Title
Nothing Left but Smoke and Mirrors: Deindustrialisation and the Remaking of British Communities, 1957-1992

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Publication Date
2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Nothing Left but Smoke and Mirrors:
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By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor James Vernon, Chair
Professor Daniel Sargent
Professor Thomas Laqueur
Professor James Holston

Summer 2020

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Abstract

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In the late 1950s, the United Kingdom remained a heavily industrialised country, with nearly 40 per cent of its workforce employed in manufacturing. Today, that figure is well below 10 per cent. Industries that were at the centre of Britain's rise to world power in the 19th century, including textiles, shipbuilding, and steelmaking, have disappeared entirely or been reduced to a tiny fraction of their former size. Although deindustrialisation is a global phenomenon, and one which is ongoing, the deindustrialisation of Britain was the most rapid and sustained of any country in the global north. It has had profound and lasting effects on the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Using material from archives across the UK, including government documents, the files of local organisations, and community oral history projects, this dissertation is a comprehensive study of deindustrialisation and its impacts on mid-to-late 20th century Britain.

This dissertation broadens the temporal frame of study away from a narrow focus on the 1980s, arguing that deindustrialisation's effects were felt much earlier than the election of Margaret Thatcher and demonstrating the complex bi-directional relationship between industrial decline and the rise of Thatcherite policies. Critically, I argue that deindustrialisation was fundamentally connected to the end of empire, and that it both intersected with pre-existed inequalities in postwar British society and demonstrated the hollowness of the promises of the postwar welfare state. Deindustrialisation impacted women and Commonwealth citizens as much or more as it did white male Britons. I also explore the significant yet understudied role of local organisations, including neighbourhood associations, clubs and support groups, in responding to the effects of deindustrialisation and also to the subsequent abandonment of government. I argue that these organisations often represented a transformation in local political assumptions and helped spur a painful process of adaptation to the post-industrial reality.

In order to capture the diversity of impacts and responses to deindustrialisation, this dissertation is structured around four interconnected case studies drawn from across the UK: Oldham, Belfast, Coventry, and Motherwell. This approach allows for the comparison of deindustrialisation's impact in the different nations of the UK, in fragmented and centralised industries, in male and female dominated sectors, and in both multi-racial and primarily white communities. However, the case studies also demonstrate the commonalities and connections across the entire UK, as deindustrialisation remade communities and left behind complex physical and emotional legacies.

For my parents:

Scott and Monica Lawson

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Acknowledgements

I am incredibly fortunate to have had this opportunity to study a topic I am passionate about, to visit dozens of unique and special places, and most importantly, to meet and learn from so many kind and brilliant people. It is only because of a network of family, friends, and colleagues who have supported, guided, and cared about me over these last six years that I have actually managed to complete this dissertation.

My sincere appreciation goes out first to the Institute of International Studies, the Center for British Studies, the Irish Studies Program, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Without their financial support, my research would not have been possible, and I would not even have been able to afford to live in Berkeley. I am also grateful for the kindness and superior organisational skills of Mabel Lee, Todd Kuebler, and Erin Lee Inama, who helped me navigate the opaque university bureaucracy and overcome the unique complications faced by international students at Berkeley.

Why would a Canadian travel to the west coast of the United States to study British History? The answer is simple: James Vernon. James is the most generous, supportive, and kind-hearted supervisor one could ever wish for. This project truly came into shape in conversation with him, as my incoherent and disjointed ideas were given form and structure. Simply put, he has helped me to find my voice as an historian. He has also tolerated my horrifying inability to meet my own deadlines and has always maintained faith in my ability to complete this dissertation, even when that faith did not seem especially warranted or deserved.

Daniel Sargent has helped me keep an eye on the big picture (often in spite of myself), and his vast knowledge and incredible ability to identify the broader relevance of my work have been inspiring and invaluable. Tom Laqueur's wisdom and depth of perspective have injected my work with a deeper sense of purpose, and his constant reminders to clarify my arguments have made me a stronger writer. James Holston introduced me to questions of culture, citizenship and rights that will forever shape my scholarship, and he has helped me to grapple with the political stakes of my project. I was also fortunate to have been able to take seminars at Berkeley with brilliant and compassionate scholars, including Janaki Bakhle, Abhishek Kaicker, David Henkin and Christoph Kalter, all of whom have left a lasting impression on my understanding of the past.

During my research trip in 2017, and in several subsequent follow up journeys, I travelled to all four nations and almost every corner of the United Kingdom. I will forever be grateful to the more than a dozen wonderful Airbnb hosts I stayed with along the way, every one of whom treated me with kindness. They drove me to the railway station when I was running late, gave me valuable insights into local history, and turned the experience of living out of a suitcase for eight months into one of the most memorable and enjoyable periods of my life. I also benefitted from the incredible generosity and keen insights of archivists and librarians who helped me find the materials that made this dissertation possible. I am especially grateful to Joanne Robson, formerly of Oldham Local Studies and Archives, Carole McCallum of the Glasgow Caledonian University archives, Justin Parkes of North Lanarkshire Heritage, and Claire Hackett of the Falls Community Council, who went well above the call of duty to support my research.

The best part about completing a PhD at Berkeley is the people you get to study alongside. I have learned so much from them and I have gained friendships that I hope will last a lifetime. In particular, my love and thanks go out to Sophie FitzMaurice, Shaviya Mishra, Varsha Venkatasubramanian, Maelia Dubois, J. T. Jamieson, David Delano, Sarah Stoller,

Peiting Li, Evan Fernández, Sourav Ghosh, Joseph Ledford, Brent Otto, Claire Wrigley and Brendan Mackie. My fondest memory of my time at Berkeley will always be the countless hours I spent on the steps outside Dwinelle Hall with Anthony Gregory, drinking coffee and debating history and politics with our colleagues as they passed by. No graduate seminar could ever replicate what I learned over the course of those discussions. It took me a long time to warm up to California, but it was these friendships that made it come to feel like home.

I am also incredibly fortunate to have been supported by a network of friends spanning multiple countries. I completed my Masters degree at McGill alongside Ella Cloutier, Carleigh Nicholls and Hao Chen, and although we went on to PhDs at different universities, we have retained a meaningful bond. Rammy Saini and Pierre Botcherby have been endlessly supportive, and I particularly want to thank them for their kind and careful edits and suggestions.

Upon my return to Toronto in 2019, Stephen Brooke, Jessica Clark and Catherine Ellis gave me a sense of academic community when I really needed it. David Wilson has always encouraged me to dig deeper, and his love of the finer details of historical research is simply infectious. Dimitry Anastakis has shown me incredible kindness in taking me under his wing in the last year. My Masters supervisor, Brian Lewis, was the one who encouraged me to apply to Berkeley in the first place, and his support and guidance gave me the confidence I needed to succeed there. And finally, I want to thank Joel Barr. His Grade 11 & 12 history classes were where it all started. Not only did he inspire me to study history, but he has remained a mentor and friend throughout my journey to get to this point.

That journey would never have been possible without my family. My grandparents made many sacrifices in order to give me the opportunities I have had, and I hope they would be proud of me. I have always looked up to my brother Nicholas, who is a truly wonderful person and a brilliant scholar to boot, so it was only natural that I would follow his footsteps on to a PhD. My sister Victoria is simply the most generous, warm-hearted person I know, and her love and kindness have been a constant in a world of upheaval.

Of all the many blessings in my life, the greatest of all is the fact I get to share it with Katherine Jin. Her love, patience, constant encouragement, and brilliant editing suggestions have sustained me during the writing process. Finishing a PhD in the middle of a worldwide pandemic is not easy, but it would have been impossible without her by my side. This dissertation is for my parents, Scott and Monica. They instilled in me a love of learning and gave me the confidence and courage to follow my dreams. This dissertation is a testament to their boundless love and support.

Toronto, July 2020.

Introduction

Whose Story?

Velda Casey was born in St. Michael's Parish, Barbados, in 1938. She had received a standard formal education, but the island's plantation economy had declined, and postwar British colonial development projects had failed to diversify the economy, leaving young Barbadians with limited opportunities and little hope for the future.[1] In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Casey was struggling to find work. She was hearing a lot of stories from friends, and in local newspapers and advertisements, of jobs and opportunities in the USA, Canada, and the imperial metropole of the UK. In fact, the UK government had launched an extensive advertising campaign to attract West Indians to the UK to take jobs in the National Health Service and public transport.[2] Casey's brother had already left for England, and was working in the town of Oldham, a cotton textile town just north-east of Manchester. In 1962, her brother's girlfriend had decided to travel to Oldham to reunite with him and encouraged Casey to come to England as well. Casey decided to follow her to England, but she did not intend to stay there permanently. Like most other migrants from Barbados in this period, she had a 'five-year plan'. She would try to save up some money and then come home, using the money and job experience to build a better life for herself and her family on the island.[3]

Casey arrived in England in the winter, and she was shocked by the cold. Luckily, the Salvation Army met the migrants at the airport to give them warm clothes and to help them with onward travel. She travelled to Oldham, and she was able to find a job as a machinist three days after she arrived. According to Casey, 'at that time it wasn't hard to get a job'. Another migrant from the West Indies to Oldham, Ernest Campbell, put it even more bluntly: 'you could leave one job Tuesday morning and have another on Wednesday morning' – 'you were never out of a job in Oldham'.[4] She soon transitioned to work at the Warwick spinning mill, in the neighbouring town of Middleton, which was easy work for her because she already knew how to sew. Her brother soon left for Canada, so she moved to rented accommodation in the diverse working-class neighbourhood of Glodwick, just to the south-east of Oldham town-centre. She knew nobody in Oldham, but she became involved in the Glodwick West Indian Association and this helped her to feel like she belonged in the community. She says that, in her early years in Oldham, most people were friendly, but she did face some prejudice on the basis of her skin colour. Casey says: 'you'd get the occasional negative comment about immigrants, but I'd never let it bother me'.[5]

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[1] Velda Casey, Interviewed 5 October 2016: High Expectations, An Oral History Project Undertaken by Oldham Anglo West Indian Over 50's Group, WIC/1/4, Oldham Local Studies and Archives (hereafter OLSA). For a discussion of the economic conditions driving emigration from the postwar West Indies, see Mary Chamberlain, *Empire and Nation-building in the Caribbean: Barbados, 1937-66* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 51-75; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), 372-86; Bridget Brereton & Kevin Yelvington (eds.), *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition: Essays on Post-emancipation Social and Cultural History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999).

[2] Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Immigration, 'Race' and 'Race' Relations in Post-war Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992); Ed Stacey, *Cotton, Curry, and Commerce: The History of Asian Businesses in Oldham* (Oldham: Oldham Council, 2013), 24.

[3] Velda Casey, Interviewed 5 October 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/4, OLSA.

[4] Ernest Campbell, Interviewed 8 February 2017: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/3, OLSA.

[5] Velda Casey, Interviewed 5 October 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/4, OLSA.

When the Warwick mill was closed, she was made redundant, so she got a job at the Hartford mill in Oldham. Then when the Hartford mill closed, and she was made redundant again. By this time, the textile industry in Oldham was in crisis, and it was no longer easy to find a job. However, with her sewing skills, she got a job at one of the few remaining mills, in Shaw, north of Oldham. She remained working there until it finally closed, at which point she retired. Although working conditions improved, pay and hours were continually cut as the industry declined. After leaving the increasingly troubled area of Glodwick, she now lives in a council flat on the north side of Oldham. In an interview for the Oldham Anglo West Indian Over 50's Group in October 2016, Casey speaks of her attachment to the community. Oldham is her home, she has three children who live in the area, and she rarely returns to Barbados. But she is despondent about the future of the town. There is limited opportunity for her children and grandchildren. People are less friendly. And the loss of the mills has 'changed everything'.[6]

When the story of deindustrialisation in the UK is recounted, stories like that of Velda Casey are rarely included. She is not a member of a 'traditional working-class community', doing the same work as her father and his father before him. She would become a single mother after her divorce, and she would balance raising three children with her work in the mills. And she was a Commonwealth citizen, from a small island on the other side of the ocean, whose history had been shaped by Britain's incessant demand for sugar, its imperial expansion, and its complicated relationship with slavery.[7] She was a stranger to the British Isles, but a familiar stranger.[8]

Casey's story is critical not just for who she is, but also for the complexities and nuances of her experience. She was proud of her skills and of the work she had done, but work in the mills was a means to an end: a better life for herself and her children. For many of her friends in the Oldham Anglo West Indian Over 50's Group, the abiding memories of the mills is the dust and the fog.[9] There is little nostalgia for the industrial past. But the decline of the textile industry brought hardship and worry, as cuts to wages and hours made it difficult to maintain a decent quality of life for her family. And she was one of the lucky ones. For many of her fellow Barbadians in Oldham, the collapse of the town's industrial base meant long spells of unemployment, serious financial struggles, and the setting up of small businesses like taxi services to make ends meet.[10] Casey was able to leave Glodwick before it became one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the poorest town in England, and before it became the site of Britain's most violent riot in twenty years. The legacies of industrial decline rest heavily on her shoulders and on the shoulders of all of the people of Oldham.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] See Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944); Catherine Hall et al, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[8] Stuart Hall & Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (London: Allen Lane, 2017).

[9] See for example Pearl Williams, Interviewed 29 September 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/23, OLSA.

[10] See for example: Curtis Lynch, Interviewed 25 June 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/15, OLSA. See also: Virinder Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks: Experiences of Migration, Labour, and Social Change* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2000).

The Origins of Deindustrialisation Studies

The industrialisation of Britain was a global story: a story wrapped up in empire, slavery, and the exploitation of foreign peoples and resources on a grand scale.[11] It was the story of a global Britain, which has shaped the world around it and in turn been shaped by that interaction with the world.[12] Naturally then, the deindustrialisation of Britain is also an imperial and global story.

It is a story of the end of empire, and the ways in which the unwinding and afterlife of that empire produced an economic and social restructuring of the British world. It is a story of how the people of the British Isles came to realise that their lives were shaped by structural economic forces over which they had limited control. And it is a story of how those structural forces, their interaction with distinctive local social and cultural formations, and the response of individuals, communities and governments to those forces, shaped the contours of contemporary British society. It is not a morality play, and despite the real trauma that deindustrialisation has caused to millions of Britons, it is not a simple process of assigning blame or counting losses. The story of deindustrialisation in Britain is the complex, multi-sided story of people like Velda Casey.

This dissertation aims to capture the complexity of Britain's deindustrialisation story, placing it at the centre of mid-to-late 20th century British history. It aims to explain how deindustrialisation was actually experienced, who it affected, and how both popular and governmental responses to deindustrialisation have reshaped British society. In doing so, it both engages with and builds upon the growing, transnational field of deindustrialisation studies.

