book, 28.4.40.

the party, which was certainly discernible in Sheffield,[203] can be attributed, in part, to the loss of Communist inspired Labour activists hastened by disciplinary action by Transport House.[204] In Sheffield, however, this malaise appears to have afflicted equally those branches with a history of dissent that suffered expulsions and loyalist branches unaffected by disciplinary action.

Underlying the difficulties those on the Left faced in allying themselves with Chamberlain in the early days of the war was the theory that all wars were the product of capitalist rivalries. "Hitler is an effect of Capitalism not a cause, and Capitalism is the root of all war", wrote Harry Bramwell in The Sheffield Transportman.[205] Many on the Left could not believe Attlee's view that Labour support for the war could lead to new and fairer economic conditions:

> Major Attlee must be either A FOOL or A TRAITOR to the workers if he intends to suggest that this Government is fighting to establish Socialism, or that they will willingly create any condition favourable to that creed.[206]

Labour's entry into the Cabinet intensified these concerns. Three resolutions from Hallam Ward to the DLP in July included one criticising the Labour Party's involvement in the floating of a War Loan and "...the failure to put into effect the promise to conscript wealth as well as man power".[207] At Hallam DLP Management Committee it was lost by just one vote (6a - 5f). "O.R.G" writing at the very beginning of the war had urged that the workers should use their "present position of indispensability to ...get the most out of these intolerably wealthy people for whom we are fighting". The wealthy, he

---

[203] Crookesmoor Ward Labour Party collapsed when the collectors refused to collect. Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 12.11.39. Burngreave Ward Cooperative Party reported having only 14 members in September 1940, "...about half the number of the preceding years". Letter from Mrs E. Yelland to A. Ballard, 16.9.40. (CPR 11). Some of this may have been due to dislocation. The greatest difficulties appear to have occurred after the bombing of December 1940. Hallam Ward Labour Party, for instance, recorded no meeting between 11.12.40. and September 1941. Nationally, official Labour Party membership figures had stood in a rising trend at 381 256 in 1934. They continued to rise to a peak of 447 150 in 1937 but thereafter fell by 20 000 for the next two years to stand at 408 844 in 1939. The 1940 total was 304 124. Pimlott, B., Labour and the Left in the 1930s, London, 1977, p114

[204] Morgan, *op cit*, p198

[205] "Let us Keep our Reason", The Sheffield Transportman, September 1939, p8

[206] "Getting Hitler Down", *ibid*, January 1940, p18

[207] Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book, 8.7.40.

had argued, should not be allowed to finance the war in such a way as to "...pass any debts on to our children" by saddling the country with "a mortgage on the future production of the workers". He concluded:

> And if any person thinks I am not patriotic, let me inform them that the last war, in which I took a part, made umpteen new millionaires, made the rich people richer, and brought to the workers the Trades Union Disputes Act, the Means Test, Unemployment and this new War.[208]

The one solid advantage that those on the Left felt had come out of the Great War was the creation of the Soviet Union and continued support for it after the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact and even after the invasion of Finland was visible outside of those known or suspected of being Communists. The view that the Russian invasion had "saved" Eastern Poland found expression in the letters column of The Telegraph[209] as well as in The Sheffield Transportman.[210] D.N. Pritt KC MP, the Labour leader most closely identified with the Soviet Union, addressed two meetings arranged by the Hillsborough Cooperative Society in March and when news emerged a month later of the trouble at the STLC, The Telegraph's article identified those under suspicion as having "unmistakable leanings" towards the recently expelled Pritt.[211] Suspicion of the motives of those denigrating Stalin's *volte-face* was widespread amongst those on the Left who remained emotionally committed to the Soviet Union. A letter preserved in the Cooperative files from a Sheffield couple, asks Alexander to use his influence to prevent war with Russia which "...a number of powerful and wealthy persons in this country were promoting ...to suit their own personal aims".[212] They, like a number of others on the Left in Sheffield, appear to have continued to believe, as a correspondent to The Sheffield Transportman succinctly put it: "The only Ally worth having to defeat FASCISM is JOE & Co, who carry lightly the taunt that they never won a war".[213] It would be a mistake, however, to assume that all those critical of Labour's support for

---

[208] "Need we Tighten our Belts", The Sheffield Transportman, September 1939. p9
[209] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 23.9.39., p4
[210] A writer describing himself as "Shirecliffe L.P." defended the Russian attack on Finland in "Letters to the Editor", The Sheffield Transportman, March 1940. p13
[211] "Mr Pritt's Meeting", The Telegraph, 18.3.40., p6 & "Trades Council May Be Dissolved," *ibid*, 24.4.40., p5
[212] Letter from Mr & Mrs Unwin, dated 16.2.40. in CPR 54
[213] "Letters to the Editor", The Sheffield Transportman, June 1940. p4

the war were also pro-Russian. Bramwell, who was critical of the Polish Government, was not a Russophile and criticised the Soviet Union for attacking Finland.[214] The small Trotskyist element in the city in the person of L. Helliwell also attacked Soviet action at the outbreak of war and over Finland in the pages of The Telegraph.[215]

Labour Party records demonstrate, therefore, firstly that there was considerable but not majority opposition to the war and secondly that this opposition was wider than the alleged extent of Communist influence in the party. "Current Topics" corroborated the:

> ...existence of an anti-war section of the Labour Party, a section that is by no means confined to those who label themselves Communists. One meets it in unexpected quarters. There is, in fact, little echo in Sheffield of the strong war-like sentiments expressed by the official Labour Party and the TUC.[216]

George Allison, from the other end of the political spectrum and addressing an audience before whom he had no need to conceal the extent to which entryism was responsible for the effect, said of the STLC's September resolution: "It indicates that there is a large section of the labour movement closely identified with the position of our Party and which can be closer identified on the basis [sic] issues..."[217] The communist manipulation which was undoubtedly taking place at the STLC and in certain Labour Ward and Division Parties increased the appearance of dissent but did not originate it. The disquiet felt by Labour activists over their party's support for the war reflected not so much outright opposition as concern over the possibility of fighting an anti-fascist war which, from a *pacificist* perspective most reluctantly accepted had become inevitable, in alliance with a capitalist government which they believed was pro-fascist and without the support of the one national government which they believed was resolutely and implacably anti-fascist. This provided an antipathetic context to the many issues resulting from the physical and economic dislocation of wartime and intensified debate on the justification for the conflict. This paralleled the unrealistic debate encouraged by the artificial atmosphere of the Phoney War in other sections of the peace movement about possible

---

[214] *Ibid*, December 1939, p14
[215] "Letters to the Editor", The Telegraph, 2.10.39., p3 & *ibid*, 13.3.40., p8
[216] "Current Topics", *ibid*, 25.4.40., p4
[217] Francis King & George Matthews (eds), *op cit*, p193

peace negotiations. The increasingly direct threat of outright defeat after April 1940 and the entry of the Labour Party into a coalition with Churchill detached wartime grievances from outright opposition to the war and left the Communist inspired Left more isolated. The ease with which the national Labour Party were able to re-organise the STLC in July confirms that, not only were the numbers of those directly inspired by the Communist Party small, but also that the anti-war resolutions which they had helped to pass did not reflect the membership's majority view. The issue of the war was, however, a policy difference which overlay fundamental ideological ties which united the Left.[218] The Communist Party therefore never found itself in the total isolation which was the lot of the absolute pacifists at this juncture. Darvill, for instance, was back as a guest speaker at Cooperative Party meetings before the end of 1940.[219] Much to the chagrin of Labour leaders, Communist vanguardism kept the party in contact with the Labour movement. Just a month after the STLC's reorganisation Thraves was having to make "a very strong appeal" to the Delegates Meeting not to distribute unofficial literature outside the meeting.[220] Continued discussions of shared concerns, albeit officially at a distance, ensured that the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union was quickly followed by an almost instant rehabilitation of the Communist Party in popular opinion on the Left.

Summary:

Although the history of the Labour Party in Sheffield during the first year of the war must focus on the anti-war position adopted by the STLC, it is clear that the majority of the *pacificist* peace movement in the city, including many members of the Labour Party, accepted the logic of the declaration of war. Historically this was more important than the communist-inspired opposition because it provided, even during the phase when Britain was fighting a unilateral war against the Axis, an internationalist dimension which influenced the post-war settlement.

---

[218] "...In many areas Communists remained active, dedicated and effective in trade union and other mass struggles. The catch was that this was always at the expense of ignoring the central political issue of the day - the war - and the attitude of Communists towards it." Morgan, *op cit*, p276

[219] Sheffield and Eccleshall Section Cooperative Party, circular dated 2.10.40. (Darvill speaking on "Civil Liberties" 23.11.40.) & circular dated 30.12.40. (Darvill speaking on "Lenin" 15.1.41.).

[220] STLC Minute Books, 13.8.40.

The failure of the League of Nations to have any impact on the opening stages of the conflict gave the LNU a problem of presentation. Local representatives continued, however, to champion the cause of a supranational organisation in the local war aims debate which began with the declaration. Nationally, Birn regards this as an example of one of the limited successes that the LNU enjoyed. The strain of idealism, which had characterised the *pacificists* even in their realist phase, flourished in the artificial conditions of the Phoney War. A federalist vision of the supranational authority surfaced which, like the League before the question of sanctions had intruded, offered a unified vision to the more idealistic *pacificists* and the more worldly pacifists. Discussions in Sheffield revealed, however, that, while *pacificist* idealism was not spent, spokesmen at both a local and national level were wary of finding themselves ensnared in an idealistic scheme that offered no obvious solution to the problem of international enforcement. After the end of the Phoney War, the Federal Union organisation aligned itself with the *pacificists* and presented itself as a long-term solution after the defeat of fascism. It was from this position, it has been suggested, that it had some influence on the post-war world.

Of those who opposed the war in Sheffield, the fascists were the least influential despite recent suggestions that at a national level the British Union enjoyed a revival during the Phoney War. Pacifists were more visible but this was partly because they became the targets of a hostile press. Censorship of pacifists' views took place during the early weeks of the war but local pacifists did not attempt to organise public manifestations of their opposition, restricting themselves instead to letters to the press. Although jingoism was not a general feature of Sheffield's reaction to the war, pacifists and particularly conscientious objectors did become the target of public hostility. Changes in the local leadership of church organisations removed some prominent pacifists and organised religion became noticeably less sympathetic to pacifism, partly at least in response to general public support for the conflict. The difficulty of maintaining a separatist lifestyle in a community in which almost all aspects of life were dominated by the prosecution of the war left absolutist pacifists struggling to find an expression for their views. The recollections of pacifists elsewhere suggest that toleration in circumstances where pacifists wished to bear witness was sometimes hard to bear. Sheffield's records offer only acts of minor persecution, sometimes by those formally pacifist themselves.