Although the term 'deindustrialisation' has been used in various contexts since the early 20th century and possibly even earlier, it only entered general discourse in the late 1970s.[13] In June 1978, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research in London hosted a conference on the question of 'de-industrialisation'.[14] The goal of the conference was 'to consider whether, and if so in what sense, there was a trend to de-industrialisation in the UK; if so, whether it mattered; and if it mattered, what should be done about it'.[15] According to the conference chair Sir Charles Carter, there was agreement about the existence of the problem, but not about the cause or the cure.[16] At a superficial level, we have not progressed far beyond the conclusions of Sir Charles in the last four decades. While the deindustrialisation of the UK and much of the global north is a well-established fact, the causes, significance, and cure – including

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[11] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton* (London: Macmillan, 2004).
[12] Gregory A. Barton, 'Towards a Global History of Britain,' *Perspectives on History* 50, no. 7 (October 2012); J. G. A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject,' Journal of Modern History 47, no. 4 (1975): 601-621; Tehila Sasson et al, 'Britain and the World: A New Field?: The Worlding of Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 57 (October 2018): 689.
[13] The Oxford English Dictionary records the use of 'deindustrialisation' and 'deindustrialise' as early as 1940, when it was used to describe Nazi plans for the occupation of France. However, it records the first use of the term in the British context in a December 1979 Daily Telegraph article about Thatcherite policy towards British Steel. Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. "De-industrialization", accessed 2 July 2020, https://www.oed.com/
[14] Frank Blackaby (ed.), *De-industrialisation* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979).
[15] K. S. Palda, Review of *De-industrialisation*, ed. Frank Blackaby, *The Canadian Journal of Economics / Revue canadienne d'Economique* 13 (1980): 504-506.
[16] C. Carter, 'Foreword', in *De-industrialisation*, ed. Frank Blackaby (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979).

if one is either feasible or desirable – are still the subject of debate. However, in the course of this debate, an ever-growing interdisciplinary and transnational literature has developed.

American Beginnings

Rigorous academic study of deindustrialisation initially developed in the 1970s and 80s as an effort to categorise and explain the structural economic changes that were beginning to reshape towns, cities, and whole societies across the global north. At this stage, the study of deindustrialisation was largely, though not entirely, an American project.[17] Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison's 1982 book *The Deindustrialization of America* helped established the contours of the field and provides a model of a work that successfully combines economic, political, and social analysis. Bluestone and Harrison also established a working definition of deindustrialisation: 'a widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation's basic productive capacity', and sounded a call to arms for academics to grapple with this monumental transformation.[18]

This American-dominated field of deindustrialisation studies blossomed in the 1980s and 90s, with several distinct strands of scholarship emerging. There were studies of the deindustrialisation of particular industries, which explored the role of capital flight, trade policies, government inaction, and trade union weakness in turning the US industrial heartland into the 'Rust Belt'.[19] In addition, there was also an explosion of studies of individual communities grappling with the sudden collapse of their primary industry. Often written by activists or those with ties to the communities in question, these studies were deeply personal, exploring the emotional impact of job loss and the ways in which the trauma of the closure was reshaping the social and cultural structure of the community.[20] These studies increasingly

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[17] An important exception to this early American dominance was the work of Robert Laxer and his son James, who developed the Canadian 'deindustrialization thesis' in the early 1970s. The Laxers argued that Canada's dependence on the US as a market and source of investment meant that Canada would be involuntarily deindustrialised every time the US economy entered a crisis, and thus should pursue a form of autarkic socialism to break this dependence. James Laxer, 'Canadian Manufacturing and US Trade Policy', in *(Canada) Ltd: The Political Economy of Dependency*, ed. Robert Laxer (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 127-42; James Laxer & D. Jantzi, 'The De-industrialization of Ontario', in *(Canada) Ltd: The Political Economy of Dependency*, ed. Robert Laxer, 147-152.

[18] Barry Bluestone & Bennett Harrison, *Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

[19] See for example: Michael French, *The US Tire Industry: A History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990); John Hoerr, *And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988); Jon Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Paul Tiffany, *The Decline of American Steel: How Management, Labor, and Government Went Wrong* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); John Ullmann, *The Anatomy of Industrial Decline: Productivity, Investment, and Location in US Manufacturing* (New York: Quorum Books, 1988).

[20] See for example: David Bensman & Roberta Lynch, *Rusted Dreams: Hard Times in a Steel Community* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987); Scott Camp, *Worker Response to Plant Closings: Steelworkers in Johnstown and Youngstown* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995); John Cumbler, *A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics, and Work in Trenton* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Steven Dandaneau, *A Town Abandoned: Flint, Michigan, Confronts Deindustrialization* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Kathryn Marie Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Ruth Milkman, *Farewell to the Factory: Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Gregory Pappas, *The Magic City: Unemployment in a*

focussed on telling the story of local campaigns to prevent plant closure, and attempted to explain why so few of these campaigns had succeeded. Dale Hathaway, Jefferson Cowie, and others embraced and built upon Bluestone and Harrison's reading of deindustrialisation as the outcome of an unequal struggle between local community and mobile international capital, with the trade unions failing to rise to the challenge.[21]

Around the turn of the millennium, this largely US-centric deindustrialisation literature expanded in a plethora of different directions, most notably with studies that move beyond the period of closures to explore the long-term cultural aftermath of the collapse of industry. Cowie and Joseph Heathcott's 2003 edited collection *Beyond the Ruins* was the driving force behind this broadening of the scope of deindustrialisation studies.[22] Of particular interest to this new generation of scholars was the long-term and even generational effects of deindustrialisation on working class identity. In 1977, Paul Willis published what is now a classic of cultural studies, exploring how the cultural structures of class and the education system socialise working class boys into accepting and perpetuating their class oppression within an industrial society.[23] In *Working Class without Work*, Lois Weis used a Paul Willis-inspired ethnographic approach to explore how deindustrialisation challenged these assumptions of teenaged boys about education, gender roles, and their own identity, causing conflict within families and opening the door to reactionary politics.[24]

Connected to this cultural turn, American and Canadian deindustrialisation scholars have explored questions of memory and belonging in post-industrial communities. *Corporate Wasteland* by Steven High and David Lewis uses a mixture of photography and oral history to capture the conflicted cultural meanings of what High terms the 'deindustrial sublime': the abandoned factories and mills that loom over many deindustrialised communities in North America. High argues that the physical ruins continue to have important cultural meaning, and 'unite displaced workers in a memory community of anger and sorrow'.[25]

But deindustrialisation and plant closures can be remembered in different ways within the same community. Efforts to publicly commemorate the role of the steel industry in

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Working-Class Community (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Lynd Staughton, *The Fight against Shutdowns: Youngstown's Steel Mill Closings* (San Pedro: Singlejack Books, 1982). For an example of the limited British work done on deindustrialisation in this period, see Huw Beynon, Ray Hudson & David Sadler, *A Place called Teesside: A Locality in a Global Economy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

[21] See for example: Gordon Clark, *Unions and Communities under Siege: American Communities and the Crisis of Organized Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Dale Hathaway, *Can Workers Have a Voice?: The Politics of Deindustrialization in Pittsburgh* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

[22] Jefferson Cowie & Joseph Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003). However, the shift to questions of identity and cultural legacy had actually begun many years before Cowie & Heathcott, with the 1988 study of Homestead, Pennsylvania by Judith Modell & Charlie Brodsky. This study used a powerful combination of photography and prose to explore the identity of the town after the closure of the steel mills. Judith Modell & Charlie Brodsky, *A Town without Steel: Envisioning Homestead* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988).

[23] Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

[24] Lois Weis, *Working Class without Work: High School Students in a De-Industrializing Economy* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[25] Steven High & David Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

Youngstown have caused considerable social conflict.[26] In his most recent monograph, a study of Sturgeon Falls in Northern Ontario, Steven High was surprised to find that not everyone wants to memorialise the Weyerhaeuser paper mill around which the small town was built. In the eyes of many Sturgeon Falls residents, the mill workers were overly privileged, the efforts to save the mill were disproportionate, and the identification of the entire community with the mill did not resonate with them. In the decades leading up to the closure, the mill's workforce had dropped from 600 to 150, and the town had already been largely transformed into a bedroom community for Sudbury and North Bay.[27] Thus, the study of the cultural impact of deindustrialisation has to be a study which is nuanced, shorn of pre-conceived notions about victimhood and about whose histories deserve to be told.

Finally, North American economic and business historians have also expanded the temporal frame of analysis to explore the successes and failures of government efforts both to protect industry and to rebuild local economies after the collapse of industry. For example, Dimitry Anastakis has shown how government intervention was reasonably successful in supporting the position of the Canadian car industry through to the period of US-Canada free trade.[28] A number of recent American studies have explored the most common techniques used to revitalise the economies of deindustrialised cities, including tax incentives, promotion of the arts, the search for untapped markets, and local economic development initiatives. Some of these studies conclude that deindustrialised cities should build upon their traditional strengths, while others point to the importance of 'adaptive resilience' and the embracing of a post-industrial economic identity. Some suggest that long-term government-led economic planning is required to overcome a painful process of deindustrialisation, while others suggest that cutting regulations and the creation of an 'attractive business climate' is the magic bullet.[29] All however, demonstrate that rigorous historical study of the process of deindustrialisation is essential to helping communities, towns, and cities recover from its effects and build a brighter post-industrial future for residents.

The first historiographical goal of this dissertation is to apply the insights of this voluminous North American literature to the British case. Just like Bluestone and Harrison did in their critical 1982 study, this dissertation combines economic, political and social analysis to fully capture the impact of deindustrialisation on the people of the United Kingdom and the structure of British society. It explores both the macro and micro causes of industrial decline and considers why some industries and some communities were affected more suddenly or more profoundly than others. It considers how deindustrialisation has changed people's identity and

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[26] Sherry Lee Linkon, and John Russo, *Steeltown U.S.A.: Work and Memory in Youngstown* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002); James Rhodes, 'Youngstown's 'Ghost'? Memory, Identity, and Deindustrialization', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84 (2013): 55–77.

[27] Steven High, *One Job Town: Work, Belonging and Betrayal in Northern Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

[28] Dimitry Anastakis, 'Industrial Sunrise? The Chrysler Bailout, the State and the Reindustrialization of the Canadian Automotive Sector, 1975-1986,' *Urban History Review* 35 (2007): 37-50.

[29] For a study that generally emphasises building upon traditional strengths, see William Bowen (ed.), *The Road through the Rust Belt: From Preeminence to Decline to Prosperity* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2014). For studies which emphasise adaptation, see Margaret Cowell, *Dealing with Deindustrialization: Adaptive Resilience in American Midwestern Regions* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015); David Koistinen, *Confronting Decline: The Political Economy of Deindustrialization in Twentieth-Century New England* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014). For a more libertarian perspective, see Adam Millsap, *Dayton: The Rise, Decline, and Transition of an Industrial City* (Chicago: Ohio State University Press, 2019).

sense of belonging, while recognising that deindustrialisation has meant different things to different people and is remembered in complex and sometimes contradictory ways.

Deindustrialisation in Britain

Slowly but surely, the study of deindustrialisation in Britain is beginning to catch up with the North American academy. Two critical studies, largely focussed on macro-effects and the high-political, have set the scholarly agenda. Jim Tomlinson's influential 2016 article proposes deindustrialisation as the 'meta-narrative' of postwar British history. Tomlinson is insistent that British deindustrialisation should not be equated or conflated with decline, as it was a complex structural process experienced by all Western European countries. Instead, he argues that the focus should be placed on the ways deindustrialisation reshaped the labour market and the very nature of employment in the UK, with profound implications for government policy, social inequality, and family incomes.[30]

In his expansive and provocative survey of 20th century British history, David Edgerton also rejects the language of decline, arguing that Britain remained a successful, advanced industrial nation through the late 1970s, and that any deindustrialisation in this earlier period was largely an inevitable result of other nations catching up.[31] However, Edgerton finds that the profound, sudden deindustrialisation of the Thatcher years resulted in the replacement of a broadly self-sufficient 'national' British economy with a fragmented, internationalised economy dependent on the financial industry and foreign investment. With their differing emphases and bold conclusions, these recent studies have opened the door to fruitful debates about the causes and effects of deindustrialisation, as well as its relationship to political and social change. However, for deindustrialisation's impact on Britain to be fully understood, the high political approach is insufficient. What is needed is a study which recognises the complex local impacts of deindustrialisation on individuals, families, and communities.

Another concept to come out of recent British research that this dissertation intends to interrogate further is the application of the Thompsonian concept of a 'moral economy' to deindustrialising communities. E.P. Thompson famously argued that, in times of shortage, 18th century peasants would assert their traditional right to buy grain at a 'fair price' independent of the market price.[32] Jim Phillips and other Scottish researchers have argued that a similar moral economy applied in postwar Scotland, with a widely-shared belief in 'the government's duty to maintain high and stable levels of paid work' and to provide alternative work for those made redundant.[33] In a recent study of the struggle to save the Linwood car plant, Phillips et al find

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[30] Jim Tomlinson, 'De-Industrialization Not Decline: A New Meta-Narrative for Post-war British History', *Twentieth-Century British History* 27 (2016): 76-99.
[31] David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History* (London: Allan Lane, 2018).
[32] Edward Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century', *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 76-136.
[33] Ewan Gibbs, 'The Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields: Managing Deindustrialization under Nationalization c.1947–1983', *Enterprise & Society* 19 (2018): 124-152; Andrew Perchard & Jim Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy: Wheelerism and Management of the Nationalised Coal Industry in Scotland', *Contemporary British History* 25 (2011): 387-405; Jim Phillips, 'Deindustrialization and the Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields, 1947 to 1991', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84 (2013): 99-115; Jim Phillips, 'The Closure of Michael Colliery in 1967 and the Politics of Deindustrialization in Scotland', *Twentieth*

that the political divergence of Scotland from England, beginning with the decline of the Unionist Party in the 1960s and accelerating ever since, reflected Scots' determination to defend this moral economy against a central government that seemed increasingly inclined to abandon it.[34] This Scottish moral economy appears similar to that found in Canada by Steven High, where unions used the rallying cries of economic nationalism and fear of American domination to force governments to protect employment in key industries.[35]

Finally, British scholars have increasingly been exploring the generational legacies of deindustrialisation. E.P. Thompson showed how pre-industrial modes of organisation and structures of feeling lived on well into the industrial age; likewise, the cultural products of the industrial age and the impact of its decline will continue to shape Western societies for decades to come. A recent special issue of *Contemporary British History* grapples with the complex, conflicted cultural legacies of the British coal industry.[36] Linda McDowell's book,[37] and an edited collection building on the work of Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor in New Times*, explore how the nature of working-class formation has changed in a post-industrial context.[38]

Many of these studies have built upon the critical work of Sherry Lee Linkon, whose monograph uses working-class novels, autobiographies, and art to explore how younger generations make sense of the physical ruins, poverty, and fractured identities of their deindustrialised communities, which she refers to as the 'half-life of deindustrialisation'. Linkon finds that there is a 'reflective nostalgia' for the industrial past, as today's casualised service workers look to the past for lessons in class solidarity, finding inspiration but not always a practical model of resistance.[39] However, these British studies are often too quick to emphasise the trauma of deindustrialisation without noting the complexity of experiences and the ambivalence that many of members of the 'post-industrial generation' feel about the industrial past.[40] As noted above, the North American scholarship is increasingly careful not to assume the existence of a singular industrial/post-industrial 'cultural identity' or 'set of values', even within a single community, and Linkon emphasises this fact in *The Half-Life of*

Century British History 26 (2015): 551-572; Jim Tomlinson, 'Re-Inventing the 'Moral Economy' in Post-war Britain', *Historical Research* 84 (2011): 356-373.