The low level of conscientious objection in Sheffield as elsewhere revealed the lack of influence that pacifism possessed. Young left-wing dissident *pacificists* did not generally express their objections in this form. Although methods of recording objectors may have biased the reports, religious objections appear to have formed a much greater proportion of the views of the objectors that did previous involvement with the peace movement. The members of Millennialist sects made up a considerable proportion of those objecting, as they had in the Great War. Few objectors attempted to use their tribunal hearing as a platform to proselytise their views and it is difficult to place Sheffield objectors within the context of an organised peace movement. Most appeared focussed on an individualist perspective of their objection.

There is no doubt that in Sheffield the most influential and effective opposition to the war existed among left-wing Labour activists. Opposition within the Labour Party membership to the war was a feature across the country (although the extent to which this reflected Communist Party entryism is difficult to establish). Sheffield's atypical feature was that the opposition was successful in passing a critical resolution through one of the party's major committees, albeit that on which local activists had most influence. There is no doubt that this did <u>not</u> represent majority support within the party in Sheffield for an anti-war line. The falling off in numbers voting for pro-Soviet resolutions after the declaration of war indicated majority support for the war. The resolution was passed as a result of careful manipulation in circumstance in which it enjoyed no more than 30% support even among activists. Hallam, the most radical of the Divisional Labour Parties with a personal loyalty to Darvill, did not have a majority in favour of an anti-war position. The passing of such a resolution fitted in with Communist Party instructions to its secret members to undermine the leadership of the social democratic party's support for the declaration of war.

The success of the CPGB's tactics in Sheffield was neither indicative of communist "control" of the STLC nor of support for a developed policy of revolutionary defeatism within the local Labour Party. There were probably no more than a dozen individuals formally linked to the Communist Party in positions of influence. Whether Darvill himself was formally linked to the party is of little consequence, his acquiescence in the direct challenge to the Labour leadership was, however, crucial and demonstrated that local leadership was an important element in the manner in which local peace movements developed.

The anti-war resolution could only have succeeded amongst non-communists if there were genuine doubts amongst the wider membership about support for the war. It is clear that some of the pertinent issues here had little direct relevance to the peace issue. Much of the suspicion of the intentions of the Labour Party leadership revolved around economic questions, most particularly unemployment, and the depth of the suspicion of the political truce declared as the war began was a legacy of the debacle of 1931. Personal animosity to Chamberlain was also a prominent factor. The importance of these issues illustrates that during the long interaction between the united front and the peace movement the issue of peace had not always had primacy. Much of the apparent opposition to the war was a manifestation of grievances on other matters which the CPGB attempted to coordinate within an anti-war context. To an extent the peace movement had simply been one theatre of conflict over the essentially domestic issue of whether the Left in Britain should evolve on a social-democratic or revolutionary model.

Of foreign policy issues which influenced attitudes within the Labour membership, it is clear that the position taken by the Soviet Union, the first "Workers' State", cast seeds of doubt in the minds of individuals who were not themselves allied to the Communist Party. The lack of socialist or even democratic credentials for some of the countries Britain had agreed to defend in the new alliance-based collective security also gave rise to nagging doubts. By far the most important factor, however, would appear to be that the developed *pacificist* view which regarded the use of military sanctions as the ultimate weapon in an internationalist model of pacification was shallow rooted amongst Labour's rank and file. The belief that the collectivist approach advocated by the Labour Party would automatically translate on the international stage into an era of peace had come to be understood as the simple equation 'Labour equals peace'. The confusion evident in the words of the Shiregreen Women's Section and of Alderman Thraves at finding the country once more at war with their party wholeheartedly supporting the prosecution of a second major conflict is plain. It argues for the continuance, long after it was intellectually discredited, of an emotional predisposition to the undifferentiated quasi-pacifism of the 1920s. An attachment to peace, in its most basic sense as the absence of war at almost any price, was a response to the Great War which underlay attitudes amongst the membership of all the groups involved the peace movement of the thirties. In part it explains the gap between leaderships struggling to develop strategies to cope with the belligerence of fascism and

members expressing a gut resistance to involvement in war. This mood survived into the period of the Phoney War and indeed, if national opinion polls are to be believed, actually grew in the early months of 1940. It evaporated, however, once it became clear that Britain itself was under real threat of external domination, leaving those in Sheffield's Labour movement who had fostered it in pursuit of the communist line with almost no direct support on the issue.

Chapter 8, Appendix:

Sheffield Conscientious Objectors Appearing before Leeds Tribunal Reported in The Telegraph, 24th October 1939 - 26th July 1940:

Total individuals: 220 (100%)

Tribunal Result:

Removed from Register:	64 (29%)
Non-Combatants:	79 (36%)
Conditionally Registered as CO	66 (30%)
Unconditionally Registered as CO	11 (5%)

	Before 9th April 1940: 135 (100%)	After 10th April 1940: 85 (100%)
Removed:	30 (22%)	34 (40%)
Non-Combatants:	48 (36%)	31 (36.5%)
Conditional:	47 (35%)	19 (22.5%)
Unconditional:	10 (7%)	1 (1%)

	On Religious Grounds: 95 (100%)	On Secular Grounds: 48 (100%)
Removed:	13 (14%)	24 (50%)
Non-Combatants:	33 (34%)	13 (27%)
Conditional:	41 (43%)	10 (21%)
Unconditional:	9 (9%)	1 (2%)

Unknown: 77

By Known Employment (total 206)

Professional	Semi-Professional	White collar	Skilled	Manual
2 (1%)	37 (18%)	78 (38%)	51 (25%)	38 (18%)

Unknown: 14

Chapter 9
Conclusion

Although the peace movement existed to address international issues through pressure on national government, the shape of the movement in different regions was defined by local circumstances. The factors that defined these circumstances were a product of the social and political culture of the locality rather than any simply determined economic forces. Sheffield's importance as an armaments centre, for instance, had a strong impact on the growth of the peace movement through working-class suspicion of the insecure nature of armaments contracts, fear of the attention of enemy bombers, interest from outsiders keen to promote war resistance and wider political forces brought into play by the debate over the nationalisation of armaments. Within the peace movement itself there is no evidence that the economic interest of the city in war production diminished activity or promoted more armaments-friendly policies.

It was the character of the component parts of the peace movement in a locality that defined its shape and the changing nature of its leadership. The strength of the Left in Sheffield, numerically through the predominantly working-class character of the city and politically and electorally through its well-organised union base, particularly in the heavy trades, had a profound effect. The nature of Sheffield's Left-wing ensured that elements of dissension based on the old pacifist ILP and the intellectual sectarianism of the Socialist League, which slowed the movement away from a generalised pacifism in other localities, had less influence on the Sheffield movement. The Communist Party, while it was far from receiving the level of support that had allowed the "Little Moscows" to grow up in a few mining areas, had achieved some penetration into the working class organisations of Sheffield. The party's efforts to direct the peace movement were unsuccessful but the intellectual coherence of its response coupled with the sympathy of a number of key figures in the Sheffield movement ensured that, to an extent, the Labour Party's relationship with the peace movement was defined by communist influence within it. This had two distinct and apparently contradictory effects. The Comintern's adoption of a *pacificist* policy aimed to contain fascist aggression through cooperation with non-socialist powers ensured that communist influence in Sheffield promoted the movement from "utopianism" to "realism" in the Labour Party. Conversely, however, the ideological direction of this new realism made it chary of

compromise over issues such as rearmament. The Labour leadership's fear of communist influence meant that they remained suspicious of involvement with the peace movement and this deliberate disengagement allowed other smaller organisations (including the Communist Party) to have a greater influence on the peace movement than would have been the case had the Labour Party fully involved itself.

Although the secularisation of British society which had commenced in the mid-nineteenth century continued apace during the nineteen thirties, the churches were equally influential on the shape of the peace movement. To the despair of some of its spokesmen, neither Christianity as a whole, nor any of the denominations individually, was able to promote a unity of view on the key question of whether, in the difficult later thirties, pacifism or *pacificism* best represented the Christian perspective. What Wilkinson describes as the natural tendency towards appeasement was counter-balanced, particularly within those church members of *pacificist* views, by a moral and ethical stance towards foreign policy which became increasingly disapproving of the Nazi regime. This judgement was expressed by individual clergymen from the start of Chamberlain's appeasement strategy and became the dominant view up to the highest levels of the Anglican hierarchy after *Kristallnacht*. Although this moral judgement was resisted in Sheffield, as elsewhere, by pacifists keen to continue with appeasement, there can be little doubt that the churches' condemnation of Nazi 'frightfulness' from the end of 1938 was an important contribution to the shift in the public's attitude towards a policy of containment over the winter of 1938 - 1939.

In Sheffield, the attitudes within Anglicanism typified the tension between this independent moral judgement and the exigencies of the Church's establishment role rather than the well-publicised pacifism of the small but influential minority of clergy at a national level. Some Anglicans, who otherwise followed a largely pro-Government line, remained engaged with the peace movement and this provided an important element of the *pacificist* consensus. In contrast the other numerically strong denomination, Methodism, despite a majority of *pacificist* members, was the mainstay of pacifism in the city. As with communist influence on the Labour Party, this was in part the result of the opinion of a few key figures. It provided, right through to the declaration of war, a source of opposition to the *pacificist* direction taken by the majority peace movement. Congregationalists and Unitarians, in the earlier part of the period were a stronger influence for pacifism than their Methodist colleagues but were eclipsed later by the

larger sect. The surprising omissions from this list were the Quakers, who do not appear to have attempted to exert a group influence on the peace movement at all, despite the fact that several Quakers were prominent in the movement. These individuals espoused an absolute pacifism. The lack of personal papers or records of private discussions from the Friends or the PPU make the detection of what Ceadel describes as a growing tendency for Quakers to combine a personal pacifism with an acceptance of a political *pacificism* difficult. Similarly with Catholicism, neither what has been described as its generally negative attitudes towards the peace movement, nor the activities of the small number of church members who sought to engage with the peace movement are obvious from public records. Indeed, apart from on the question of the religious education of the Basque child refugees, there is no evidence of local Catholic intervention either for or against the peace movement.

The third organisation that had an important influence on the shape of the Sheffield movement was the League of Nations Union. In part the LNU owed its influence to the Labour Movement who were prepared to see leadership by that body and enter into cooperation with it where they would not countenance open coalition with left-wing groups pursuing a united front. This paints the LNU in too passive a light. Until May 1938 the union actively pursued its own unity strategy and demonstrated a surprising resilience in what might appear to be the inimical social and political conditions of Sheffield. As with the two other major constituencies of the movement the LNU's influence was not coherent. Its national visiting speakers proselytised views that were the basis for the consensus among *pacificists*, but its local officials not only modified these views so as to allow the continued participation of pacifists in the organisation, but also espoused views that were incompatible with a *pacificist* vision. These tensions within the organisations induced paralysis at the time of Munich and had a serious effect on the coherence of the *pacificist* response to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. A resolution of this situation within the union in favour of the *pacificist* view occurred only in the very last months of peace.

Of the smaller organisations involved, those within the widest remit of the Labour Movement displayed attitudes, even when they acted independently, recognisably allied to the spectrum of Left-wing views in the city. Sheffield's Woodcraft Folk, for instance, expressed opinions in line with the *pacificist* Left rather than the pacifist views which have been commented on in other parts of the country. Studies of pacifism have

highlighted a number of individuals who attempted to live in a style compatible with, and which gave witness to, their pacific beliefs. Although this tradition in Labourism had been diminished by the development of its party structure, there continued to exist amongst peace activists of the Left in Sheffield a tradition of participation in activities which emphasised a non-competitive communitarianism or gave expression to their internationalism. This was certainly not peculiar to Sheffield and it is not clear whether it can be traced directly to a local communitarian socialist tradition that had existed in the late nineteenth century.

Unions and other bodies expressed political views generally through the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council and thus contributed to the overall stance taken by that body, although individual branches identified themselves with communist views and occasionally the Communist Party. Outside of the STLC, unions did not play a large part in the peace movement and a number of smaller unions, for whom records survive, never discussed such issues.[1] There were pockets of pacifism within the Labour Movement, particularly in the Cooperative Women's Guilds and the Labour Women's Sections but these were unable to act sufficiently independently to make alliances outside of the Labour umbrella.

The most important of the smaller organisations, the Peace Pledge Union, was successful in delineating a pacifist domain on the edge of the majority peace movement but unsuccessful in influencing the main group. In part this was the result of a late start at a time by which the *pacificist* basis of Sheffield's peace movement was well established. Pacifist influence within the Churches and the LNU pre-existed through the roles of prominent individuals and prior membership of other organisations promoting pacifism, particularly, it is surmised, the denominational pacifist fellowships. The nature of Sheffield's Labour Movement, especially the weakness of the ILP with which the pacifist NMWM had strong connections, never gave pacifism more than a toe hold within the Left and by the time the PPU attempted to gain some influence the divergence between pacifism and Left-wing opinion, particularly over Spain, was too great. There does

---

[1] Both the Sawmakers Protection Society (11.5.38.) and the Amalgamated Society of Wire Drawers and Kindred Workers (25.9.37.) recorded giving funds to industrial causes in the mining industry. Neither appears to have contributed to Spanish funds. The only intervention in the peace movement' affairs recorded was the Sawmakers' decision (12.6.40.) to send a delegate to the meeting to reorganise the STLC in July 1940.

appear in Sheffield to have been efforts to form other independent peace groups allying a populist approach to foreign policy with a generalised approval of the appeasement methodology. These did not involve themselves with the peace movement, of whose internationalism they were an expression of disapproval, and do not appear to have survived the wide acceptance of the *pacificist* view following the fall of Prague. These organisations are the only elements of Sheffield peace activity which do not have an obvious national counterpart.

Of other political parties the British Union of Fascists was of marginal importance in Sheffield and did not associate itself with the peace movement even during the Phoney War when pacifists and communists were taking a superficially similar view. The BUF's greatest role, therefore, was during the earliest period of united front activity when they became a target as local representatives of fascism for a youth peace movement bent on direct anti-fascist activity. The Liberal Party, on the other hand, had an influence on the LNU despite its electoral collapse after 1929. The points of similarity between Liberal and Marxist analyses of the economic causes of war were an important contribution to the *pacificist* consensus, as well as providing the intellectual justification for the World Conference to re-divide global resources, which was the abiding pacifist answer to the international destabilisation of the thirties. Efforts by Liberals to lead the movement, however, brought into play the same kind of opposition as the Labour Party had expressed to the formation of a united front.

The biggest difference between the shape of the local and national peace movements was the lack in Sheffield of a dissident anti-appeasement group of Conservatives. The Conservative Party showed almost a complete lack of engagement with the peace movement in Sheffield and the Conservatively inclined press was antagonistic, not just to the peace movement, but to dissident Tories as well. In contradiction to what was said earlier about the lack of obvious economic motivation to peace movement opinion, Conservative opposition reflected not only an ideological defencism but also the involvement of leading party members in Sheffield in the arms trade. Calls for the nationalisation of armaments production appear to have had a particularly strong effect. Conservative influence on the *pacificist* consensus, which was crucial at a national level and very shortly after the outbreak of war provided the dominant historical view of the period, was only felt in Sheffield at a distance. It is difficult to say what effect this had, but it might have been that the existence of a Popular

Front, including dissident Tories, at the outbreak of war could have acted as a counterbalance to communist exploitation of the dissatisfaction felt during the Phoney War. The weakness during the Munich period of the LNU, which provided these kind of links in Sheffield, exacerbated this effect.

The form that the Sheffield peace movement took was equally influenced by the fact that its three major constituencies were divided to different extents both between pacifism and *pacificism* and within *pacificism* over the key issues of rearmament, ARP, national service and conscription. While at moments of stress this weakened the peace movement's response, during the first phase of cooperation it undoubtedly built bridges across the organisations which remained visible during the later period when these divisions hardened. Incoherence within organisations thus ironically promoted coherence in the movement as a whole.

In theoretical terms the broad model of a movement which journeyed from a generalised pacifism into the alternative channels of a *pacificist* collective security and an absolute pacifism is applicable to Sheffield's experience. The model of collective security to which *pacificists* had moved by the outbreak of war, mutual defence pacts between countries building towards an anti-fascist *bloc*, was difficult to distinguish both from simple defencism and from the rival alliances that had existed during the Great War. The two essential factors which continued to place this rather primitive version of collective security within a *pacificist* model were its eschewal of isolationism and the idealistic dimension of the policy which recognised both the existence of mutual national interests and a moral basis for the antagonism to fascism. The consensus around these precepts united left and right, outside of pro-fascists and the pacifists, until the Soviet-German Pact detached communist opinion. Militant anti-war opinion in Sheffield was based on the strength of communist influence on the STLC and support for the USSR. This reaction remained *pacificist* but rejected the conditions of September 1939 as the basis for a just war. It reflected, among left-wing political activists, an ideological impatience with the compromises of a realist foreign policy which had been the basis of tensions within the Labour Party since 1934.

The generalised pacifism of opinion in the early years of the decade was also influenced by local conditions. In Sheffield war-resistance had widespread support amongst Sheffield's Left reflecting the perceived importance of the circumstances of the Soviet Revolution. War resistance was a *pacificist* doctrine and its alliance with pacifist

views was based on a lack of clarity over the circumstances in which war would not be resisted. The international events which pushed a wide spectrum of opinion from a more genuinely pacifist view towards *pacificism* were, however, instrumental also in convincing war resistors that fascist aggression needed to be resisted. On all sides the experience of the Great War had left a legacy of anti-war opinion which continued to be an undercurrent long after the stated views of the majority of the peace movement had espoused a rational and ordered *pacificism* in response to fascist expansion. It remained difficult for the peace movement to espouse specific belligerent acts for the purposes of restraining aggression within the *pacificist* agenda. Generalised anti-war and anti-militarist sentiments continued to impede the coherence of the peace movement's responses right through to the Phoney War.

On the Left, it is difficult to distinguish these generalised pacific views from specific ideological objections within a *pacificist* model to rearmament, ARP, national service and conscription. The apparent inconsistency of opposition to these war preparations within a *pacificist* model, which was always a focus for anti-Left and anti-peace movement criticism, increased as the international situation deteriorated. Although they were the products of a coherent intellectual approach, these objections prioritised domestic political considerations over international factors and produced contradictions in policy never fully resolved by any section of the Left until the outbreak of war. This in turn reflected the difficulty of formulating a definition of unity both on the Left and within the country as a whole after two of the most socially and politically divided decades in British history. These underlying divisions were exacerbated both by the character of the Chamberlain administration and the animosity widely felt in the peace movement to it and by the imminence of a general election as war approached.

In the face of this litany of divisions it might be asked how a consensus within *pacificism* could be said to exist. The common elements were a preparedness to sanction an armed response to aggression not directly aimed at Britain in conjunction with or under the aegis of a supranational organisation, usually the League of Nations but increasingly a less formalised group of similarly motivated states. This was a consensus rather than an underlying similarity of conception because the movement towards it consciously accepted the shared basis of views held in contradistinction to the appeasement of the government and the pacifists. The growth of the consensus was marked by the conscious rejection of pacifism, which became so marked by the last

months of peace, that it was difficult for pacifists and *pacificists* to cooperate over shared opposition to aspects of war preparations.