[34] Andrew Perchard, ''Broken Men' and 'Thatcher's Children': Memory and Legacy in Scotland's Coalfields' *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84 (2013): 78–98; Jim Phillips, Valerie Wright & Jim Tomlinson, 'Deindustrialization, the Linwood Car Plant and Scotland's Political Divergence from England in the 1960s and 1970s' *Twentieth-Century British History* 30 (2019): 399-423.

[35] High, *Industrial Sunset*.

[36] Jorg Arnold, ''Like Being on Death Row': Britain and the End of Coal, c. 1970 to the Present,' *Contemporary British History* 32 (2018): 1-17; Almuth Ebke, 'The Decline of the Mining Industry and the Debate about Britishness of the 1990s and Early 2000s,' *Contemporary British History* 32 (2018): 121-141; Tim Strangleman, 'Mining a Productive Seam? The Coal Industry, Community and Sociology', *Contemporary British History* 32 (2018): 18-38. See also the related work of Jay Emery, 'Belonging, Memory and History in the North Nottinghamshire Coalfield', *Journal of Historical Geography* 59 (2018): 77-89.

[37] Linda McDowell, *Redundant Masculinities?: Employment Change and White Working Class Youth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

[38] The original classic: Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor.* The new edited collection: Nadine Dolby, Greg Dimitriadis & Paul Willis (eds.), *Learning to Labor in New Times* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

[39] Sherry Lee Linkon, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialisation: Working Class Writing about Economic Restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).

[40] An example of a recent British study that takes a very nuanced look at the impact of deindustrialisation on subsequent generations is Jon Lawrence's study of social surveys of Tyneside women in the 2000s in his recent monograph: Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me: Individualism and the Search for Community in Post-war England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 195-229.

Deindustrialisation. She demonstrates that the postwar 'golden age' of the American industrial working-class was not shared equally by black and Hispanic workers, and this racialisation both shaped their experience of deindustrialisation and mediates its long-term impact on their identities.[41]

Broadening Spatially & Temporally

Britain and North America are not the only places to have experienced deindustrialisation. As I will emphasise throughout this dissertation, deindustrialisation is a global phenomenon, tied to structural changes in the nature of the global economy, the end of empire, and the remaking of the global division of labour. Deindustrialisation has occurred in many parts of the world, and thus, my dissertation also engages with English-language scholarship beyond the Anglo-American context – including East Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere – to help identify what is unique and specific to the British case.[42] Even with the Anglo-American context, scholarship has been expanding the spatial focus, exploring how deindustrialisation was differently experienced in remote industrial towns, such as Sydney, Nova Scotia (in Canada), or in predominately middle-class English regions like Kent or South Lincolnshire, and these comparisons will also prove valuable.[43]

Deindustrialisation is not unique to the global north, and neither it is uniquely modern phenomenon. Christopher Johnson's study of the decline of textile production in southern France over the 19th century is a useful reminder of this long history.[44] Imperial exploitation often led to the destruction of indigenous industries, the most famous example being the 19th century deindustrialisation of India, which was referenced by Karl Marx in *Das Kapital* and became a rallying cry for Indian nationalists in the early 20th century.[45] This dissertation will not expand the temporal focus to quite this extent, but it will challenge the traditional periodisation of deindustrialisation in Britain. David Edgerton downplays the extent of deindustrialisation in the pre-Thatcher era, placing the blame (in his eyes) for the 'fall' of the national, self-sufficient British economy on shoulders of Thatcher's economic officials and their total disregard for the traditions of British Toryism.[46] But in many of the industries that I shall

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[41] Linkon, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialisation.*

[42] See for example Germano Mendes de Paula, 'Deindustrialization in Brazil?' in *The New Brazilian Economy,* ed. Elias Grivoyannis (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 63-85; Roger Selya, 'The De-Industrialization of Taiwan: A Spatial Perspective', *Geography Research Forum* 27 (2007): 70-96; Nebojša Stojčić & Zoran Aralica, '(De)industrialisation and Lessons for Industrial Policy in Central and Eastern Europe', *Post-Communist Economies* 30 (2018): 713-734; Gabriel Simion, 'Effects of Postsocialist Deindustrialization in Central and Eastern Europe: Results of an Industrial Site Survey and GIS Mapping in Bucharest City, Romania', *Human Geographies* 10 (2016): 79-93.

[43] Lachlan MacKinnon, *Closing Sysco: Industrial Decline in Atlantic Canada's Steel City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020); James Broun, 'Place, Identity and Social Conflict in Post-Industrial England: Cases from South Lincolnshire in the 1980s', *Contemporary British History*, (2020): published online; David Nettleingham, 'Beyond the Heartlands: Deindustrialization, Naturalization and the Meaning of an 'Industrial' Tradition', *British Journal of Sociology* 70 (2019): 610-626.

[44] Christopher Johnson, *The Life and Death of Industrial Languedoc 1700–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[45] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (1867); Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1902); David Washbrook, 'Progress and Problems: South Asian Economic and Social History, c. 1720-1860', *Modern Asian Studies* 22 (1998): 57-96.

[46] Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation*.

focus on, the 'rationalisation' of production and downsizing of employment began to accelerate as early as the 1950s and continued through to the 1990s. The steel and textile industries began to rationalise on a large-scale in the late 1950s, while the British coal industry experienced its greatest employment decline in the 1960s, during the tenure of the first Wilson (Labour) Government.[47] Although central government did not fully come to recognise nor respond to the extent of Britain's economic transformation until the social and political upheaval of the 1970s, local communities were feeling its effects much earlier.

Race, Gender, Brexit

Every scholar of deindustrialisation is aware of how the political upheavals of recent years – Trump, Brexit, Le Pen, even the recent 2019 UK election – have increased popular and journalistic interest in the study of deindustrialisation. Commentators and some scholars have suggested that these political earthquakes are at least partially an effect of the 'half-life of deindustrialisation' and the neglect of working-class communities by progressive politicians.[48] However, many other scholars have challenged the assumptions that lie behind this narrative, arguing that it ignores the role of racism and imperial nostalgia, and that it unfairly blames working-class people when these right-wing populists were actually elected with the votes of the middle and upper classes.[49]

This increased interest is welcome, but it requires an appropriate scholarly response. First and foremost, this means writing an inclusive history of deindustrialisation that recognises the intersection of race, class, and gender, and that does not play into reactionary, exclusionary ideas of whose traumas deserve to be remembered.

There has been much study of the gendered impacts of deindustrialisation, but until recently this primarily meant focussing on masculinity and the dual roles of working women, rather than the direct impact of plant closures on women industrial workers.[50] Valerie Wright finds that deindustrialisation in Dundee, particularly in its early stages, actually affected women more than men as the city attempted to attract 'modern', male-dominated industries to replace the supposedly 'outdated', female-dominated jute industry.[51] Maud Anne Bracke's article on

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[47] William Ashworth. *The History of the British Coal Industry. Volume 5. 1946–1982: The Nationalized Industry*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[48] Justin Gest, *The White Working Class: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Linkon, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialisation*; Lisa Mckenzie, 'The Class Politics of Prejudice: Brexit and the Land of No-Hope and Glory,' *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 (November 2017): 265-280; Christine Walley, 'Trump's Election and the "White Working Class': What We Missed', *American Ethnologist* 44 (2017): 231–236. See also the provocative arguments of David Goodhart in *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2017).

[49] Lorenza Antonucci, Laszlo Horvath & Yordan Kutiyski, 'The Malaise of the Squeezed Middle: Challenging the Narrative of the 'Left Behind' Brexiter', *Competition & Change* 21 (2017): 211–229; Gurminder Bhambra, 'Brexit, Trump, and 'Methodological Whiteness': On the Misrecognition of Race and Class', *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 (2017): 214-232; Robert Shilliam, *Race and the Undeserving Poor: From Abolition to Brexit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Satnam Virdee & Brendan McGeever, 'Racism, Crisis, Brexit', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41 (2018): 1802-1819.

[50] See for example McDowell, *Redundant Masculinities?*; Valerie Walkerdine & Luis Jiménez, *Gender, Work and Community after De-industrialisation: A Psychosocial Approach to Affect* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[51] Valerie Wright, 'A Woman's Industry? The Role of Women in the Workforce of the Dundee Jute Industry c. 1945-1979', *International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy* 8, 2/3 (2014): 110-125.

the struggle for gender equality in the context of deindustrialisation at Fiat in Italy and Jonathan Moss' recent monograph on women's workplace activism in Britain provide critical insights into the relationship between deindustrialisation and the feminist politics of work.[52] Jackie Clarke's 2015 article on Molineux in France and Chiara Bonfiglioli's most recent article on the decline of Yugoslavian textile industry give voice to women's memories and trauma in the face of official efforts to devalue their work and silence their stories.[53]

With a focus on both male-dominated and female-dominated industries, this dissertation also attempts to give a proper voice to women workers and seeks to explain the gendered impacts of deindustrialisation. 'Women's jobs' in the cotton and linen textile industries were not defended with the same vigour as 'men's jobs' in steel or shipbuilding. But it also goes beyond that, exploring how deindustrialisation added distinct burdens to women's lives, while also opening the door to new forms of local struggle for gender equality. In the face of deindustrialisation, governments turned to community development to 'help communities help themselves', and immediately found that the number one demand was often improved childcare and support for working mothers. Women led the process by which local communities both adapted to and were transformed by deindustrialisation.

In his reflection piece following the Working Class Studies conference in Kent in September 2019, Steven High wrote that the focus of deindustrialisation studies on predominately white communities reflected a 'danger that we are contributing to the coding of the working-class as white'.[54] On both sides of the Atlantic, ethnic minority communities have been impacted by deindustrialisation more than any other segment of society, and in distinct and ongoing ways. South Asian migrants came to Lancashire in the 1950s and 60s for work in the textile mills, only to find themselves the first out of work, abandoned by the trade unions, and blamed by the wider society for their own misfortune.[55] Deindustrialisation combined with racist housing practices contributed to the segregation and poverty of the African American working-class in northern industrial cities.[56]

This dissertation demonstrates the way deindustrialisation impacted Britons of all races and backgrounds. It explores how industrial decline intersected with pre-existing racial inequalities in British society to produce distinctive racialised effects, including deepening residential segregation, unequal educational outcomes, and even increased racist violence. It argues that deindustrialisation exposed the incompleteness of postwar social democracy. In the context of industrial decline, Commonwealth citizens in particular found the promises of full employment and the welfare state wanting, and thus found themselves with no choice but to adapt to a post-industrial reality through individualism and the community pooling of resources.

In this effort to rectify the failure to recognise the intersection of race with the history of deindustrialisation, this dissertation once again follows the lead of American scholarship.

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[52] Mary Anne Bracke, 'Labour, Gender and Deindustrialisation: Women Workers at Fiat (Italy, 1970s–1980s)', *Contemporary European History* 28 (2019): 484-499; Jonathan Moss, *Women, Workplace Protest and Political Identity in England, 1968—85* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

[53] Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'Post-Socialist Deindustrialisation and its Gendered Structure of Feeling: The Devaluation of Women's Work in the Croatian Garment Industry' *Labor History* 61 (2020): 36-47; Jackie Clarke, 'Closing time: Deindustrialization and Nostalgia in Contemporary France', *History Workshop Journal* 79, no. 1 (2015): 107-125

[54] Steven High, 'A New Era in Deindustrialization Studies?', *Working-Class Perspectives* [Blog], 30 September 2019, https://workingclassstudies.wordpress.com/2019/09/30/a-new-era-in-deindustrialization-studies/.

[55] Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks.*

[56] William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

American studies of deindustrialisation have generally been relatively attune to the distinct impacts of industrial decline on African Americans, inspired in particular by Thomas Sugrue's seminal work *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.[57] Building upon Sugrue's work, Jason Hackworth's recent monograph explores how the American 'urban crisis' has been deepened by the racialised 'othering' of predominately black industrial cities.[58]

British scholarship has been slow to apply these insights, but Aaron Andrews' recent article is an important exception, integrating the story of deindustrialisation with broader histories of urban decline and governmental neglect. Andrews shows how the decline of the urban landscape of Liverpool was actually an agent of the city's deindustrialisation, as the dereliction of housing and public spaces played into a downward economic spiral.[59] This dissertation looks to Sugrue, Hackworth, and Andrews for inspiration, but also to recent ground-breaking UK studies of race, class, and community in the context of postwar deindustrialisation, a context that this project will help to foreground.[60]

Deindustrialisation & Neoliberalism

This dissertation seeks not only to provide a more inclusive history of deindustrialisation in Britain, but also one which is serious about unpicking the relationship between deindustrialisation and neoliberalism. 'Neoliberalism' is a contested term, disliked by many scholars for its vagueness and frequent employment as a term of abuse. However, it still has value as a broad, all-encompassing term for the changed relationship between government and citizen which developed in the last third of the 20th century, and for the subsequent global ideological consensus around deregulation, privatisation, free trade, and austerity.[61] Since the 2008 global financial crisis, this consensus has come under sustained scholarly and popular

[57] Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also the following American studies of race and deindustrialisation: Randolph Hohle, *Race and the Origins of American Neoliberalism* (London: Routledge, 2015); Guian McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Judith Stein, *Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Heather Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[58] Jason Hackworth, *Manufacturing Decline: How Racism and the Conservative Movement Crush the American Rust Belt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

[59] Aaron Andrews, 'Dereliction, Decay and the Problem of De-Industrialization in Britain, c. 1968–1977' *Urban History* 47 (2020): 236-256. See also the following valuable contributions: Simon Gunn & Colin Hyde, 'Post-Industrial Place, Multicultural Space: The Transformation of Leicester, c. 1970-1990,' *International Journal of Regional & Local History* 8, no. 2 (2013): 94-111; James Rhodes & Laurence Brown, 'The Rise and Fall of the 'Inner City': Race, Space and Urban Policy in Postwar England', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45 (2019): 3243-3259.

[60] Kieran Connell, *Black Handsworth: Race in 1980s Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019); Radhika Anita Natarajan, *Organizing Community: Commonwealth Citizens and Social Activism in Britain, 1948–1982* (PhD Thesis, UC Berkeley, 2013); Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain 1964-85* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018).

[61] Sheri Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth* Century (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

attack, and the debate over its future direction is driving much of today's political upheaval.[62] By exploring the relationship between deindustrialisation and neoliberalism, this dissertation will play a role in clarifying the history and meaning of neoliberalism, and in contributing to the debates about its future.

In particular, there is a scholarly debate about whether young people embrace individualism in response to economic insecurity, but there have been limited attempts to connect the profound economic insecurities caused by the particularly rapid deindustrialisation of the 1970s and 1980s with the rise of neoliberal governance in the same period.[63] Emily Robinson et al have identified the rise of a 'popular individualism' in 1970s Britain, but largely ascribe its rise to generational shifts, secularisation, and trade union militancy.[64] As noted above, I argue that deindustrialisation often forced working class and marginalised Britons to adopt cultural traits, such as individualism and entrepreneurialism, which would come to be associated with Thatcherite neoliberalism. This was largely as a result of the failure of the social democratic welfare state to deliver on its promises in the face of industrial collapse, but it would have a real and lasting effect, which challenges our idea of neoliberalism as a high-political transformation imposed from above.[65]

Critical Interventions

This dissertation thus aims to be the first comprehensive study of deindustrialisation and its impacts on mid-to-late 20th century Britain. Building upon the literature discussed above, and particularly inspired by the work done in the North American context, it aims to identify what the deindustrialisation of Britain actually looked like at a local level, who it affected, and what role it played in transforming British society over the last sixty years.

The first critical intervention of this dissertation will be to explain why the speed, scale and pattern of deindustrialisation varied so greatly across industry and location, and how these differences are significant to the broader economic and political history of postwar Britain. From the mid-19th century until the mid-20th century, the percentage of people employed in manufacturing in the United Kingdom was stable between 35 and 39 per cent.[66] However, from the 1960s onwards Britain experienced the most rapid decline of manufacturing jobs in the

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[62] David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2013); Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press, 2014); Thomas Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020).

[63] Barbara Jensen, *Reading Classes: On Culture and Classism in America* (Ithaca: Cornell/ILR Press, 2012); Jennifer Silva, *Coming Up Short: Working-Class Adulthood in an Age of* Uncertainty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[64] Emily Robinson et al, 'Telling Stories about Post-war Britain: Popular Individualism and the 'Crisis' of the 1970s' *Twentieth Century British History* 28 (2017): 268-304.

[65] For further discussion of the incompleteness of postwar social democracy and its failure to meet the challenge of economic restructuring (on both sides of the Atlantic), see Judith Stein, *Running Steel, Running* America: Judith Stein*, Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); James Vernon, *Modern Britain: 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[66] Dirk Pilat et al, 'The Changing Nature of Manufacturing in OECD Economies', *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Working Papers* 2006/9; Office for National Statistics, *2011 Census Analysis, 170 Years of Industry*, 05 June 2013, data tables, archived by The National Archives on 6 January 2016, retrieved from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/170-years-of-industry/index.html.

global north.[67] In 1970, 25 per cent of French workers were employed in manufacturing, compared to 33 per cent in the UK. Britain was considerably more industrialised than its large continental neighbour. However, by 2003 the balance had flipped: 15 per cent of the French population was employed in manufacturing compared with only 12 per cent in Britain.[68] Britain's decline in manufacturing employment was the fastest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and twice the average. In the 1950s Britain was still an industrial nation, whereas by the 1990s it was largely not.

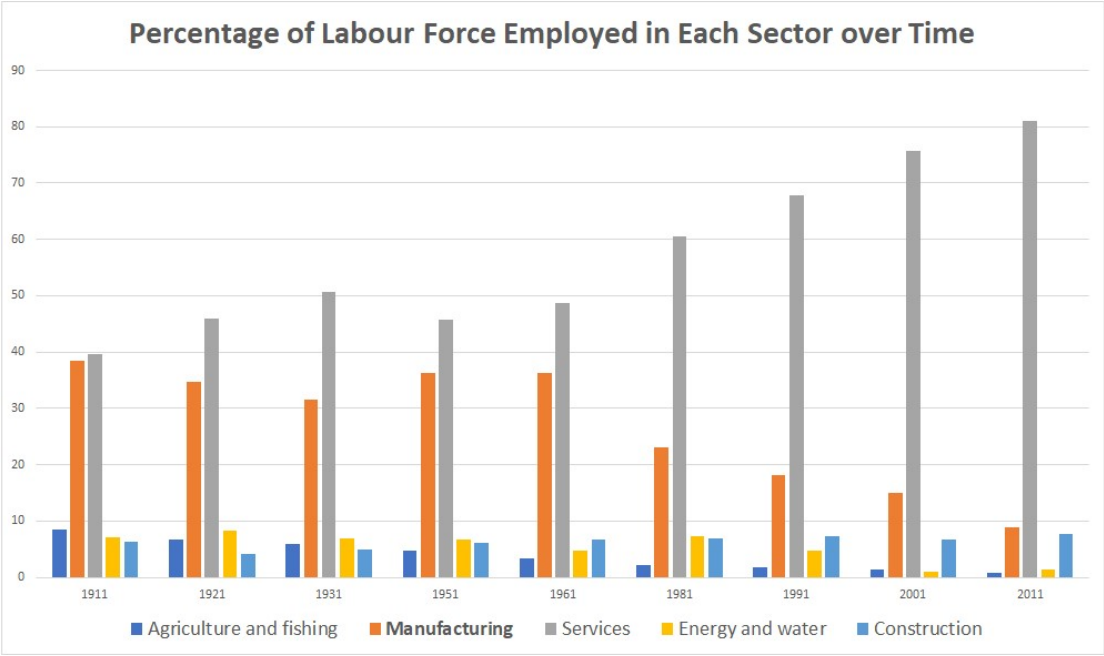

Figure 1: Graph showing percentage of UK labour force employed in each sector over time (data from ONS report, *2011 Census Analysis, 170 Years of Industry*, 2013)

The explanation for the speed of Britain's deindustrialisation is a complex one. It has been the subject of considerable study by economic and business historians, and which cannot be replicated here.[69] But where this project can make a valuable contribution is in exposing some of the peculiar features of the postwar British industrial structure. The 'postwar Butskellite consensus' may be a myth,[70] but postwar governments of both parties pursued

[67] Pilat et al, 'The Changing Nature of Manufacturing in OECD Economies'.
[68] Ibid.
[69] There is a vast literature on this question. Some economic & business historians blame underinvestment, some blame trade union culture & industrial relations, while some see the process as inevitable and relatively benign. See for example: Nicholas Comfort, *The Slow Death of British Industry: A Sixty-Year Suicide* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013); Nicholas Crafts, 'Deindustrialisation and Economic Growth', *The Economic Journal* 106 (1996): 172-183; Charles Feinstein, 'Economic Growth Since 1870: Britain's Performance in International Perspective,' *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 4, no. 1 (1988): 1-13; Michael Kitson & Jonathan Michie, 'Britain's Industrial Performance since 1960: Underinvestment and Relative Decline', *The Economic Journal* 106, no. 434 (1996): 196-212; Martin Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981)
[70] Harriet Jones & Michael Kandiah (eds.). *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945-64* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Rationing, Austerity and the Conservative Party Recovery after 1945', *The Historical Journal* 37, no. 1 (1994): 173-197.

industrial policies that created a manufacturing sector that was both expected to compete in a competitive global market and to act as a piece of social democratic regional policy.[71] As global competition grew and imperial markets were lost, this left many British industries very poorly positioned to compete. This can be seen most starkly in the case of the Scottish steel industry, but it is hardly unique. The particular nature of the postwar British economy and the conflicting goals of postwar industrial policy shaped the speed, scale, and pattern of deindustrialisation in Britain.

The second major intervention will be to tell an inclusive story of deindustrialisation in Britain. First, this means a geographically inclusive story, that moves beyond the Northern English industrial heartland to explore the distinctive impacts of deindustrialisation in places like the formerly prosperous English Midlands, conflict ridden Northern Ireland, and the Scottish central belt. As previously mentioned, it means telling a temporally inclusive story, which recognises that deindustrialisation spans across the social democratic and neoliberal eras, and which helpfully complicates the simple periodisation of postwar British history as being broken in two by the election of Margaret Thatcher.[72]

And finally, also as discussed above, it means writing a history that recognises that deindustrialisation impacted women and ethnic minority Britons as much or more as it did white male Britons. It means telling their stories. It also means recognising the way that the pre-existing inequalities of postwar British society – particularly race, class, gender and region – interacted with structural economic changes to produce particular social, cultural, and spatial outcomes. Deindustrialisation in Oldham interacted with racial and class inequalities to break apart the multicultural community in Velda Casey's neighbourhood of Glodwick and create a segregated, disadvantaged 'ghetto'. Here again I will use deindustrialisation as a way to explore the contradictions and gaps in the supposedly universal social democratic postwar welfare state, and the ways in which that welfare state was built upon particular assumptions about the racial makeup of the country and the place of women in family and society.[73]

The third and final intervention of this dissertation will be to explore how individuals, families, and communities responded to deindustrialisation. Here, we are able to see how the speed and parameters of industrial decline in specific towns and cities shaped the nature of the response. In Coventry, the automobile industry collapsed quite suddenly in the 1970s, opening the door to radical political solutions that would not be seen in Oldham, where the decline began earlier and was more gradual. In Belfast, the decline of the linen and shipbuilding industries coincided and interacted with the onset of sectarian conflict to produce particular social and cultural challenges. Common to all deindustrialising communities, however, was the blossoming from the ground up of a new generation of organisations, often shaped less around identities of class than locality, nation, religion, race and gender, and often with imperial origins or antecedents. These local organisations were often founded to halt or reverse the process of deindustrialisation, and in so doing challenged the position of trade unions, who had manifestly

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[71] James Cronin, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion: War, State and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[72] Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton do a fine job of outlining and deconstructing this historiographical trend in their introduction to Lawrence Black, Hugh Pemberton & Pat Thane (eds.), *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

[73] Eve Worth, 'Women, Education and Social Mobility in Britain during the Long 1970s', *Cultural and Social History* 16, no. 1 (2019): 67-83; Helen McCarthy, *Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Natarajan, *Organizing Community*.

failed in this task. Thus, in Motherwell the Ravenscraig steel mill was briefly saved from closure by a community campaign in the 1980s, which brought together campaigners, some of whom were fighting to save the mill on the basis of class, some on the basis of nation, and still others fighting on the basis of locality.

These local organisations fought to protect local industry, but also to fill in the gaps in state provision that deindustrialisation was beginning to expose. Then, as they lost these battles, these local organisations actually played a significant yet understudied role in helping residents come to terms with the end of the social democratic industrial era. Groups like the Oldham Asian Business Association and the Coventry Workshop shifted their focus from the preservation of industrial jobs to the promotion of re-skilling and entrepreneurialism. This should not be understood as a sort of grassroots Thatcherism, as this shift was often tied to efforts for a more inclusive, just, and equal society, including a particular emphasis on the need for gender equality and broader access to further education.[74] However, their efforts, combined with the loss of faith in a set of social democratic promises that had manifestly been broken, did open the door to a new neoliberal politics. In turn, that new Thatcherite politics put enormous pressure on the tenuous but critical balance between individualism and communitarianism that shaped the social structure of deindustrialising communities.[75] Just as E.P. Thompson traced the agency of the working class in their own making, I demonstrate the active popular agency of local communities in the 'unmaking' of the British working class in the context of late 20th century deindustrialisation.

Structure of the Study

This project takes the form of four case studies of deindustrialised towns drawn from across the UK. This approach allows a deep and multi-faceted look into how deindustrialisation interacted with the political, social, cultural, and spatial structures of the postwar UK to produce different outcomes in different places. Each of the sites has a unique history, a unique position in the social and cultural geography of the United Kingdom, and a unique set of responses to the collapse of its primary industry. Together they provide a set of cases that will allow comparison of deindustrialisation's impact in the different nations of the UK, in fragmented and centralised industries, in male and female dominated sectors, and in both multi-racial and primarily white communities.

[74] Emily Robinson et al, 'Telling Stories about Post-war Britain'.
[75] Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me Me?: The Search for Community in Post-war England.*

Figure 2: Map showing location within the UK of the four case-studies covered in this dissertation (created by author)

The first site is Oldham, just north-east of Manchester in industrial Lancashire. Oldham is a logical place to begin a study of Britain's transition to a post-industrial society, as it was once the heart of the industry most associated with Britain's initial rise to industrial strength, the production of cotton textiles. However, it is now the most deprived local authority in England and a byword for racial tension, having experienced destructive race riots as recently as 2001. The British cotton industry, relying on outdated equipment and hampered by a fragmented ownership structure and limited government support, had been losing world market share to lower cost competitors since the end of the First World War. But for a period immediately after the Second World War, the British textile industry experienced a brief economic reprieve, and the need for workers encouraged the migration of Eastern Europeans, West Indians, and South Asians to the town, and most notably a large community of peasant farmers from Mirpur in Pakistan. Oldham was a multi-ethnic working-class community. From the late 1950s onwards, the industry began rapid and inexorable decline, and this deindustrialisation would have racialised effects. South Asian and West Indian workers were disproportionately affected, were abandoned by trade unions, and were blamed for the suffering of the wider community. The universalist promises of the postwar welfare state were proven to be hallow, and the government's community development efforts actually shifted social responsibilities further onto the backs of local residents. Into this gap stepped a number of local organisations, organised around ethnicity, gender, and locality, which turned to entrepreneurialism and the support of small businesses as a route out of the post-industrial dead end. However, those without the education or connections to follow this path found themselves increasingly abandoned and trapped. Deindustrialisation was thus the catalyst of a process by which the multi-ethnic working class was broken apart, local organisations helped redefine the nature of the social, and the neighbourhood of Glodwick became a 'ghetto' which continues to suffer considerable economic and social neglect. This chapter will thus provide an opportunity to study how three of the most transformative aspects of postwar British history –

deindustrialisation, the restructuring of the welfare state, and postcolonial migration – intersected with one another at the level of the local community.