The pacifist theories on which the peace movement was based are much harder to delineate. At the beginning of the period a developed pacifism (as opposed to amorphous anti-war sentiment) existed in the small No More War Movement branch, in a tradition of Christian pacifism associated with the Wilson family, whose political home had originally been the Liberal Party but which had moved into the Labour Party after the Great War, and in the Churches themselves. This provided, particularly through the public profiles of Frank Dawtry, Cecil Wilson and Alfred Hall, a local spectrum of pacifist thought ranging from the socialist to the spiritual. Although the situation of the thirties and the creation of the Peace Pledge Union led to a debate between these pacifist currents, this does not appear to have impacted on Sheffield. It is clear that Gandhian non-violence was discussed but difficult to point to its influence on pacifist thought or activity. The fact that the only two representatives of pacifism to become prominent after the creation of the PPU were the Methodists Benson Perkins and Tyler Lane, whose primary allegiance may well have been to the Methodist Peace Fellowship, suggests that the new organisation did not have a dynamic theoretical impact. There is a lack of evidence in Sheffield to examine local pacifist thought but in part this appears to be the result of quietism and a stress on the importance of individual conscience. Those who continued to see pacifism as a political force had some success in steering local LNU policy, but, despite Wilson's position as a Labour MP, little discernible influence on the Labour Movement outside of the small pockets of pacifism. The experience of Sheffield suggests that developed pacifist ethics, as distinct from a generalised anti-war sentiment, had limited appeal both within the peace movement and for the public as a whole. Ceadel's view that PPU membership never really grew after the success of its launch accords with this. Equally it refutes the Churchillian thesis that the thirties saw the growth of pacifism amongst the public usually traced through a litany of events beginning with the Oxford Union's "King and Country" debate.

The tension between schematic political thought and what has been rather lamely described in this work as "psychological reaction" is of key importance in examining the theories espoused by the peace movement. Events in Sheffield at the time of Munich accord with opinion polls taken at the time to demonstrate that the apparent warmth of public reaction to Chamberlain neither accorded with the sceptical view of appeasement

taken by large numbers of people in the population nor, in the aftermath. changed that view. Although not all the apparent inconsistencies of peace movement thought and action can be attributed to the same causes as public relief in October 1938 it is clear that without the recognition of an emotional dimension to the activities of the peace movement its reactions appear at times incoherent. This emphasizes the importance of Ceadel's patterning of the decade as a movement away from quasi-pacifism and the continuation, even amongst those who moved into a developed *pacificist* paradigm, of a residual and generalised pacifism.

Both the shape and theoretical form of the Sheffield peace movement were conditioned by opposition to it. The initial impetus to coalition was strengthened by the government's criticism of the Peace Ballot. The movement of the LNU towards the Labour Party was similarly influenced initially by the government's growing rejection of internationalism and later by Chamberlain's espousal of appeasement outside of the League framework. LNU rhetoric grew noticeably more oppositional as the thirties progressed and this drew them closer to the Left who were promoting a Popular Front. There is no doubt that the primacy of international affairs had a distorting effect on the debate on pacification as it became the main forum for expressions of opposition to the government. While proponents of the united and popular front strategies were sincere in their protestations that pursuit of these goals was inextricably linked to their efforts to change foreign policy, there is no doubt also that they sought to manipulate anxieties about international affairs to increase support for these strategies. It is quite impossible to understand what was happening in the Sheffield peace movement without knowing the contemporary events in the long running struggle in the Labour movement over the united front. In the last stages, those who maintained opposition after war was declared were in danger of being overwhelmed by an opposition which now included their former *pacificist* allies. Pacifists found themselves forced into isolation and individual witness, acknowledging that even their efforts to influence public opinion must be curtailed. Communists, on the other hand, while insisting that their own membership conformed to the Comintern's policy, sought to continue their opposition to the war through leadership of public grievances.

In turning to the final question underlying this thesis, the extent to which Sheffield's history challenges the received view of the national peace movement, it is clear that no simple empirical methodology can be applied. Theories about what was

happening at a national level cannot be tested by comparing them with the evidence available from Sheffield's records. Peace movements varied too widely between localities for any single area's experience to provide a 'typical' model. Efforts to re-interpret the national movement with regard to its popular base must await the production of studies of the peace movements in a number of localities. The national historiography, however, certainly as far as Sheffield is concerned, does provide an adequate description of the many strands of theory and policy upon which the activities of the peace movement were based. The example of the Sheffield movement suggests, however, that the character of local movements may have increased or lessened the impact of aspects of this shared basis in such a way as to vary their individual histories to a significant degree.

Although all historical interpretations tend to an extent to dissolve in the minutiae of a close examination of individual events, the overall model of peace activity upon which almost all commentators are agreed provides two points of reference. Around 1931, amongst both the majority of the peace movement and the general public in Britain, there was a quasi-pacifist view that a repetition of the Great War should be avoided at all costs. By the other end of the decade, after March 1939, there was amongst a similar majority a contradictory view that aggressive territorial expansion by one state against another must be countered by the joint forces of non-aggressive states. The theoretical routes and speed with which individuals and groups within the peace movement moved between these points varied enormously. The criticism of the portrayal of national peace movement which this interpretation of events in Sheffield validates lies not in the causal relationship between events and opinion within the peace movement but in the tendency to offer broad generalisations about the effect within a time limit of specific causes. Thus, while it is clear that the Abyssinian War promoted a debate about the application of sanctions which represented an important stage in the evolution of the two distinct peace traditions of the thirties, neither A.J.P. Taylor's assertion that this was the most important debate on the Left in defining peace attitudes nor Carroll's view that it promoted a widespread acceptance of rearmament is sustainable with regard to Sheffield. Indeed, even its agreed effect, the divergence of pacifist and *pacificist* opinion, cannot be dated in the city by reference to the cause. Two and more years later those split by the debate were still working together within the LNU.

While the present work cannot provide a basis from which to propose alternative models of what was happening at a national level, it reinforces the point that not enough

is understood about the relationship between the views that were propounded by peace organisations centrally and the opinions of their nominal supporters and the public in the country at large. The interpretation of this interrelationship is made more difficult in the thirties because the surveying of public opinion was in its infancy and the policy of the peace movement's component organisations was decided either undemocratically, as in the PPU, or in such a way that the opinions of a small number of individuals was disproportionately weighted, as in the LNU and the Labour Party. The dissension of activists in these two latter organisations from the policies of the small committees which dominated them is well recorded. The history of the Sheffield movement tends to emphasize, however, that the majority view of local activists may not have fully endorsed any of the conflicting positions recorded nationally. The history of the relationship between the local Labour Party and the local peace movement, for example, conforms neither to the model of the national leadership's evolving policy towards peace nor to the alternative history of the dissenting tradition associated with the Socialist League and Sir Stafford Cripps.

Although the well-delineated position of the Communist Party was a crucial factor in shaping the relationship of the Sheffield Labour Party to its local peace movement, its policy was influential because of the pressure it exerted on a dualism which already existed with regard to peace policy in many ordinary members and amongst some of its local hierarchy. The effect of this, outside of those committed to Communist ideals, was to promote that confusion of popular view which is commonly observed in the peace movement of the thirties. Individuals simultaneously approved different strands of peace theory whose ultimate result, in the unfavourable circumstances of the time, was to promote conflicting policies. Evidence of this dualism of opinion within Sheffield's LNU and Labour activists is so widespread that it might almost be described as characteristic of the Sheffield peace movement. The internalisation of this conflicting dualism, it has already been suggested, may explain the silence of the LNU membership in the immediate aftermath of Munich. There is a danger in attributing all lacunae in the evidence available in Sheffield to the same cause, but it is not implausible to suggest that the difficulty in characterising the local PPU may owe something to the confusion of belief which existed, not only between different members of that group, but also within individuals.

A superficial view of the size and importance of the pacifist constituency and the

extent of the rejection by the *pacificist* majority of war preparations has led to the peace movement of the thirties being dismissed, outside of specialist and scholarly interest, as mistaken, irrelevant or even as a dangerous aberration.[2] This view is based on a "realist" interpretation of the period in which pre-war attitudes are tested against later events, particularly the weakness and isolation of Britain in the twelve month period June 1940 - June 1941 and the Holocaust. There is an inherent danger in viewing an epoch simply as a staging post on the way to somewhere else but even within this framework there is an alternative view that the peace movement played a crucial role in forming the resolution displayed by British public opinion in continuing the war against Germany in what appeared to be the almost hopeless circumstances of the summer of 1940. In a similarly positive vein it could be reasonably claimed that in its early phase the peace movement was instrumental in keeping before the public eye the lessons of the Great War, particularly the danger of a lack of democratic control on foreign policy, and the human cost of warfare. This motivated a greater public interest in and comment on British diplomacy within Britain and gave public opinion, however marginally, an influence on government. The greater awareness of the reality of war promoted by the peace movement also prevented, it could be argued, the jingoism of the early stages of the Great War. That there were other lessons read from the Great War which were less helpful in combating the ambitions of the dictators, particularly the need for disarmament, is undeniable but the peace movement can claim some credit for encouraging what has been described as a mature attitude in the British public which aided national resilience after the fall of France. A lack of periodicity strengthens the negative view of the peace movement. Although it has been accused, not unreasonably, of confusing public opinion over the part played by sanctions in a *pacificist* world order at the time of the Peace Ballot, at a later period, largely the same group of *pacificists* were responsible for promulgating a developed view of collective security at a time when the National Government were eschewing that policy in favour of appeasement combined with an inconsistently isolationist defencism. There was an educative effect in

---

[2] James Hinton has mounted a notably robust defence of the thirties' peace movement stressing both the difficulty it faced in accepting that the rise of the dictators demanded policies very different from those which had grown out of the experience of the Great War and refuting the implication that it was the peace movement that was to blame for the failures of British foreign policy in the last years of peace. Hinton, J., Protests and Visions - Peace Politics in Twentieth Century Britain, London, 1989, pp90 - 92

the broadly similar elements of the *pacificist* policy propounded by the national leadership of the Labour Party, by the LNU and by Churchill from the autumn of 1936, increasingly converging in the latter part of 1937. Its fruits can be seen in public reaction to the last months of the Spanish Republic and in the re-evaluation of Munich which followed *Kristallnacht*. Such opinion polls as exist suggest that to an extent public opinion ran ahead of the National Government in the move towards the anti-fascist defensive pacts favoured by the *pacificist* consensus.

Lastly, but not least, the influence of the peace movement of the thirties is to be seen, even in the desperate circumstances of 1940, in the continuation of an internationalist dimension to British war aims. While it could be argued that this was similar to the rhetoric used in other modern wars, faced with the possibility of defeat British opinion did not fall back on a crude defencism. The importance that was placed on the Allied side on the creation of some kind of internationalist world order was to be seen in the formation of the United Nations during the conflict. Criticism of that body on the grounds that it has been used to pursue the hegemony of particular groups in the world community does not detract from the view that it is a descendant of a recognisable tradition of peace policy for which the peace movement of the thirties was both a conduit and a propagandist.