The second chapter will explore the story of Belfast, the city that built the Titanic but whose history in the last half century has been marred by steep industrial decline and destructive sectarian conflict. Unlike Oldham, Belfast was not a single-industry city, but all of the major pillars of the local economy, including shipbuilding, linen, and aerospace, faced existential crises in the postwar era. The Northern Ireland government's drastic efforts to save the Protestant-dominated shipbuilding industry reflected the uniquely powerful position of working-class Protestants in shaping the economic and political response to deindustrialisation in the Belfast, but even this agency was not enough to prevent the industry's further decline. With the onset of sectarian conflict in the late 1960s, a vicious feedback loop of deindustrialisation and violence developed, particularly on the majority Catholic western side of the city, where the collapse of the linen industry caused some of the highest unemployment rates in the Western world. Once again, one of the outcomes of the industrial collapse was the blossoming of a variety of local organisations, which often placed a particular emphasis on the fight for better education and childcare and implicitly challenged assumptions about the role of women in a post-industrial society. These organisations, often seen as products of the sectarian conflict, were also responses to the deindustrialisation of Belfast and the need to fill the manifold gaps in the social democratic welfare state if the city was to regain economic health in a post-industrial context. The decline of Northern Ireland's economy and the rise of sectarian conflict have usually been studied as two separate issues by historians, but it is wrong to ignore the socio-economic ramifications of job losses and their impact on driving Catholics and Protestants apart.

The third chapter studies the mid-sized city of Coventry in the English Midlands, the heart of Britain's automobile industry but ravaged by British Leyland's plant closures throughout the second half of the 20th century. Car manufacturing is a more recent addition to Britain's industrial base, and Coventry boomed in the immediate postwar era, with average incomes 20 to 25 per cent above the overall national average. However, like the 'Big 3' North American auto makers, British automobile production did not adapt well to Japanese and European competition, and regional policy caused the geographic fragmentation of the industry and the de-centring of Coventry within its production structure. The city experienced an incredibly rapid reversal of fortune, with parts of Coventry becoming among the most deprived areas of the Midlands by the 1980s. Once again, women and the large South Asian population working in the auto industry faced the greatest impact, and subsequently found that the institutional structure of local society, including organisations like the Indian Workers Association, were unable to provide an effective response. Here, more clearly than in any other case, we can see deindustrialisation mixing with generational change and social upheaval to cause the pre-existing fissures within Coventry's multi-racial working class to rupture. This in turn opened the door to a complex mixture of political and cultural responses, from the National Front's appeal to racism, to the old-fashioned class politics of the Militant Tendency, to the intersectional leftism of the Asian Youth Movements. This chapter will provide an opportunity to study how deindustrialisation is experienced and understood in an area that had previously seemed relatively immune to such economic restructuring.

The final chapter will focus on Motherwell in North Lanarkshire, the site of the Ravenscraig steel mill. Steel production has a long history in Scotland, but it was in serious need of modernisation by the mid-twentieth century. Ravenscraig, built with government support, was Britain's most advanced steel mill when it opened in the 1959 and seemed to

represent the beginning of a new and bright era for the industry. However, the construction of the mill starkly reflected the contradictions of postwar industrial policy, as it was built both to prop up employment in a depressed area and to compete in an international market. It would struggle mightily to do both things at the same time. The enormous financial losses incurred by the Scottish steel industry made it a target for opponents of government economic intervention, and the Thatcher government was determined to force its closure. However, the thirteen years from 1979 to 1992 represent a partial victory for popular agency in resisting the economic and political forces of deindustrialisation, as a community mobilisation succeeded in frightening the Scottish Conservatives Party into prolonging the mill's lease on life. But, taking a closer look at the makeup of this 'community mobilisation', we once again see deindustrialisation fraying the traditional structures of solidarity and opening the way for distinctive political formations, including the rising and newly transformed force of Scottish nationalism. This chapter will also be an opportunity to interrogate the existence of the Scottish industrial 'moral economy' as described by Jim Phillips and his colleagues.

Sources

This study is based on a diverse range of textual and recorded sources, allowing for the mixing of perspectives and methods. Government documents, including from central government and the Northern Ireland and Scottish Offices, allow an exploration of policy responses to deindustrialisation and the reaction of political officials to popular mobilisation. Trade union and company files serve a similar purpose. Studying the development and relevance of local organisations can be very challenging due to the lack of consistent records. Much of my material on these organisations comes from the brief moments when they interacted directly with the state, such as during the Oldham Community Development Project and during the engagement process of the early direct rule government in Northern Ireland. This mediation of voices poses a real problem, and local organisations are not necessarily representative of the communities they claim to represent, but when used carefully these files can provide valuable insights into grassroots organising and the nature of popular responses to deindustrialisation. The historical 'ephemera' held by many local archives in the UK: newspaper clippings, local government records, flyers and photos – have also proven incredibly valuable for tracing the actions and ideologies of anti-deindustrialisation community mobilisations such as the campaign in Motherwell. The scale of this project has made the completion of oral histories impossible, but for some of the cases, particularly that of Oldham and Belfast, publicly available community oral history projects have been consulted. These collections may be designed to provide a carefully curated picture of community life from a particular perspective, but they can still bring out voices that would otherwise be silent. Voices like those of Velda Casey come from these collections.

Deindustrialisation has a long history in Britain and around the world. It has had a profound impact on the physical, economic, political, social and cultural landscape of the United Kingdom. Yet, despite the growing scholarship of British deindustrialisation studies, we lack a full understanding of how it occurred and how it interacted with the other critical historical transformations of 20th century Britain to produce that contemporary landscape. This dissertation is thus a preliminary attempt to place deindustrialisation where it belongs, in the centre of postwar British history,

Chapter 1:
As the Wheels Stop Turning: Community, Race and Gender in Postwar Oldham

When Commonwealth citizens arrived in Oldham in the 1950s and 1960s, they were often immediately struck by two things. The first, mentioned above by Velda Casey, was the cold. Louis Lovell arrived in mid-spring 1963 from Barbados, and had been warned about the cold, but still found the first experience of English weather 'impossible to prepare for'.[1] Mohammed Ashraf, travelling to Oldham from Rawalpindi in Pakistan in 1968, also received strong warnings about the cold, but was still shocked and amazed by the snowfalls of his first winter.[2]

The other feature of Oldham that these new arrivals remarked upon was the fog. Tariq Amin, a relative of Mohammed Ashraf, arrived in Oldham from Rawalpindi in 1962, at the age of ten, to join his father. His first memories of Oldham are of the smoke coming from the chimneys, and the persistent fogs that would settle in over the town.[3] Muriel Harewood arrived in England from Barbados a year after Amin, and worked in catering in Kent for a year, before moving north in 1964 to be with her husband in Oldham. She found the fog in Oldham to be unlike anything she had experienced in the south-east. She says that, during the really thick fogs, 'they would get a blind man to lead people home from the factories.'[4] This incredible story is reminiscent of Morley Roberts's 1908 poem, 'The Fog', in which wealthy Londoners are dependent on the help of a blind beggar to get home through one of London's famous fogs.[5]

As a 21st century visitor to Oldham, I can certainly relate to the first of these observations. The high elevation and the proximity to the Pennine hills produces a cold, damp microclimate that even this hardened, winter-loving Canadian found difficult to bear. However, I can only imagine what Oldham might have looked like in the midst of a thick, pollution-related fog. Oldham's pollution problems persisted well beyond the passage of the Clean Air Act in 1956, which was largely a response to the particularly deadly 1952 London fog, but began to rapidly dissipate from the late 1960s onwards.[6] In the present day, the distinctive skyline of Oldham is rarely obscured by any smoke. Across Britain, this decline in air pollution – especially the decline in sulphur dioxide and fine particulates – has been driven largely by the changeover from coal to gas or electric household heating.[7] Oldham is no exception to this, but the heating changeover also coincided with another change that also helped clear the air over the town: the collapse of the cotton textile industry. Although electrification of textile mills began

[1] Louis Lovell, Interviewed 14 May 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/14, OLSA.
[2] Mohammed Ashraf, Interviewed 2011-12 (specific date unknown): Cotton, Curry and Commerce Oral History Recordings, M185/4, OLSA.
[3] Tariq Amin, Interviewed 2011-12 (specific date unknown): Cotton, Curry and Commerce Oral History Recordings, M185/2, OLSA.
[4] Muriel Harewood, Interviewed 5 October 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/8, OLSA.
[5] Morley Roberts, 'The Fog', *Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly* 36 (July to December 1908), page 382. For an elaboration on the significance of Roberts' story, see Christine Corton, *London Fog: The Biography* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2015), 148-152.
[6] J.W.S. Longhurst & D.E. Conlan, 'Changing Air Quality in the Greater Manchester Conurbation', *Transactions on Ecology and the Environment* 3 (1994): 352.
[7] Corton, *London Fog*, 315-334.

around the turn of the 20th century and accelerated in both Britain and the US in the 1920s,[8] there were still mills in the Oldham area using coal for energy as late as the 1970s.[9]

Oldham's history has revolved around the production of cotton textiles. Located in the cradle of Britain's early industrialisation, Oldham was once one of the wealthiest towns in the world, and employment in the mills peaked at more than 50,000 at the beginning of the 20th century. But that century would not be kind to the industry, and the final decline of textile production in Oldham would begin from the 1950s onwards, leaving behind the abandoned and repurposed mills that continue to dot the town's skyline, and the clear air that makes it possible to view that skyline. However, the legacies of deindustrialisation in Oldham run much deeper than some spooky old mills, as fascinating as they are.[10]

Figure 3: The abandoned Hartford Mill, Oldham, before its demolition in 2020 (photo taken by author, 2018)

The workforce in Oldham's textile industry was always diverse. Women made up the majority of workers in many sections of the industry, and generations of migration to Lancashire brought Irish Catholics, Poles, Ukrainians, West Indians, and finally South Asians to work in

[8] Patrick Malone, 'Steam Mills in a Seaport: Power for the New Bedford Textile Industry', *IA. The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology* 40, no. 1/2 (2014): 130-34.
[9] 'Report of the Directors', Courtaulds Report and Accounts, 1980-81, page 18-20, L17884, OLSA.
[10] At least this author finds them fascinating. A particularly famous abandoned mill and grade-two listed building, the Hartford Mill, was demolished in early 2020, after continued problems with trespassing and vandalism. Charlotte Green, ''Death trap' 113-year-old mill is being demolished', *Manchester Evening News*, 17 February 2020, https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/death-trap-113-year-old-17765701

the mills over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. Even as it began to contract in the 1950s and early 1960s, low wages, poor conditions, and the availability of other employment meant that the textile industry continued to look beyond Britain to obtain the workforce that it required. However, as mill and factory closures accelerated from the late 1960s and the postwar 'golden age' began to falter, deindustrialisation exposed the underlying inequalities of British society and the false promises of the postwar welfare state, particularly to Commonwealth citizens and working women.

Deindustrialisation has produced a post-industrial, post-imperial social formation in Oldham, one which has been shaped by the distinctive features of the town's industrial history, but which also reflects the cleavages and brokenness of contemporary British society as a whole. The story of Oldham has long been an imperial story. Oldham's industrial rise was dependent on the imperial economic system of the 19th century, including forced labour, naval superiority, and protected markets.[11] The unravelling of that system, and the rise of competition from Commonwealth and imperial textile producers, such as Hong Kong and India, were a critical part of the town's industrial decline. Migration to Oldham's mills was driven also driven by imperial exploitation and post-colonial economic interventionism, from the Irish Famine of the 1840s to the construction of the Mangla Dam in 1960s Kashmir. And finally, as deindustrialisation exposed the racial inequalities and broken promises of postwar Britain, the government turned to strategies of community relations and community development that had been refined in the context of imperial social reform.

This chapter will trace how this post-industrial, post-imperial social formation was created in Oldham. It will begin by explaining the combination of local, imperial/post-imperial, and global forces that caused the deindustrialisation of Oldham to unfold the way it did. As will be the case with all of the industries studied in this dissertation, this decline did not follow an inevitable, pre-set path. The specific process of decline in the cotton textile industry actually reflected and exposed gender and racial inequalities in important British institutions, including the trade unions. The chapter will then show how deindustrialisation intersected with racial inequality, and how this intersection produced a particularly deep form of ethnic segregation and concentrated poverty in Oldham's inner city neighbourhoods. The government's Community Development Project of the early 1970s sought to solve Oldham's social problems through the creation of local organisations that would 'help local residents to help themselves'. In many ways, this ham-fisted intervention actually deepened racial divisions and segregation, and the local organisations were artificially constructed in a manner consistent with postwar assumptions about the management of multi-culturalism. Nevertheless, many of these organisations developed a logic and coherence of their own and played a significant role in supporting communities in ways that government was either unable or unwilling to, and in helping these communities adapt to post-industrial economic circumstances. The chapter thus will conclude by considering how some of these organisations acted as agents in the unmaking of social democracy and rise of a new intellectual paradigm based on self-reliance and entrepreneurialism, both in Oldham and across Britain.

In addition to the archival files of government, industry, and local organisations, this chapter makes use of two Oldham Council-supported oral history projects, conducted with members of the town's West Indian and South Asian communities respectively. These oral histories were designed to memorialise and celebrate both the migration stories and the

[11] Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*.

subsequent contribution that the interviewees have made to Oldham. Thus, they highlight positive, immigrant 'success' stories, they sometimes avoid difficult questions of discrimination, and they certainly do not focus on the history of deindustrialisation. They do not provide anything approaching a representative sample. However, they remain a highly valuable source for understanding the true complexity of deindustrialisation and its social and cultural effects on a racially diverse community like Oldham. And, as I will discuss below, the editorial decisions that shaped these oral history projects are themselves interesting for what they tell us about the ideological transformations that resulted from deindustrialisation. Thus, I have tried to use these sources with care and in a way that does justice to the interviewees and their stories.

The Global and the Local: Oldham in the World Economy

Oldham was in many ways the perfect location for the spinning of cotton. Its location on the edge of the Pennine Hills created a damp climate and provided access to falling water, the power source of many of the original late 18th century mills. The construction of canals in the last decades of the 18th century, particularly the Huddersfield Narrow, Ashton, and Hollinwood Branch Canals, connected Oldham to Manchester and beyond to the Irish Sea. Coal was also readily available, close to the surface, allowing for the construction of the large organically powered mills of the 19th century.[12] In 1861, there were about 1,800 coal miners working in a series of small pits in Oldham and the surrounding villages, providing enough coal to power most of the town's mills.[13] The population of the town grew from 12,000 in 1801 to 53,000 in 1851 and 137,000 in 1901.[14] In 1884, the 'Greater Oldham' area, which is roughly equivalent to the present-day Borough of Oldham, possessed about 23 per cent of the spindles in the entire Lancashire cotton industry. By 1902, this proportion had risen to 26.8 per cent, which in turn accounted for 13 per cent of *global* spinning capacity.[15] Oldham was also at the very centre of the textile equipment manufacturing industry, with the Platt Brothers' main factories in Werneth employing upwards of 12,000 in the early 20th century.[16] The ownership structure of the textile industry was highly fragmented – some mills were part of large joint-stock companies, while others were small family owned enterprises.[17]

The story of Oldham's development can of course only be explained with reference to the global 'empire of cotton' that had been created through conquest and imperialism over the course of the 19th century. Lancashire's cotton textile industry had, through a combination of economies of scale, British capital decisions, and the deindustrialisation of British colonies, developed both a reliable combination of raw material sources and a near stranglehold on the enormous colonial and quasi-colonial markets of India, China, and much of Africa over the

[12] Robert Robson, 'Location and Development of the Cotton Industry', *The Journal of Industrial Economics* 1, no. 2 (1953): 107-112.
[13] Theo Balderston, 'The Economics of Abundance: Coal and Cotton in Lancashire and the World,' *The Economic History Review* 63 (2010): 577.
[14] Brian Law, *Oldham, Brave Oldham: An Illustrated History of Oldham* (Oldham: Oldham Council, 1999), preface.
[15] Thomas Ashton, 'The Growth of Textile Businesses in the Oldham District, 1884-1924'*, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 89, no. 3 (1926): 567.
[16] 'Draft Oldham Economic Strategy, 2004', Oldham Economic Partnership files, 2000-06, M166/20/4/1, OLSA. In addition to textile machinery, the Platt Brothers also produced a number of other engineering products.
[17] Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 158-68.

course of the 19th century.[18] Without these markets, the majority of Oldham's spindles would have fallen silent. In 1882, Britain produced only 38 per cent of cotton textiles, but 82 per cent of world cotton textile exports originated from Britain. In a world where textiles were still produced primarily to satisfy a local market, [19] Britain's export dependent industrial behemoth stood alone, with Oldham and Lancashire at its very heart.[20]

The physical structure of Oldham was largely set during this period of rapid, imperially-financed growth. Oldham was and remains a town of tightly packed neighbourhoods of two-up-two-down terraced houses, with the textile mills built right into the structure of residential neighbourhoods. Textile workers walked to work, and they continued to be woken by the foreman's window-knocking pole into the mid-20th century.[21] Life in industrial Oldham was far from easy. Herbert Asquith, the future Prime Minister, described Oldham as 'one of the most dismal of manufacturing towns' upon visiting there in 1893. 'Civilisation and religion have done something for them', he wrote, 'given them paved streets, water-tight houses, board schools, chapels, and even (in Oldham) an art gallery. But life in its real sense they have never known, and to their dying day they will never know'.[22]

Although Oldhamers may have lacked 'civilisation' as Asquith defined it, they played a critical role in shaping the political culture of Britain in that transformative period of the 19th century when the country became truly 'modern'.[23] It was famously a centre of political radicalism through much of the 19th century,[24] and was at the centre of the 'cotton wars' of the 1880s and 90s, when tens of thousands of Oldham spinners and weavers struggled for union recognition.[25] Oldhamers were leaders in the co-operative movement and the limited liability joint stock company boom, and in 1863 the largest mill in the country, Sun Mill in Chadderton, was opened under a form of workers ownership and control.[26]

Fundamental to the distinct culture and politics of industrial Oldham was its distinct industrial workforce. In the 1851 census, 49 per cent of textile workers in England and Wales (a

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[18] I have borrowed the term 'empire of cotton' from Sven Beckert's critical monograph, which provides a definitive outline of how Lancashire came to dominate the global cotton textile trade: Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History.*

[19] This includes the American textile industry, which was primarily domestically oriented until the early 20th century.

[20] 'The United Textile Factory Workers' Association Plan for Cotton, 'Tables' (Appendix 1)', 1957. TU2/9/6, OLSA.

[21] Olga Brewster, Interviewed 16 September 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/1, OLSA.

[22] 'Liberal Premier's View of Oldham: 'One of the Most Dismal of Manufacturing Towns'', *Oldham Weekly Chronicle*, 10 September 1977.

[23] James Vernon, *Distant Strangers: How Britain became Modern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

[24] Oldham has long been at the centre of the rich and longstanding historical debate over the remaking of class and politics in 19th century England. See for example, John Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London: Methuen, 1974); David Gadian, 'Class Consciousness in Oldham and Other North-West Industrial Towns 1830-1850', *The Historical Journal* 21, no. 1 (1978): 161-172; R. A. Sykes, 'Some Aspects of Working-Class Consciousness in Oldham, 1830-1842', *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 1 (1980): 167-179; James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, 1815-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[25] Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics,* 64-65.

[26] Chadderton's relationship to Oldham remains complex. It physically abuts Oldham, is tied into the Oldham regional economy, and is merged into the Oldham Metropolitan Borough in 1974. However, it retains a clear sense of its own independence, and I have tried wherever possible not to ignore that fact. See Michael Lawson, *Chadderton's Cotton Industry: The Story of its Development and Decline* (Oldham: Chadderton Historical Society, 2001), 4-6.

category which also includes linen and wool workers) were women, and 54 per cent of workers in the clothing industries were women.[27] Incredibly, 1851 census figures also show that more women worked in textiles and related clothing industries than in domestic service.[28] Women would make up the majority of the cotton textile industry's workforce until the 1960s, and were particularly dominant in weaving and ring spinning. Even married women's employment, which had dropped to very low levels in most of Britain by the beginning of the 20th century, remained as high as 30 per cent in the textile districts.[29] Women were leaders in the political and workplace activism that took place in and around 19th and early 20th century Oldham textile mills. Harold Benenson has identified instances of women-led and women-only industrial action in the textile industry as far back as the 1840s, and he argues that this collective action created a distinctive gender and class identity among local women that contrasted sharply with the broader norms of Victorian England.[30] In 1887, women cardroom workers in Oldham went on strike to protest sexual harassment and assault by a foreman, and succeeded in forcing the company to sack the offender.[31] Thus the textile industry in Oldham was a product of local geography and global imperialist structures. It had resulted in the creation of a distinctive urban environment and a distinctive industrial workforce. As the economic rationale behind the industry began to collapse, these distinctive features would play a role in shaping both the process and outcomes of Oldham's deindustrialisation.

Deindustrialisation Arrives in Oldham

Employment in the British cotton textile industry peaked at 622,000 in 1912, and Oldham's workforce made up approximately 10 per cent of this total.[32] Writing in 1928, Ben Bowker looked back on this period before the First World War as a lost golden age, but one which was lost first and foremost due to the arrogance and lack of foresight of the manufacturers. 'I doubt if a single man in the Lancashire trade ever seriously thought of the morrow; if he did, he put the thought behind him as a waste of time'.[33] British dominance of the empire of cotton was already slipping before 1914, but it was the disruption caused by the First World War that would break its hold forever. Particularly significant were the sharp cuts to the imports of low-grade raw cotton from the US and India as a result of the war. Whereas Bolton, which primarily produced high-grade textiles for the domestic market using fine Egyptian cotton, was not hit too hard, the mass-market export-focussed mills of Oldham were crushed.[34] With few Lancashire textiles reaching critical overseas markets, those markets would be captured by domestic producers, especially in the case of India, and by modernised, export-

[27] Roger Penn, Ann Martin & Hilda Scattergood, 'Gender Relations, Technology and Employment Change in the Contemporary Textile Industry' *Sociology* 25, 4 (1991): 569-587.
[28] Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, 'The Occupational Structure of Britain, 1379-1911', updated 1 March 2018. Accessed online, https://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/occupations/
[29] Wally Seccombe, *Weathering the Storm: Working-class Families from the Industrial Revolution to the Fertility Decline* (London: Verso, 1993), 111-119.
[30] Harold Benenson, 'Patriarchal Constraints on Women Workers' Mobilization: The Lancashire Female Cotton Operatives 1842-1919', *The British Journal of Sociology* 44 (1993): 616-18.
[31] Ibid, 624.
[32] N.A., *The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire* (Manchester: Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association, 1967), retrieved from historical ephemera collection, OLSA.
[33] Ben Bowker, *Lancashire Under the Hammer* (London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf, 1928), 23.
[34] Ibid, 57-8

focussed industries which grew rapidly in Japan and Hong Kong.[35] The decision to return to the Gold Standard in 1926 proved another devastating blow, and in the 1930s Lancashire lost global markets to American and continental European competition. In the period of 1910-13, 81 per cent of the UK production of cotton goods went to export, but in the 1923-38 period only 46 per cent did.[36]

As in some other traditional industries, a temporary post-war boom took place in the years immediately following the Second World War, and employment stabilised around 320,000, about where it had been in the late 1930s. Britain, like the US, benefited from a lack of industrial competition during this period, as continental Europe and Japan rebuilt after the war. In 1949, the Lord Mayor described Oldham as 'highly prosperous, vigorous, and optimistic'.[37] However, this period of stability came to an abrupt end in the early 1950s, as employment dropped dramatically starting in 1952.[38] The textile industry was thus the first of the largest industrial sectors to begin the process of terminal decline.[39]

Over the next fifteen years about a thousand of the 1750 active mills in Lancashire would close, and employment would drop about 60 per cent, to a total of just 123,000 in 1966.[40] And the decline would continue, with fits and starts, through the 1970s and 1980s, with particularly dramatic job losses during the Oil Crisis-Three Day Week period of 1973-74, and again during the deep recession of the early 1980s. In the year 1980 alone, 11 mills closed in Oldham, cutting the size of the town's industry by 30 per cent.[41] And it was not just the mills that were lost. In 1981, the Oldham College of Technology shut down its internationally famous textile technology program due to a lack of students. Courtaulds, the largest textile producer in Lancashire, had shifted its apprentices to the college in Bolton in 1980, and enrollment in the programme dropped from 70 in 1979 to 23 in its final year. Through its link with Zawia-el-Hamra College in Egypt, the College had educated several generations of Egyptian technologists in addition to its British students, and it had attracted skilled teachers from around Lancashire.[42] A small number of mills would continue in production into the 1990s – 10 remained open in Oldham in 1994, but the days of 'England's bread hanging by Lancashire's thread were over'. Oldham was no longer a textile town, though the physical legacy of the textile era lives on, with a dozen mills still standing in Oldham today, most used as warehouses and distribution facilities.

How should this process of deindustrialisation be explained? There are a number of factors at play, some systemic, and some more specific to time and place. Certainly, as with many other industries in the Western world over the last 70 years, part of this employment

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[35] The debate over the 'inevitably' of the loss of the Indian textile market during the interwar period is a historiographically rich one. William Lazonick and William Mass have argued that it was indeed inevitable and unavoidable, while Sarah Wolcott has argued that, if not for inflation and changing political dynamics within India, Britain could have retained a hold on the Indian market for years and potentially decades to come. William Lazonick & William Mass, 'The Performance of the British Cotton Industry 1870-1913,' *Research in Economic History* 9 (1984): 37; Sarah Wolcott, 'British Myopia and the Collapse of Indian Textile Demand', *The Journal of Economic History* 51 (1991): 367-384.

[36] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter One: Problems and Prospects of the Cotton Industry', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.

[37] Law, *Oldham, Brave Oldham*, 291.

[38] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter One: Problems and Prospects of the Cotton Industry', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.

[39] The coal industry, for example, did not experience sustained employment losses until 1958. See William Ashworth, *The History of the British Coal Industry. Volume 5, 1946-1982*.

[40] *The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire*.

[41] '1980 Nightmare Could be Repeated, warn Textile Bosses', *Oldham Weekly Chronicle*, 21 February 1981.

[42] 'World-Famous Oldham Tech Ends Textiles', *Oldham Weekly Chronicle*, 24 December 1981.

decline was the result of rising productivity. Cotton production per worker increased by a quarter between 1951 and 1966. However, these productivity increases only account for a fifth of the job losses experienced in towns like Oldham.[43] The real cause of the industry's shrinkage was the loss of international markets, due to the inability to compete. The British textile industry was uniquely dependent on exports. As late as 1951, the UK had exported a net total of 578 million square yards of cotton textiles. In the summer of 1957, for the first time, imports of cotton goods into the UK exceeded exports. And in 1966, it was a net importer of 449 million yards.[44]

Why was the British textile industry unable to compete? Part of this story, as discussed above, dates back to the First World War, when the global empire of cotton centred on Lancashire was disrupted, giving other countries a chance to build up their industries. Although the rise of the Indian textile industry in the interwar period is usually seen as particularly significant to this story, the largest source of cotton imports were actually the US and Western Europe, not India, and Britain was still had a significant trading surplus with India in textiles.[45] However, the 'Ottawa Agreements', signed at the 1932 Imperial Economic Conference, would begin to change this. The agreements guaranteed bi-directional tariff free trade in textiles between Britain and most of the Empire and Commonwealth. The British government saw the Ottawa Agreements as a way of creating a protected imperial market for British goods, allowing them to use the empire to finance British economic recovery from the Great Depression.[46] And in the short-to-medium term it was a moderately successful strategy. As late as 1950, Britain retained a majority share of three critical colonial markets: South Africa, the Gold Coast (now Ghana), and Australia. These three disparate markets together accounted for nearly half of all exports of British cotton cloth and yarn.[47]

However, the Ottawa Agreements would come to have unintended consequences in the postwar era, as imperial preference only worked in Britain's favour so long as its cloth was the cheapest available within the imperial market. In their 1957 'Plan for Cotton', the United Textile Factory Workers' Association (UTFWA) was explicit about the miscalculation of the agreements: 'the Ottawa Agreements, of course, derive from a time when India was a heavy net importer of cotton goods and when the possibility of substantial exports was not envisaged.'[48] Because of the cost of transporting raw cotton to Britain for manufacture and some internal supports provided by the Nehru government, it was increasingly impossible for British textile producers to compete on equal terms with the Indian mills. Now able to undercut British manufacturers, and with lower transport costs, Indian textile producers became the primary beneficiaries of the imperial preference system, winning a large share of the Australian market. South Africa and the newly independent West African states withdrew from imperial preference in the late 1950s and early 1960s in an effort to develop their domestic industries, reducing British access to those markets.[49] As a result, by 1960 the British share of the Australian market in cotton cloth had fallen to 10 per cent from 53 per cent just a decade earlier. In South Africa

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[43] *The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire*.
[44] John Singleton, 'Lancashire's Last Stand: Declining Employment in the British Cotton Industry, 1950-70' *Economic History Review (London)* 39, no. 1 (1986): 92-107.
[45] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter Three: Problems of Markets and Marketing', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.
[46] Ian Drummond, *Imperial Economic Policy 1917-1939: Studies in Expansion and Protection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).
[47] *Cotton Board Quarterly Statistical Review*, various dates, retrieved from the British Library.
[48] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter Five: The Problem of Abnormal Imports', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.
[49] Singleton, 'Lancashire's Last Stand', 99.

the drop was from 60 per cent to 24 per cent; in Nigeria and the Gold Coast (Ghana) the drop was from 52 per cent to 19 per cent.[50] The Lancashire textile industry had been built on imperial exploitation and protected markets. As that imperial structure broke down, the textile industry faced a highly uncertain future.