The lack of Conservative engagement with the Sheffield peace movement makes it difficult to examine the local dimension of the broadest claim for the importance of the *pacificist* consensus to British political history. The alliance of the constitutionalist Left with a wing of the Conservative Party prepared to accept state intervention in pursuit of common goals, which was the basis of the wartime coalition and which was visible as an informal alliance from the time of Munich, has generally been accepted as setting the tone for the domestic political consensus around minimums of social policy for the next quarter of a century. The same intellectual currents, it could be argued were visible in the *pacificist* consensus in which the acceptance of an internationalist dimension to foreign policy by those otherwise of the right, paralleled their acceptance in the domestic sphere of the interdependence of classes and of interventionist social policies based, in the circumstances of war, on promoting national unity. In Sheffield these currents were overshadowed by Conservative opposition to disarmament and by the ideological objections of the most vigorous of Labour's peace activists to rearmament and conscription. While, therefore, the growth of a consensus amongst *pacificists* is

detectable, signs of the changes of attitude on both sides which allowed the formation of the coalition government of 1940 are visible directly only at the informal level of journalistic commentary. In Sheffield there is no sign of the existence of a left-wing Labour view for whom the adoption of the traditional language of patriotism and the endorsement of Churchill's support for the creation of a Ministry of Supply acknowledged the need for rearmament in the face of fascist aggression and substituted a gradualist defence of democracy for the goal of immediate socialism. This is not to suggest that such a strand did not exist before May 1940, but to emphasise that in Sheffield the proximity of the Labour Left to Communist views and the rejection of formal cooperation this provoked in the local Labour leadership obstructed the public expression of this dimension of the political forces which produced the wartime coalition.

The attractive coherence of this paralleling of internal and external policies should not blind us to the fact, however, that in this work concerned to discern popular attitudes in Sheffield, no developed consciousness of such a connection has been found to exist outside of the sophisticated views of A.V. Alexander and an unnamed Labour councillor.[3] This is a pertinent reminder of one of the abiding difficulties of assessing the peace movement of the nineteen thirties, both locally and nationally. Maurice Cowling writes that while he accepts that the success of the wartime coalition: "...made it possible to see the foreign-policy conflict of the thirties as anticipating the egalitarian patriotism of the forties rather than as continuing the class conflict of the twenties", he believes that this view creates an "obstacle to understanding". Although Cowling was justifying the need for a revisionist history of appeasement, his concern that earlier historians' accounts of the period were distorted by an "...identification with the régime that 'won the war' [which] made writing about its enthronement an act of self-congratulation",[4] applies equally to accounts of the wider peace movement. Writing during a period which is being treated as the sixtieth anniversary of the six year long conflict, one is struck both by the extent to which popular portraits of those years convey a sense of the peculiar horror of the cataclysm that befell Europe and the Far East and by the extent to which this

---

[3] Interestingly Thorpe, examining the wartime records of the City Council, corroborates the view that in Sheffield there was little outward sign of the development of a wider consensual politics. Thorpe, Thorpe, A., "The Consolidation of a Labour Stronghold 1926 - 1951", in Binfield C., *et al* (eds), The History of the City of Sheffield 1843 - 1993, Vol 1, "Politics", Sheffield, 1993, p110

[4] Cowling, M., The Impact of Hitler 1933 - 1940, Cambridge, 1975, p2

continues to colour the interpretation of it. If this is more true of popular cultural representations of the period than of academic accounts, it nonetheless remains true that the force of hindsight has a more distorting effect on the later thirties than it does on almost any other period.

The peace movement of the thirties as a whole, and as it operated within particular localities, will no doubt continue to be re-appraised. It is very unlikely, however, that in the foreseeable future in any given period, a consensus of interpretation of the movement will exist among future historians. The number of conflicting views within the movement, the extent to which these reflected contrasting ideological positions, which will continue to have a resonance with historians, and the impossibility of avoiding judging peace movement policies in relation to the events which followed will ensure that the topic remains abidingly controversial. Whether histories of local peace movements of the thirties depict them as backward looking intellectual *cul-de-sacs* which attracted those unable to cope with the forceful realities of the period, or as an expression of the intellectual currents which were to dominate the British political scene for the next three decades, will continue to depend, therefore, not only on the locality which they describe, but also by whom they are written.

Bibliography:

Primary Sources:

Most of the primary sources for the work are held at Sheffield City Library Local Studies Section and Sheffield Archives. All documents cover the period 1934 - 1940 unless otherwise stated:

Church Records: (In 1932 the Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists and United Methodist Church had come together to form the Methodist Church. Indications of former allegiances, however, remained in the names on minute books of Methodist Churches which spanned the unification. The Wesleyan Reform Union still had an independent identity.)

Anne's Road (Heeley) Primitive Methodist Church Council Minute Book
Birley Carr Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
Carver Street Methodist Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
Carver Street Methodist Chapel Boy Refugee Account and Cash Book
Cemetery Road Congregational Church: Church Meeting Minute Book
Chantrey Road Methodist Church Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
Darnall Congregational Church, Church Meeting minute Book
Darnall Congregational Church, Deacons' Meeting Minute Book
Ebenezer Chapel, Walkley, Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
Ellesmere Road Wesleyan Church Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
Ellesmere Road Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book
Hillsborough Wesleyan Church Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
Howard Road Methodist Church, Walkley Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
Oak Street Methodist Chapel (Heeley) Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
Petre Street Methodist Church Minute Book
Petre Street Methodist Church Notice Book
The Sheffield Congregational Yearbook
Sheffield (Norfolk Circuit) Local Preachers' Meeting Minute Book
St John's Wesleyan Church, Crookesmoor Road, Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
St Philip's Church, Sheffield Register of Services
Trinity Wesleyan Church(Firvale) Leaders' Meeting Minute Book
United Methodist Church, Broomhill, Leaders' Meeting Minute Book

Peace Organisations:

League of Nations Union:

Annual Reports of Executive Committee to Members (Sheffield Branch)
"Towards World Order", Sheffield City Library Lecture Hall, 4 - 9 April 1938 (programme)

Sheffield Peace Council:

Sheffield and Rearmament - An exposure of the "Defence" Programme, Sheffield, 1937

Sheffield University Peace Society:

Viewpoint (undated but thought to be January 1937)

Political Parties:

Communist Party:

ARP - A Complete Plan for the Safety of the People of Sheffield, CPGB Sheffield Branch North Midland District, 1938

Conservative Party:

Central Division, Finance and Advisory Committee Minute Book
Central Division of Women's Conservative Association Executive Committee Minute Book
City of Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee Minute Book
The Eccleshall Divisional Conservative Association Annual Report 1938
Eccleshall Divisional Executive Committee Minute Book

Cooperative Party: (order as in catalogue)

Cooperative Party Council and Executive Committee Minute Book
Brightside Division, Burngreave Ward Minute Book
Hillsborough Divisional Council Minute Book
Wadsley and Wisewood Section Minute Book (1939 on)
Neepsend Ward Executive Committee Minute Book
Southey and Norwood Section Minute Book (1938 on)
Neepsend Joint Committee Minute Book
Sheffield and Eccleshall Section Minute Book (1938 on)
Correspondence with Sheffield Labour Parties (1939 on)
Correspondence with other Cooperative Parties
Correspondence for A.V. Alexander to address meetings in Sheffield (1937 on)
General Chronological File

Labour Party:

Brightside Divisional Labour Party Minute Book
Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party; Shiregreen Women's Section Minute Book
Central Divisional Labour Party Minute Book
Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book
Hallam Ward Party Minute Book
Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Minute Books (Executive Committee and Delegates Meeting)
Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Annual Reports

Progressive Party: (Alliance of Conservative and Liberal Members on Sheffield City Council)

Citizens Group Minute Book

Trade Unions:

Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen Branch Meeting and Executive Committee Minute Books (Sheffield No 1B)
Amalgamated Society of Wire Drawers and Kindred Workers Executive Minute Books (to 1938)
File Forgers' Union Minute Book
Pen and Pocket Blade Forgers and Smithers Protection Society
Sawmakers Protection Society
National Association of Local Government Officers Executive Minute Books
National Association of Local Government Officers (Sheffield Municipal Officers Branch) Annual Reports (1936 on)
Pen and Pocket Forgers and Smithers Protection Society Minute Books
Sawmakers' Protection Society Minute Book (1937 on)

Other Organisations:

Sheffield and District Ramblers' Federation Minute Book

Newspapers:

The Daily Worker
The Sheffield Daily Independent (to October 1938) (abbreviated to The Independent)
The Sheffield Daily Telegraph (abbreviated to The Telegraph)
Sheffield Forward (1938 - 1939)
The Sheffield Star

Other Periodicals:

Agamus, Sheffield Notre Dame Magazine (to 1937)
The Arrows Organ of Sheffield University Union of Students
Congregational Association (Sheffield) Yearbook
The Manor and Woodthorpe Review (to 1935)
North Wing, Magazine of the Sheffield Medical School (1936 on)
Park and Heeley Gazette and Manor and Woodseats Herald (1938 - 1939)
Peace News (1936 on)
St Augustine's Parish Magazine (1936 on)
St George's Church Parish Magazine
The Sentinel (1934 - handwritten small circulation magazine)
The Sharrovian (Sharrow Parish Church Magazine)
Sheffield Clarion Ramblers Annual Syllabus
Sheffield Cooperator (later Bulletin)
Sheffield Diocesan Gazette
The Sheffield Liberal (to 1936)
Sheffield Methodist Mission Messenger
The Sheffield Transportman (1938 on)
Sheffield Unemployed News (1932)
Sheffield Yearbook and Record
The Voice (1936)
The Young Men of Sheffield (YMCA) (1936 - 1937)

Other Primary Sources:

Sheffield City Council, Minutes of Parliamentary and General Purposes Committee
The Sheffield Yearbook and Record

Individuals:

Interviews:

Winifred Albaya
Horace J. Clayton
Charles S. Darvill
Edward W. Fisher
Bill Moore

Correspondence:

Jim Ashford
Aileen Button
Winifred Eason

Autobiographies:

Albaya, W., Through the Green Door, an account of the Sheffield Educational Settlement, Shipton Street 1918 - 1955, Sheffield, 1980
Basil Barker and Lynda Staker, Free but not Easy, Derbyshire County Council, 1989
Clayton, H.J., Suno Tra Nuboj, Autobiografio de Horace Clayton, Glasgow, nd (in Esperanto)
McLachlan, H. John, The Wine of Life - Testimony to Vital Encounter, Sheffield, 1991

Secondary Sources:

Unpublished theses:

Buzan, B.G., "The British Peace Movement from 1919 to 1939", Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, 1972 - 1973
Carroll, A.F., "The Debate over Rearmament in the North East of England between 1931 - 1935", MA dissertation, Durham, 1992
Esnouf, G.N., "British Government War Aims and Attitudes Towards a Negotiated Peace, September 1939 to July 1940", Ph. D. thesis, King's College, London University, 1988
Mager, J.W., "'Believing that Socialism and Peace are Indivisible' - the attitude of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council towards Peace and War between 1919 and 1939", MA dissertation, Sheffield University, 1983
Spalding, R., "Revolutionary Socialism to Radical Patriotism - The British Labour Left 1931 - 1945", M. Phil thesis, University of East Anglia, 1989

Published sources:

Adams, R.J.Q., British Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of Appeasement, 1935 - 1939, London, 1992

Addison, Paul, The Road to 1945, British Politics and the Second World War, London, 1975

Ahmann, R., Birke, Adolf M., Howard, Michael (eds), The Quest for Stability: Problems of West European Security 1918 - 1957, Oxford, 1993

Alexander, Bill, British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain 1936 - 1939, London, 1982

Alpert, M., "Humanitarianism and Politics in the British Response to the Spanish Civil War", European History Quarterly 14 (1984)

Anderson, David G., "British Rearmament and the 'Merchants of Death': The 1935 - 1936 Royal Commission on the Manufacture of and Trade in Armaments", Journal of Contemporary History, 29 (1994)

Anderson, G.D., Fascists, Communists and the National Government: Civil Liberties in Great Britain, 1931 - 1937, London, 1983

Armytage, W.H.G., Heavens Below, Utopian Experiments in England 1560 - 1960, London, 1961, pp293 - 301

Attfield, John & Williams, Stephen (eds), The Communist Party and the War, London, 1984

Bailer, U., "The Danger of Bombardment from the Air and the Making of British Air Disarmament Policy 1932 - 1934", in Bond, B. & Roy, I. (eds), War and Society, 2, 1977

Baker, V.B., "Selective Inattention: The Runciman Mission to Czechoslovakia, 1938", East European Quarterly, 24 (1990), 24 (1990)

Barnett, C., The Collapse of British Power, London, 1972

Barrett, Neil, "A Bright Shining Star: The CPGB and Anti-Fascist Activism in the 1930s", Science and Society, 61:1 (1997)

Barrett, Neil, "The Communist Party in Manchester and Salford, 1935 - 1936", Labour History Review, 58/3 (1993)

Baruah, D.K. "Edward Carpenter and the Early Sheffield Socialists", Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society, Vol 10, Part 1, 1971

Baxendale, John & Pawling, Chris, Narrating the Thirties: A Decade in the Making, 1930 to the Present, Basingstoke, 1996

Beales, A.C.F., The History of Peace, London, 1931

Beckett, F., Enemy Within: The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party, London, 1995

Beckett, Francis, Clem Attlee, London, 1997

Benewick, R., The Fascist Movement in Britain, London, 1972

Berghahn, Marion, Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany, Oxford, 1988

Berkman, J.A., "Transformations in Pacificist Consciousness in England 1914 - 1939" in Weigar, W.W. (ed), The Secular Mind, Transformations of Faith in Modern Europe, London, 1982

Binfield C., et al (eds), The History of the City of Sheffield 1843 - 1993, Sheffield, 1993

Birn, Donald S., The League of Nations Union, 1918 - 1945, Oxford, 1981

Blake, Robert & Louis, William Roger (eds), Churchill, Oxford, 1993

Blythe, R., The Age of Illusion, London, 1963

Bornstein, S. & Richardson, A., Against the Stream, A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain, 1924 - 1938, London, 1986

Bornstein, S. & Richardson A., Two Steps Back, London, nd
Bornstein S. & Richardson A., War and the International, A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain, 1937 - 1949, London, 1986
Bosco, Andrea, "Lothian, Curtis, Kinder and the Federal Union Movement (1938 - 1940)", Journal of Contemporary History, 23 (1988)
Bowen, E. Jane, "Attitudes to Peace and War - Sussex Peace Groups 1914 - 1945", Southern History, 9 (1987)
Branson, N., History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927 - 1941, London, 1985
Branson, N. & Heinemann, M., Britain in the Nineteen Thirties, London, 1971
Briggs A. & Saville, J. (eds), Essays in Labour History 1918 - 1939, London, 1977
Brittain, Vera, The Rebel Passion: A Short History of Some Pioneer Peace Makers, London, 1964
Brittain, V., Testament of Youth, London, 1933
Buchanan, Tom, "'A Far Away Country of which we Know Nothing'? Perceptions of Spain and its Civil War in Britain 1931 - 1939", Twentieth Century British History, 4 (1993)
Buchanan, T., Britain and the Spanish Civil War, Cambridge, 1997
Buchanan, T., "Britain's Popular Front? 'Aid Spain' and the British Labour Movement", History Workshop, 31 (1991)
Buchanan, T., "The Death of Bob Smillie, the Spanish Civil War, and the Eclipse of the Independent Labour Party", Historical Journal, 40 (1997)
Buchanan, T., "The Politics of Internationalism: The Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Spanish Civil War", Society for the Study of British Labour History 53/3 (1988)
Buchanan, T., "The Role of the British Labour Movement in the Origins and Work of the Basque Children's Committee 1937 - 1939", European History Quarterly, 18 (1988)
Buchanan, T., The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement, Cambridge, 1991
Bullock, A., The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, London, 1967
Burridge, T.D., British Labour and Hitler's War, London, 1976
Bussey, Gertrude & Tims, Margaret, Pioneers for Peace: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915 - 1965, London 1980
Calder, Angus, The People's War - Britain 1939 - 1945, London, 1969
Calder, A. & Sheridan, D., Speak for Yourself, A Mass Observation Anthology 1937 - 1949, London, 1984
Callaghan, John, Rajani Palme Dutte: A Study in British Stalinism, London, 1993
Carbery, T.F., Consumers in Politics, A History and General Review of the Cooperative Party, Manchester, 1969
Carley, Michael Jabara, "Down a Blind Alley: Anglo-Franco-Soviet Relations 1920 - 1939", Canadian Journal of History, 29 (1994)
Carr, E.H., International Relations Between the Two World Wars, London, 1947
Carr, E.H., The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War, London, 1984
Carr, E.H., Twenty Years' Crisis 1919 - 1939, London, 1939
Ceadel, Martin, "Attitudes to War: Pacifism and Collective Security", Johnson, Paul (ed), Twentieth Century Britain, London, 1994
Ceadel M., "Christian Pacifism in the Era of the Two World Wars", in Shiels, W.J., The Church and War, Oxford, 1983
Ceadel, M., Pacifism in Britain 1914 - 1945, The Defining of a Faith, Oxford, 1980
Ceadel, M., "The First British Referendum: The Peace Ballot 1934 - 1935", English Historical Review, 95 (1980)

Ceadel, M., "The First Communist 'Peace Society': The British Anti-War Movement. 1932 -1935", Twentieth Century British History, 1 (1990)
Ceadel, M., "The 'King and Country' Debate, 1933: Student Politics, Pacifism and the Dictators", Historical Journal, 22 (1979)
Ceadel, M., Thinking About Peace and War, Oxford, 1987
Chambers, C., History of Unity Theatre, London, 1989
Charmley, John, Chamberlain and the Lost Peace, London, 1989
Chandler, Andrew, "Munich and Morality: The Bishops of the Church of England and Appeasement", 20th Century British History, 5 (1994)
Childs, D., "The British Communist Party and the War, 1939 - 1941, Old Slogans Revived", Journal of Contemporary History, 12 (1977)
Churchill, W.S., The Second World War, Vol 1, London, 1948
Cienciala, Anna M., "Poland in British and French Policy in 1939: Determination to Fight or to Avoid War", British Review, 34 (1989)
Clark, S., Heinemann, M., Margolis, D. and Snee, C. (eds), Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 30s, London, 1979
Cockett, Richard, Twilight of the Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement, and the Manipulation of the Press, London, 1989
Cole, G.D.H., A History of the Labour Party from 1914, London, 1948
Cole, G.D.H., Socialism and Fascism 1931 - 1939, London, 1969
Cook, Chris & Ramsden, John, By-Elections in British Politics, London, 1997
Corfield, Tony, "Why Chamberlain Really Fell", History Today, 46:12 (1996)
Cowling, M., The Impact of Hitler 1933 - 1940, Cambridge, 1975
Crowson, N.J., "Conservative Parliamentary Dissent over Foreign Policy during the Premiership of Neville Chamberlain: Myth or Reality", Parliamentary History, 14 (1995)
Crowson, Nicholas J., Facing Fascism: the Conservative Party and the European Dictators, 1935 - 1940, London, 1997
Dalton, H., The Fateful Years, Memoirs 1931 - 1945, London, 1957
Darlington, Ralph, The Political Trajectory of J.T. Murphy, Liverpool, 1998
Deli, P., "The Images of the Russian Purges in The Daily Herald and the New Statesman" , Journal of Contemporary History, 20 (1985)
Dewar, H., Communist Politics in Britain, London, 1976
David Dilks (ed), Retreat from Power, Studies in Britain's Foreign Policy of the Twentieth Century, Vol 1, 1906 - 1939, London, 1981
Dowse, R.E., Left in the Centre - The Independent Labour Party 1893 - 1940, London, 1966
Dunbabin, J.P.D., "British Rearmament in the 1930s: A Chronology and Review", Historical Journal, 18 (1975)
Eaton, P., "The Role of the Peace Movement in the 1930s: Who was for Munich?", University Group on Defence Policy Pamphlet, 1959
Egdgell, Derek, The Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, 1916 -1949, as a New Age Alternative to the Boy Scouts, Lampeter, 1993
Faulks, S, The Fatal Englishman: Three Short Lives, London, 1997
Feiling, Keith, The Life of Neville Chamberlain, London, 1946, (revised edition 1970)
Fleay, C. & Sanders M.L., "The Labour Spain Committee: Labour Party Policy and the Spanish Civil War", Historical Journal, 28 (1985)
Flint, James, "English Catholics and the Proposed Soviet Alliance, 1939", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 48 (1997)
Flint, James, "Must God Go Fascist? English Catholic Opinion and the Spanish Civil War", Church History, 56 (1987)