With the loss of export markets, the domestic market became ever more important. As mentioned above, in 1957 imports of cotton textiles exceeded exports for the first time. Simply put, imported cloth was, by the late 1950s, significantly cheaper. In January 1962, durable 'drill' cotton cloth could be obtained in Britain from domestic manufacturers for 23d per yard. The same grade of cloth imported from Hong Kong was available for 18.75d, from India for 18.25d, and from China at 16.75d.[51] In 1957, about half of all cotton textile imports came from India, but Hong Kong was second at nearly 22 per cent.[52] Among all of Britain's competitors, the lowest wage costs were actually to be found in Hong Kong, and the various textile unions repeatedly demanded that the government enforce higher wages and standards in the Hong Kong industry, considering that it was still a British colony.[53] The UTFWA may have been exaggerating somewhat when they stated, 'it has been truly said that Lancashire could not compete even if her weavers worked for nothing', but it is certainly the case that there was no easy fix.[54]

Throughout the postwar era, the debate raged on how to fix the British textile industry's lack of competitiveness. Most of the proposed solutions can be grouped into two categories: modernisation and protection. The question of modernisation is particularly fraught, because it is inescapably tied to the question of British industrial under-investment more broadly.[55] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to determine whether British's 20th century industrial leadership were short-sighted under-investors or not, but it is undisputable that total capital investment in the British textile industry was lower than its comparable competitor industries in other developed countries. This was partly a legacy of the fact that British mills were older than their competitors, and thus harder and more expensive to modernise. In July 1955, approximately 42,000 automatic looms had been installed in Lancashire mills, but this was only 14 per cent of all looms, a fraction of the percentage among their European or Japanese competitors.[56] Even with government grants for retooling and modernisation, progress was slow. This was in spite of the fact that the Lancashire textile industry continued to be quite profitable through much of the postwar era, begging the question of why those profits were not ploughed back into the business more aggressively. Courtaulds, in particular, seemed quite

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[50] *Cotton Board Quarterly Statistical Review*, various dates.
[51] Cotton Board, *The Implications for the U.K. Cotton Industry of Britain's Entry into the E.E.C.* (Manchester, 1962), page 30.
[52] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter Five: The Problem of Abnormal Imports', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.
[53] ''Retaliation Risk' in a Textiles Ban: Reply to pleas by peers for help', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 24 April 1975
[54] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter Five: The Problem of Abnormal Imports', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.
[55] This debate over under-investment has an extensive historiography, and is related to the broader debate about the economic causes of deindustrialisation in Britain. For a taste of some of the key interpretations, see Alan Booth, 'The Manufacturing Failure Hypothesis and the Performance of British Industry During the Long Boom' *The Economic History Review* 56, 1 (2003): 1-33; and the dean of the field (but with a distinctly neo-liberal perspective), Nicholas Crafts, *Can De-Industrialisation Seriously Damage Your Wealth?: A Review of Why Growth Rates Differ And How To Improve Economic Performance* (London: IEA, 1993). In my opinion, the most convincing argument that under-investment was indeed a problem is made by Michael Kitson & Jonathan Michie, 'Britain's Industrial Performance since 1960: Underinvestment and Relative Decline'.
[56] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter Two: Production, Efficiency and Costs', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.

content to ride out the decline of the industry, closing mills as they became unprofitable and crying poverty in order to gain support and import protections from the government. In 1974, Courtaulds had a before-tax profit of £112 million,[57] its highest in many years, and its UK operations were consistently profitable until 1980, when the severe recession finally forced them into the red.[58]

Nevertheless, many mill owners, often allied with the workers themselves, insisted that no amount of investment would improve matters unless protection was increased. There was a debate about the issue at a December 1981 meeting of the Lancashire Local Authority Textile Action Committee, an organisation created and based in Oldham. At the meeting, regional councillors Fred Yates and Charles Tucker agreed that textile manufacturers had brought the decline on themselves by not modernising. But J. W. Jones of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and John Longworth of Oldham Textile Employers' Association joined forces to argue that tariffs were the only answer. Longworth 'offered to take anyone in any factory in the Oldham area and show them modern equipment'.[59] They also argued, with some justification, that further capital investment could not be expected without guarantees that there would still be enough of a market left for the capital costs to be recouped. In 1969, the Textile Council argued that Britain's industry could only be truly competitive if a set of new, modern mills were built at a cost of £4 million each. Either the government had to provide the money, or the textile manufacturers had to be guaranteed a sufficient share of the domestic market.[60]

The Role of Government, or Lack Thereof

Thus, the questions of both modernisation and protection led back to the role of government. Governments of both political persuasions had been involved in trying to fix the problems of the textile industry since the initial crises of the interwar period. In 1929, the Bank of England, with the support of government, forced the creation of the Lancashire Cotton Corporation, which took possession of more than 100 mills. 60 per cent of the mills were immediately closed, while the remaining 53 were modernised with government support. 20 of the LCC's mills were in Oldham or adjacent communities, more than in any other town.[61] The postwar Labour government largely followed the pattern set in the interwar period. It actively avoided nationalisation, but did involve itself in the industry through a series of grant programmes for modernisation, and through the creation of the Cotton Board in 1948.[62] The Cotton Board worked to reorganise the industry, researched new production techniques, and mounted an advertising campaign to encourage consumers to 'buy British textiles'.[63] The 1959 Cotton Industry Act gave further powers to the Cotton Board and imposed a new round of

[57] 'Textiles had a good year in 1974', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 18 January 1975.
[58] 'Courtaulds Announce 114 million loss', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 29 May 1981.
[59] '160pc Jump in Textile Job Losses since 1980', *Oldham Weekly Chronicle*, 12 December 1981.
[60] United Textile Factory Workers' Association, 'The Annual Conference Report from 1972 – April 27th-29th', TU2/9/13, OLSA.
[61] Duncan Gurr & Julian Hunt, *The Cotton Mills of Oldham* (Oldham: Oldham Education & Leisure, 1998).
[62] A full explanation of this complex relationship between government and the industry is given in Marguerite Dupree, 'The Cotton Industry: a Middle Way Between Nationalisation and Self- Government?' in *Labour Government and Private Industry, the Experience of 1945–51*, eds. Helen Mercer, Neil Rollings and Jim Tomlinson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 137–62.
[63] See David Clayton, 'Buy British: The Collective Marketing of Cotton Textiles, 1956–1962', *Textile History* 41 (2010): 217–235.

rationalisation on the industry. As a result of the consolidation following the 1959 Act, 36 of the remaining 130 mills in Oldham and adjacent communities were closed in 1959-60, the largest single year decline in the postwar period.[64] Further rationalisations were encouraged through the 1960s, the most significant occurring in 1964 when Courtaulds bought the LCC and became the dominant player in the industry.[65]

Nationalisation was a standard demand of the trade unions, but it was rarely taken seriously by either political party. At the 1972 UTFWA AGM, the Association voted overwhelming to support nationalisation. The only dissenter was Mr. K Forrester of the Beamers, Twisters, and Drawers, who warned that 'no government, Tory or Labour, and certainly not Tory, would, in his opinion, look at socialisation or nationalisation of what was left of the textile trade'. Labour MP Anthony (Tony) Wedgewood Benn, who would shift towards the left of the Labour Party over the course of the 1970s, was invited to give a speech on the final day of the meeting, but explicitly refused to address the question of nationalisation.[66] Short of nationalisation, or large blanket subsidies, there was little more that Government could do to help modernise the industry.

However, one thing over which government had complete control was protection. Generally speaking, both Tory and Labour governments were reluctant to impose tariffs on textiles coming from Commonwealth countries, seeing the remainder of the imperial preference system as integral to Britain's economic well-being and an important piece, along with the Sterling Area, of Britain's neo-imperial sphere of influence.[67] British officials feared that tariffs on Indian textiles would lead to retaliatory measures placed on British automobiles and engineering goods.[68] Although some quotas on imports were imposed in the 1950s, textile manufacturers looked longingly at the Common Market, where tariff barriers existed right from its creation in 1958. And indeed, it would only be in 1972, the year before Britain entered the European Economic Community (EEC), when a substantial programme of tariffs would be imposed.[69] Nevertheless, the tariffs initially were so low that many in the industry believed they would have little effect.[70] By joining the EEC, Britain was automatically entered into the European Multi-Fibre Agreement, which provided a degree of protection and stability to the remaining mills.[71] However, the British textile industry proved unable to compete effectively even with its European rivals, a situation Courtaulds blamed on significantly higher gas and electricity prices in the UK.[72] In 1981, with the industry experiencing another period of accelerating decline, European Representative Barbara Castle called on the Thatcher Government to ignore the Multi-Fibre Agreement and impose additional protections. 'Other

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[64] *The Decline of the Cotton and Coal Mining Industries of Lancashire*.
[65] Gurr & Hunt, *The Cotton Mills of Oldham*.
[66] United Textile Factory Workers' Association, 'The Annual Conference Report from 1972 – April 27th-29th', TU2/9/13, OLSA.
[67] For the argument that maintenance of the sterling area also damaged British goods' competitiveness, see Peter Cain & Anthony Hopkins, *British imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1990* (London: Longman, 1993). This argument is qualified somewhat by Caroline Schenk, *The Decline of Sterling: Managing the Retreat of an International Currency, 1945-1992* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[68] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter Five: The Problem of Abnormal Imports', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.
[69] United Textile Factory Workers' Association, 'The Annual Conference Report from 1972 – April 27th-29th', page 22, TU2/9/13.
[70] 'New Campaign to Save Textile Industry: Oldham Leads Fight to Stop Closures', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 18 October 1971.
[71] 'Oldham Backs Tough Line on Imports' *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 15 May 1981.
[72] Courtaulds Report and Accounts, 'Report of the Directors', 1980-81, L17884, OLSA.

governments are out to defend their own national interests', she said. 'Britain is the only one that says we mustn't break the rules. I saw that we should take the stance of the French – break the rule first…and apologise later.'[73] Thatcher did not follow up on Castle's suggestion. As we will see in the final chapter, this would not be the only time that Thatcher held fast to European regulations as a justification for laissez-faire industrial policy.

Why did successive British governments not do more to help the textile industry? Why did they not rescue unprofitable firms from closure like they did with the steel, shipbuilding, and automobile industries? Like all counterfactuals, this is a difficult and problematic question to attempt to answer. But there are several relevant factors that can be clearly established. First, the union structure in textiles was notoriously fragmented and impotent. Despite a series of consolidations in the 1950s and 1960s, the annual meeting of the United Textile Factory Workers' Association in Blackpool in 1968 brought together six fiercely independent union bodies, which disagreed on many of the specific solutions to the industry's problems.[74] Much of this was a legacy of how the industry developed in the 19th century: the divisions between spinners and weavers, and most significantly between male and female workers. While male spinners were represented by the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners from its creation in 1870, women spinners were represented by the Amalgamated Association of Card and Blowing Room Operatives, a division which persisted into the 1970s.[75] This fragmentation naturally circumscribed their political power, and particularly their power within the labour movement.

Second, textile work was always classed as a less skilled industry than other forms of manufacturing, and as an industry less central to community life than coal or steel. Why? This inevitably leads back to the question of gender.[76] In the late 19th century, the male 'breadwinner's wage' was a critical demand of the British working class movement. The heavily feminine workforce in textiles was a serious problem for this movement, and the broader labour movement continued to undervalue textile work as a result. In 1962, an article discussing the future of the industry argued that the 'high proportion of married women' in the workforce 'makes the introduction of new methods difficult'.[77] Although the issue of gender was never made explicit in the postwar debates over what to do about the industry's decline, the repeated arguments that communities could cope with textile job losses, and that retraining was not required (whereas it most definitely was in coal and steel towns) were reflective of these assumptions about gendered work and the male-breadwinner. The all-male leadership of the textile unions would often express their frustration how the industry considered second-class, but they never directly pushed the government to reflect on its gendered biases. At the

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[73] 'Cotton Takes Fight for Life to Europe', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 21 March 1980.

[74] These were the Amalgamated Weavers' Association (34451 members), the Amalgamated Association of Card, Blowing and Ring Room Operatives (24203 members), the Amalgamated Textile Warehousemen (5050 members), the Amalgamated Association of Beamers, Twisters, and Drawers (Hand and Machine) (1860 members), the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners and Twisters (2208 members), and the General Union of Lancashire and Yorkshire Warp-dresser's Associations (402 members). United Textile Factory Workers' Association, 'Annual Conference Report 1968', TU2/9/13, OLSA.

[75] For more detail see Joseph White, *The Limits of Trade Union Militancy: The Lancashire Textile Workers, 1910-1914* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978).

[76] For a useful explanation of the gendered nature of textile work and its relationship to the societal valuation of that labour, see Jutta Schwarzkopf, *Unpicking Gender: The Social Construction of Gender in the Lancashire Cotton Weaving Industry, 1880-1914* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2004).

[77] K. L. Wallwork, 'The Cotton Industry in North West England: 1941-1961', *Geography* 47 (1962): 247.

previously mentioned 1968 conference, the President of the UTFWA gave this impassioned address: 'I often wonder if we are considered by some to be a race apart; it appears to be that we are the most inefficient industry in the country, that our members are just naturally lazy and that we are demanding protection in order to continue with woolly ideas of a bygone age in blissful ignorance.'[78] Maybe not a race apart, at least not yet, but certainly a gender apart.