Flowers, Paul, "Cornering the Chameleons: Stalinism and Trotskyism in Britain 1939 - 1941", Revolutionary History, 6: 2 - 3 (1996)
Foster, Alan J., "The Beaverbrook Press and Appeasement: The Second Phase", European History Quarterly, 21 (1991)
Foster, Alan J., "An Unequivocal Guarantee? Fleet Street and the British Guarantee to Poland, 31 March 1939", Journal of Contemporary History, 26 (1991)
Fowler, W.S., A Study in Radicalism and Dissent, The Life and Times of Henry Joseph Wilson, 1833 - 1914, London, 1989
Fry, Geoffrey K., "A Reconsideration of the British General Election of 1935 and the Electoral Revolution of 1945", History, 76 (1991)
Fyrth, John (ed), Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front, London, 1985
Fyrth, J., The Signal was Spain, London, 1986
Fyrth, J., "The Aid Spain Movement in Britain 1936 - 1939", History Workshop, 35 (1993)
Gallup, George H., (ed) The Gallup International Public Opinion Poll, Great Britain 1937 - 1975, Volume One 1937 - 1964, New York, 1976
Gerwitz, Sharon, "Anglo-Jewish Responses to Nazi Germany, 1933 - 1939: The Anti-Nazi Bycott and the Board of Deputies of British Jews", Journal of Contemporary History, 26 (1991)
Gilbert, Mark, "Pacifist Attitudes to Nazi Germany, 1936 - 1945", Journal of Contemporary History, 27 (1992)
Gloversmith, F., Class, Culture and Social Change, Brighton, 1980
Glynn, S. & Oxborrow, J., Interwar Britain: A Social and Economic History, London 1976
Gordon, G.A.H., "The Admiralty and Appeasement", Naval History, 5 (1991)
Gorny, Joseph, The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917 - 1948, London, 1983
Gregg, R.B., The Power of Non-Violence, London, 1935
Grey, Edward, Twenty-five Years, London, 1925
Griffiths, R., Fellow Travellers of the Right, British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933 - 1939, London, 1980
Gupta, P.S., Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914 - 1964, London, 1975
Hannington, W., Unemployed Struggles 1919 - 1936, London, 1937
Harris, John P., "'The Sandys Storm': The Politics of British Air Defence in 1938", Historical Research, 62 (1989)
Hartley, E., "Edward Carpenter (1884 - 1929)", Sheffield City Libraries Local Studies Leaflet, 1979
Haslam, J., "The British Communist Party, the Comintern and Comintern and the Outbreak of War, 1939, 'a Nasty Taste in the Mouth'", Diplomacy and Statecraft, 3:1 (1992)
Haxey, Simon, Tory MP, London, 1939
Hayes, D., Challenge of Conscience - the Story of the Conscientious Objectors of 1939 - 1949, London, 1949
Hayes, D., Conscription Conflict, London, 1949
Heim, Joseph Charles, "Liberalism and the Establishment of Collective Security in British Foreign Policy", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6th series 5 (1995)
Henderson, Nicholas, "A Fateful Guarantee: Poland, 1939", History Today, 47:10 (1997)
Henig, Ruth B., The League of Nations, London, 1973
Hinton, J., Protests and Visions - Peace Politics in Twentieth Century Britain, London, 1989

Hirschfeld, G. (ed), Exile in Great Britain: Refugees from Hitler's Germany, Leamington Spa, 1984
Hogenkemp, B., Deadly Parallels, Film and the Left in Britain 1929 - 1939, London, 1986
Howard, Michael, "A Thirty Years War?: The Two World Wars in Historical Perspective", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6th series 3 (1993)
Howell, D., British Social Democracy, London, 1976
Howson, Gerald, Arms for Spain - The Untold Story of the Spanish Civil War, London, 1998
James, R.P., Anthony Eden, London, 1986
Jebson, H.A.R., "Pacifists and Fellow Travellers in World War II", Modern History Review, 8:3 (1997)
Jebson, H.A.R., "The Downfall of Neville Chamberlain: The 'Peacemaker' Obliged to Declare War", Modern History Review, 8:4 (1997)
Jeffreys, Kevin, "May 1940: The Downfall of Neville Chamberlain", Parliamentary History, 10 (1991)
Johnstone, Monty, "The CPGB, the Comintern and the War, 1939 - 1941, Filling in the Blank Spots", Science and Society, 61:1 (1997)
Jones, Raymond A., Arthur Ponsonby - The Politics of Life, London, 1989
Jupp, J., The Radical Left in Britain 1931 - 1941, London, 1982
Keating, Joan, "Looking at Europe: Roman Catholics and Christian Democracy in 1930s Britain", European History Quarterly, 26 (1996)
Kennedy, Paul M., "Appeasement and British Defence Policy in the Inter-War Years", British Journal of International Studies, 4/2 (1979)
Kent, Peter C., "Between Rome and London: Pius XI, the Catholic Church, and the Abyssinian Crisis of 1935 - 1936", International History Review, 11 (1989)
Kerr, Philip, (Lord Lothian), The Ending of Armageddon, or the Federal Principle as the Only Basis for International Peace, Liberty and Prosperity, Oxford, 1939
Kimber, Sir Charles, "Federal Union", Catterall, Peter & Morris, C.J. (eds), Britain and the Threat to Stability in Europe 1918 - 1947, London, 1993
Kindleberger, C.P., The World in Depression 1929 -1939, London, 1973
King, Francis & Matthews, George (eds), About Turn: The British Communist Party and the Outbreak of the Second World War: A Verbatim Record of the Central London Committee Meetings of 25 September and 2 - 3 October 1939, London, 1990
Kingsford, P., The Hunger Marches in Britain 1920 - 1939, London, 1982
Kushner, Tony, "Ambivalence or Antisemitism? Christian Attitudes and Responses in Britain to the Crisis of European Jewry during the Second World War", Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 5 (1990)
Kyba, Patrick, Covenants Without Sword: Public Opinion and British Defence Policy 1931 - 1935, Waterloo, 1983
Lamb, R., Whitehall Madness: the Failures to Stop the Second World War 1935 - 1945, London, 1985
Lawlor, Sheila, Churchill and the Politics of War, 1940 - 1941, Cambridge, 1994
Leighton, Joan, "Why Mosley Failed", Historian, 46 (1995)
Lewer, Nick, Physicians and the Peace Movement, Prescriptions of Hope, London, 1992
Liddington, J., The Long Road to Greenham - Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820, London, 1989
Little, Douglas, "Red Scare, 1936: Anti-Bolshevism and the Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War", Journal of Contemporary History, 23 (1988)
London, Louise, "Refugee Agencies and their Work, 1933 - 1939", Journal of Holocaust

Education, 4:1 (1995)
Long, David & Wilson, Peter (eds), Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter War Idealism Reassessed, Oxford, 1995
Lukowitz, D., "George Lansbury's Peace Mission to Hitler and Mussolini in 1937", Canadian Journal of History, 15 (1980)
Lunn, K., and Thurlow, R.C. (eds) British Fascism, London, 1980
MacLeod, I., Neville Chamberlain, London, 1961
MacIntyre, S., Little Moscows: Communism and Working Class Militancy in Inter-War Britain, London, 1980
MacKenzie, J.M. (ed), Imperialism and Popular Culture, Manchester, 1986
Mahon, J., Harry Pollitt, London, 1975
Martin, David A., Pacifism, an Historical and Sociological Study, London, 1965
Marwick, A., Clifford Allen, London, 1964
McElwee, W., Britain's Locust Years 1918 - 1940, London, 1962
McLachlan, H.J., "A Prophet of Our Time: Edward Carpenter 1844 - 1929", Faith and Freedom, Vol 32, Part 3, No 96
Meisel, Joseph S., "Air Raid Shelter Policy and its Critics in Britain before the Second World War", 20th Century British History, 5 (1994)
Mellanby, Kenneth, Human Guinea Pigs, London, 1945
Mendelson, J., Owen, W., Pollard S., and Thornes V.M., Sheffield Trades and Labour Council 1858 - 1958, Sheffield, 1958
Middlemas, K., Diplomacy of Illusion, The British Government and Germany 1937 - 1939, London, 1972
Miliband, R., Parliamentary Socialism, London, 1961
Miller, K.E., Socialism and Foreign Policy, Theory and Practice in Britain to 1931, The Hague, 1967
Mills, William C., "The Chamberlain - Grandi Conversations of July - August 1937 and the Appeasement of Italy", International History Review, 19 (1997)
Mills, William C., "The Nyon Conference: Neville Chamberlain, Anthony Eden and the Appeasement of Italy in 1937", International History Review, 15 (1993)
Mommsen, Wolfgang J., & Ketternacker, Lothar, The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement, London, 1983
Moore, E.L. (Bill), All Out! - The Dramatic Story of the Sheffield Demonstration Against Dole Cuts on February 6th 1935, Sheffield, 1985
Moore, E.L., "The Anti-War Movement in Sheffield in the 1920's and 1930's", Sheffield Forward, September 1980
Moore, E.L. (ed), Behind the Clenched Fist - Sheffield's Aid to Spain 1936 - 1939, Sheffield, 1986
Moradiellos, Enrique, "Appeasement and Non-Intervention: British Policy During the Spanish Civil War", Catterall, Peter & Morris C.J. (eds), Britain and the Threat to Stability in Europe 1918 - 1947, London, 1993
Moradiellos, Enrique, "The Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War: Anglo Spanish Relations in Early 1936", European History Quarterly, 21 (1991), pp339 - 364
Morgan, Kevin, Against Fascism and War, Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935 - 1941, Manchester, 1989
Morgan, Kevin, Harry Pollitt, Manchester, 1993
Morris, A.J.A., C.P. Trevelyan 1870 - 1950, Portrait of a Radical, Belfast, 1977
Morris, Benjamin, The Roots of Appeasement: The British Weekly Press and Nazi Germany During the 1930s, London, 1991

Morrison, S., I Renounce War, The Story of the Peace Pledge Union, London, 1962
Mosse, Werner E. (ed) Second Chance: Two centuries of German Speaking Jews in the United Kingdom, Tubinen, 1991
Mowat, C.L., Britain Between the Wars 1918 - 1940, London, 1955
Naylor, John F., Labour's International Policy, London, 1969
Neilson, Keith, "'Pursued by a Bear': British Estimates of Soviet Military Strength and Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1922 - 1939", Canadian Journal of History, 28 (1993)
Neville, Peter, Neville Chamberlain: a Study in Failure?, Sevenoaks, 1992
Newton, K., The Sociology of British Communism, London, 1969
Newton, Scott, Profits of Peace: the Political Economy of Anglo-German Appeasement, Oxford, 1996
Noel-Baker, P., The Private Manufacture of Armaments, London, 1936
Northedge, F.S. & Wells, Audrey, Britain and Soviet Communism - The Impact of a Revolution, 1982
Orwell, George, The Road to Wigan Pier, London, 1937
Ovendale, R., Appeasement and the English Speaking World: Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Policy of Appeasement 1937 - 1939, Cardiff, 1975
Overy, Richard & Wheatcroft, Andrew (eds), The Road to War, London, 1989
Owen, A.D.K., A Report on Unemployment in Sheffield, Sheffield Social Survey Committee, Survey Pamphlet No 4, 1932
Parker, Alastair, Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War, Basingstoke, 1993
Parker, R.A.C., "British Rearmament 1936 -1939: Treasury, Trade Unions and Skilled Labour", English Historical Review, 96 (1981)
Parker, R.A.C., "Economics, Rearmament and Foreign Policy: The United Kingdom before 1939 - a Preliminary Study", Journal of Contemporary History, 10 (1975)
Patrick, K., "The Mass Pursuit of Peace: England 1934 - 1940", Melbourne Historical Journal, Vol 7 1968
Pearce, Robert D., Attlee, London, 1997
Peden, George C., "Winston Churchill, Neville Chamberlain and the Defence of Empire", Hattendorf, John B. & Murfett, Malcolm H. (eds) The Limitations of Military Power: Essays presented to Professor Norman Gibbs on his Eightieth Birthday, Basingstoke, 1990
Pimlott, Ben, Labour and the Left in the 1930s, London, 1977
Pimlott, B., & Cook, C (eds), Trade Unions in British Politics, London, 1982
Pollard, S., History of Labour in Sheffield, Liverpool, 1959
Ponting, C., 1940 Myth and Reality, London, 1997
Post, Gaines, Dilemmas of Appeasement, British Deterrence and Defence, 1934 - 1937, London, 1993
Pritt, D.N., From Right to Left, London, 1965
Prynn, D., "The Woodcraft Folk and the Labour Movement 1925 - 1970", Journal of Contemporary History, 18 (1983)
Pugh, M., "Pacifism and Politics in Britain 1931 - 1935", Historical Journal, 23, 3 (1980)
Pugh, M., "The British Union of Fascists and the Olympia Debate", Historical Journal, 41, 2, June 1998.
Rae, John, Conscience and Politics, The British Government and the Conscientious Objectors to Military Service 1916 -1919, London, 1970
Reynolds J. & Laybourn K., Labour Heartland - The History of the Labour Party in West Yorkshire During the Inter-War Years 1918 - 1939, Bradford, 1987
Ritchie, J.M., "German Refugees from Nazism", Panayi Pakos (ed), Germans in Britain

since 1500, London 1996
Robbins, K., "Britain, 1940 and 'Christian Civilisation'", in Beales, D. & Best, G. (eds), History, Society and the Church: Essays in Honour of Owen Chadwick, Cambridge, 1985
Robbins, K., "Church and Politics: Dorothy Buxton and the German Church Struggle", in Baker, D. (ed), Church, Society and Politics (Studies in Church History), 12, Oxford, 1975
Robbins, K., "Free Churchmen and the Twenty Years' Crisis", Baptist Quarterly, 27 (1978)
Robbins, Keith, Churchill, London, 1992
Robbins, Keith G., Appeasement, Oxford, 1988
Roberts, Andrew, The Holy Fox: A Biography of Lord Halifax, London, 1991
Rock, W.R., British Appeasement in the 1930s, London, 1970
Rock, W.R., "British Appeasement (1930s): A need for Revision?", South Atlantic Quarterly, 78 (1979)
Rock, W.R., Appeasement on Trial: British Foreign Policy and its Critics 1938 - 1939, Hamden, 1966
Roi, Michael L., "'A Completely Immoral and Cowardly Attitude': The British Foreign Office, American Neutrality and the Hoare Laval Plan", Canadian Journal of History, 29 (1994)
Rowlinson, E.G., "Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield 1926 - 1932", Sheffield, 1932
Salerno, Reynolds M., "Multilateral Strategy and Diplomacy: The Anglo-German Naval Agreement and the Mediterranean Crisis, 1935 - 1936", Journal of Statistical Studies 17:2 (1994)
Scaffardi, S., Fire Under the Carpet, Working for Civil Liberties in the 1930s, London, 1986
Schwarz, Angela, "British Visitors to National Socialist Germany: in a Familiar Country?", Journal of Contemporary History, 28 (1993)
Seton-Watson, R.W., Britain and the Dictators, Cambridge, 1938
Seyd, P., "Factionalism within the Labour Party: The Socialist League 1932 - 1937", in Briggs, A. & Saville, J. (eds) Essays in Labour History 1918 - 1939, London, 1977
Shachtman, T., The Phony War 1939 -1940, New York, 1982
Shepherd, John, "Labour and the Trade Unions: Lansbury, Ernest Bevin and the Leadership Crisis of 1935", Wrigley, Chris & Shepherd, John (eds), On the Move: Essays in Labour and Transport History Presented to Philip Bagwell, London, 1992
Shepherd, Robert, A Class Divided: Appeasement and the Road to Munich, 1938, London, 1988
Sherman, A.J., Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich, 1933 - 1939, London, 1994
Sherman, A.J., "The British Government, the Jewish Community and Refugee Agencies", Journal of Holocaust Education, 4:1 (1995)
Sibley, Richard, "The Swing to Labour During the Second World War: When and Why", Labour History Review, 55/1 (1990), pp23 - 24
Smith, Adrian, "Macmillan and Munich: the Open Conspirator", Dalhousie Review, 68 (1988), pp 235 - 247
Squires, Mike, Shapurji Saklatvala: A Political Biography, London, 1990
Srebrnik, Henry Felix, London Jews and British Communism, 1935 - 1945, London, 1994
Stannage, T., Baldwin Thwarts the Opposition: The British General Election of 1935, London, 1980

Starkey, Pat, I will not Fight: Conscientious Objectors and Pacifists in the North-West During the Second World War, Liverpool, 1992
Stevens, Richard, "'Disruptive Elements'?: The Influence of the Communist Party in Nottinghamshire and District Trades Council, 1929 - 1951", Labour History Review 58/3 (1993)
Stevenson, J., & Cook, C., The Slump, London, 1977, p255
Stone, C., "Britain, Non-Intervention and the Spanish Civil War", European Studies Review, 9 (1979)
Swerdlow, Amy, "Female Culture, Pacifism and Feminism: Women Strike for Peace", Angerman, Arina (ed) Current Issues in Women's History, London, 1989,
Sword, Keith, "British Reactions to the Soviet Occupation of Eastern Poland in September 1939", Slavonic and Eastern European Review, 69 (1991)
Symons, J., The Thirties a Dream Revolved, London, 1960 (revised ed. 1975)
Taylor, A.J.P., The Troublemakers, Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792 - 1939, London, 1957
Taylor, Richard & Young, Nigel (eds), Campaigns for Peace: British Peace Movements, Manchester, 1987
Teichman, J., Pacifism and the Just War, Oxford, 1986
Thomas, Hugh, The Spanish Civil War, London, 1961
Thompson, J.A., "Lord Cecil and the Pacifists in the League of Nations Union", Historical Journal, 20 (1977)
Thompson, J.A., "The Peace Ballot and the Public", Albion, 13 (1981)
Thompson, J.A., "The 'Peace Ballot' and the 'Rainbow Controversy'", Journal of British Studies, 20 (1981)
Thompson, Kenneth W., Foreign Policy and Arms Control: Churchill's Legacy, (W. Alton Jones Foundation Series on Arms Control, Vol 16) Lanham, 1990
Thompson, N., The Anti-Appeasers, Conservative Opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s, London, 1971
Thompson, Willie, The Good Old Cause, British Communism 1920 - 1990, London, 1992
Thornes, V., and Ballard, A., 40 Years Labour Rule in Sheffield, Sheffield, 1968
Thurlow, Richard C., "'A very clever capitalist class', British Communism and state surveillance", Intelligence and National Security, 12:2 (1997)
Tilley, John, Churchill's Favourite Socialist: A Life of A.V. Alexander, Manchester, 1995
Trory, E., Between the Wars, Recollections of a Communist Organiser, Brighton, 1974
Turner, John (ed), The Larger Idea: Lord Lothian and his World, London 1988
Tweedale, G., Steel City, Entrepreneurship, Strategy and Technology in Sheffield 1743 - 1993, Oxford, 1995
Waley, D., British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War, London, 1975
Walton, J.K., "British Perceptions of Spain and their Impact on Attitudes to the Spanish Civil War", 20th Century British History, 5 (1994)
Watkins, K.W., Britain Divided: The Effect of the Spanish Civil War on British Political Opinion, London, 1963
Webber, Gerry, "Patterns of Membership and Support for the British Union of Fascists", Journal of Contemporary History, 19 (1984)
Weintraub, S., The Last Great Cause, The Intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War, London, 1968
White, Joseph, Tom Mann, Manchester, 1991
Whittaker, David J., Fighter for Peace: Philip Noel Baker, 1889 - 1982, York, 1989

Wickert, S., "The Enigma of Fascism: The British Left on National Socialism" in Taylor. A.J.P. (ed), Essays in Labour History, London, 1976
Wilkinson, A., Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches 1900 -1945. London, 1986
Williams, F., Ernest Bevin, London, 1952
Wilson, A.C., Cecil Henry Wilson 1862 - 1945, Sheffield, 1946
Wood, N., Communism and British Intellectuals, London, 1959
Woodhouse, M. & Pierce B., History of Communism in Britain, London, 1975
Wrigley, C. (ed), Warfare, Diplomacy and Politics: Essays in Honour of A.J.P. Taylor. London, 1986
Wrigley, Christopher John, Arthur Henderson, Cardiff, 1990
Young, K., Stanley Baldwin, London, 1976