The decline of Oldham's cotton textile industry is thus a significantly more complex story than it might appear to be on the surface. Decline may have been 'inevitable', as the enormous size of the British textile industry was the direct result of the 'global empire of cotton' Britain had built in the 19th century. This was an inherently violent and exploitative system. But the speed and direction of that decline was shaped by a diverse array of global, national, and local forces – the structure of the industry, the actions of the corporations, the speed of modernisation, government decision on tariffs and quotas, and implicit assumptions about the relationship between gender and labour. Oldham's industrial decline was tied to economic forces originating beyond the seas, but it was also a distinctly local process, with distinct impacts on the diverse communities that had come to call the town home.

Multicultural Oldham

Oldham's working class has always been diverse, and the development of its cotton textile industry has only been possible because of waves of migration to the town from across Britain and the world. Oldham, like most of Lancashire, benefitted from a considerable migration of Irish Catholics, escaping famine and poverty, who came to work in its mills in the mid to late 19th century. In June 1861, there were 'Serious Riots in Oldham' against the Irish – attacks on Catholic Churches, and violence involving up to 15,000 people. A few years later, in 1868 the notorious anti-Catholic orator named William Murphy came to Oldham, after having helped to incite riots in other Lancashire towns. According to the *Oldham Chronicle*, he came to Oldham with the objective 'of rousing the rabble against the Irish'.[79] Following his speech, a Catholic church was attacked and the windows of a number of Protestant chapels were broken.[80]

Migration to Oldham declined in the early 20th century, but the brief boom in the textile industry following the Second World War began a new and transformative process of migration from beyond the British Isles. Although Oldham was still a textile town, most postwar school leavers preferred jobs in the engineering, electrical, or telecommunications industries, which grew rapidly in Oldham and across the country in the 1950s and 1960s. In the twenty years following the end of the Second World War, wages in the textile industry fell by 30 per cent relative to other industries.[81] Courtaulds argued that, without significant protection or government support for modernisation, the only way to compete in a competitive global market was to keep wages as low as possible.[82] Not surprisingly, a job in the mill was thus low on the wish list of school leavers, both male and female. In 1900, nearly three quarters of Oldham

[78] United Textile Factory Workers' Association, 'Annual Conference Report 1968, Presidential Address', TU2/9/13, OLSA.
[79] 'No to Racism and Fascism! – A Pamphlet for Trade Unionists by Oldham Trades Union Council', December 2004, page 3, from file entitled 'Two Trade Union Pamphlets About Racism and Fascism', TU11/4/5/6, OLSA.
[80] Walter Arnstein, 'The Murphy Riots: A Victorian Dilemma', *Victorian Studies* 19, no. 1 (1975): 51-71 (64)
[81] Ely Devons, J. R. Crossley & W. F. Maunder, 'Wage Rate Indexes by Industry, 1948-1965', *Economica* 35 (1968): 392-423.
[82] Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks*, 88-90.

school leavers entered the mills; in 1950, that number was down to one quarter.[83] As a result, labour shortages appeared in Oldham's mills for the first time in several decades. Engineering in particular became a critical part of Oldham's economy, and by the late 1960s electrical engineering and equipment firm Ferranti was second only to Courtaulds as the largest employer in the city. And even as the textile industry declined, the low unemployment of the postwar era meant that labourers were still in short supply. Unemployment remained remarkably low in Oldham right through to the late 1970s. In the 19 July 1973 edition of the *Oldham Evening Chronicle,* Courtaulds placed a quarter-page advert listing more than two dozen positions it needed to fill in Oldham-area mills. These positions included winders on the night shift at the Dee Mill, a beamer on the 'double day' shift at the Eagle Mill, and 'fully experienced cone winders' on the 'housewife' or 'swing' shift at the Briar Mill.[84]

The other factor driving the need for labour was the changing schedule of work. As textile mills became more capital intensive, it was increasingly important that equipment not be left idle.[85] Thus, by the early 1960s many mills began operating 24 hours a day, with three fixed 8-hour shifts. This was highly unpopular with local workers, who demanded higher wages to work the overnight shift.[86] It was a particularly serious challenge for married women, who often had childcare responsibilities at home and who in the past had often been able to work a flexible 'swing' shift of three or four hours in the evening.[87] In fact, at this time it was still technically illegal for women to work overnight shifts.[88] Thus, the mills looked even further afield for a 'flexible workforce' that would be willing to take on the low-paying night shift jobs in a period of continuing low unemployment.[89]

By this time, Whitehall had awoken to the potential of recruiting from imperial realms and from the newly independent Commonwealth nations to fill temporary labour shortages in undesirable sectors of the economy. Thus, even as pressure for restrictions to Commonwealth immigration began to grow across Britain,[90] the government worked with industries to 'divvy up' much of the former empire and target recruitment in different regions for different sectors of the British economy. While the Ministry of Health was encouraged to bring doctors and nurses from the West Indies and London Transport focussed on Barbados, the textile industries of the North-West were 'allocated' South Asia, with the cotton mills of the area around Oldham focussing their efforts in rural and small-town Pakistan to fill their labour shortages.[91]

The first international migrants to arrive in postwar Oldham, however, were Poles and Ukrainians, many of whom had lost their homes during the Second World War and had come directly from refugee camps. By 1951, there were an estimated 2,000 Eastern Europeans living in Oldham.[92] But these migrants were soon followed by West Indians starting in the mid-1950s.

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[83] Law, *Oldham, Brave Oldham*, 292.
[84] '30m profit forecast for Courtaulds', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 19 July 1973.
[85] UTFWA Plan for Cotton, 'Chapter Two – Production, Efficiency and Costs', 1957, TU2/9/6, OLSA.
[86] Michael Lawson, *Chadderton's Cotton Industry*, 13.
[87] Penn, Martin & Scattergood, 'Gender Relations, Technology and Employment Change', 583.
[88] This was the result of an 1844 labour law, which had largely brought night shifts at textile mills to an end. See Gurr & Hunt, *The Cotton Mills of Oldham.*
[89] 'A Study of Mobility in a Pakistani Community', preface. CDP/4/5, OLSA.
[90] The first restrictions on Commonwealth immigration were passed in 1962. See Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration.*
[91] Ed Stacey*, Cotton, Curry, and Commerce: The History of Asian Businesses in Oldham* (Oldham: Oldham Council, 2013), 24.
[92] Law, *Oldham, Brave Oldham*, 292.

The West Indian migrants came largely from Jamaica and Barbados, leaving their home islands due to the failure of postwar colonial development and consequent lack of opportunity.[93] As Sheila Patterson argued, migration was in many ways a protest against current conditions.[94] The migration to Oldham was usually not a direct one: many West Indians, especially young women, were recruited to work in the NHS or related caring professions, and often worked in other parts of the UK before finding their way to Oldham because of a partner or new employment opportunity. For some, the move to Lancashire was a shock in and of itself. Olga Brewster moved to Oldham in 1964 with her husband Roy, after working as a nurse in a number of different hospitals in Berkshire and London. She was shocked by the cobble streets, gas lamps, and depredations of industrial Oldham, and says that 'I used to think I was in Wales, I didn't think I was in England'.[95] Although many West Indian Oldhamers would end up working in textiles, this was simply a by-product of industry's outsized footprint in the town's employment structure, rather than a targeted recruitment effort.[96]

The West Indian arrivals were then followed by South Asians in the early 1960s, the majority Pakistanis, who would quickly come to make up the largest community of Commonwealth citizens in Oldham. By the early 1970s, Oldham was home to three distinct groups of Pakistani immigrants – the largest being from the disputed Azad Kashmir region, with smaller groups from rural West Punjab and the remote North-West Frontier Province. The arrival of the Mirpuris from Azad Kashmir was particularly significant. The initial migration of Kashimirs to Oldham occurred between 1961 and 65, as a direct result of the construction of the Mangla Dam, which flooded several hundred towns and villages in the Mirpur district.[97] Between 50,000 and 100,000 people are estimated to have been displaced.[98] This dam was built using funds from the World Bank and was a critical part of the West's postcolonial development programme for Pakistan.[99] And the focus on development in this disputed part of post-colonial South Asia was partly an attempt to make up for a chronic lack of development during the British colonial era. As a princely state, Kashmir had been neglected by colonial governance, and even the most basic infrastructure, such as the postal service and comprehensive schooling, were still lacking in the Mirpuri area when Kashmir was divided into the newly independent states of Pakistan and India in 1947.[100] The new Pakistani government, dominated by Punjabi and Urdu speakers, viewed the underdeveloped and ethnically distinct Azad Kashmir region as a neo-colonial hinterland, and governed it accordingly. The Mirpuris were not consulted about the construction of the Mangla Dam, and many remained in their homes until right before they were flooded.[101]

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[93] See Brereton & Yelvington (eds.), *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition.*
[94] Sheila Patterson, *Dark Strangers: A Sociological Study of the Absorption of a Recent West Indian Migrant Group in Brixton, South London* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1963).
[95] Olga Brewster, Interviewed 16 September 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/1, OLSA
[96] See for example Velda Casey, Interviewed 5 October 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/4, OLSA; Ernest Campbell, Interviewed 8 February 2017: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/3, OLSA; Joseph Norris, Interviewed 17 May 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/18, OLSA.
[97] 'Kashmir Cultural Day 2000 – Celebrating Diversity, Promoting Cohesion', Presented by the Oldham Kashmir Cultural Day Steering Group, M166/21/10, OLSA.
[98] Aloys Michel, *The Indus Rivers: A Study of the Effects of Partition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).
[99] For an understanding of this project and the assumption behind it, see Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).
[100] Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks*, 54.
[101] Ibid, 60-61.

Left homeless, thousands of Mirpuri residents took the compensation money they received and used it to buy fares to Britain. With the migration rights of Commonwealth citizens being restricted from 1962 onwards, the UK and Pakistani governments came to an agreement which allowed those displaced by the dam to claim UK work permits.[102] The largest group of Mirpuri migrants settled in Bradford, also attracted by the promise of employment in textiles.[103] However, many Mirpuris would also find their way to Luton, Bradford, Birmingham, London, and Oldham.

Significantly, as a result of this 'push' migration, the Mirpuri community was largely made up of peasant farmers, with little formal education. Many of them only spoke the local language, Pahari, which is related to but distinct from Punjabi, making it hard for Oldham Council to engage with them even after the hiring of Urdu speaking staff.[104] It is difficult to accurately estimate the size of this Mirpuri or Kashmiri population in Oldham, because the census does not include Kashmiri as an ethnicity/nationality, and because the local council generally grouped them in with other Pakistanis. However, in a December 2001 report the Oldham Kashmiri Association estimated that there were about 14,000 people of Kashmiri/Mirpuri origin in Oldham, making up 6-7 per cent of the Borough's population and approximately 50 per cent of all South Asian Oldhamers.[105] Their story is thus a perfect example of the complex by-directional relationship between Britain and its empire, as the impact of colonial and post-colonial 'development' policies drove migration back to the metropole.

As with the migration of West Indians, the majority of the Mirpuris actually had not come directly from South Asia to Oldham – according to a 1976 study, 66 per cent of the community had lived in another part of the UK before coming to the town. Of this group, 42 per cent had come most recently from Yorkshire, particularly Bradford, 20 per cent from other parts of Lancashire, 16 per cent from the West Midlands, and only 14 per cent from London.[106] Most of those who arrived initially were young men travelling alone, the majority of whom lived together in temporary shared accommodation while sending remittances back to family in Pakistan.[107] When anti-immigration forces raised questions about the large number of arrivals in towns like Oldham, the cotton mill managers and government officials both emphasised that the Mirpuris were only there temporarily, and would be leaving to return to South Asia as soon as a longer-term solution to the industry's viability was found.[108] And this was indeed the plan of many of the immigrants themselves. Zuber Ahmed, the founder of the Oldham Kashmiri Association, said the following in 2000: 'The older generation came to this country with a specific economic dream. The dream was to exist here for a number of years and to return to

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[102] Mohammed Qasim, *Young, Muslim and Criminal: Experiences, Identities and Pathways into Crime* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2018), 26.
[103] Marta Bolognani, *Crime and Muslim Britain; Race, Culture and the Politics of Criminology Among British Pakistanis* (London: IB Tauris, 2009).
[104] Oldham Council and the Community Development Project seemed at first unaware that the majority of the Kashmiri community would not be fluent in Urdu. See 'Asian Immigrants in Oldham: A Report by Kanta Walker on a Survey carried out in the Glodwick area of Oldham on behalf of the Oldham CDP', May 1974, CDP/2/3, OLSA.
[105] 'Kashmiris in Oldham' – A report compiled by the Oldham Kashmiri Association', December 2001, M166/21/10, OLSA.
[106] 'A Study of Mobility in a Pakistani Community', page 7, CDP/4/5, OLSA.
[107] Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks*, 66-67.
[108] Stacey*, Cotton, Curry, and Commerce*, 41-44.

our homeland with so much wealth so that any memories of our peasant history could be eradicated. They aspired to become the new noble class.'[109] However, as they began to establish themselves in employment and housing, their thoughts often turned to setting down roots in the Oldham area.

When interviewed for an oral history project focussed on business leaders in Oldham's South Asian community, Abdul Mannan gave a similar account: 'the intention was to do some work, earn some money, get some money together. We will then be back home to help establish our own country. But time was rolling, passing, and after a while we thought we must bring our families here'.[110] A similar theme emerges in the oral history interviews with the West Indian community, and many of the interviewees spoke of a '5 year plan' to get rich and then return home. Samuel Harris came to Britain in 1956 from Barbados, hoping to work as an electrician, but ended up on the production floor at the Fern Mill in Shaw, just north of Oldham. Harris says that when he left Barbados at age 20, he 'never thought for one moment about making a family in this country'…but then, what happened… in 1959 I was a married man' [111] Thus, over time, the first wave of South Asian and West Indian migrants were beginning see Oldham as their long-term home. This psychological relocation was made complete in the 1970s, when the South Asian male textile workers began bringing their wives and children over to join them, partly because of the challenge of separation, and partly because of the fear that growing immigration restrictions would soon make such family reunifications impossible.[112]

Most of the migrants, even if they came with other skills, ended up working in the mills for some period of time. This was not for the love of the job: in the oral history collections they repeatedly refer to the noise, the cold, and most significantly the dust. Pearl Williams, another migrant from Barbados, left her job at the Oldham Royal Infirmary in the early 1960s to work in a mill because she heard the pay was better. In an interview, she said the following about the decision: 'the matron at the hospital said 'you'll be sorry'…and she was right! My nose was bleeding, the dust everywhere'.[113] And the dust was not just a nuisance. In August 1982 the BBC documentary 'Dust to Dust' claimed that one in five workers in the cotton industry in Britain were affected by byssinosis, a serious lung disease. Although these claims were immediately disputed by both factory owners and trade union leaders, no one seriously disputed that the mills were a dangerous and unpleasant place to work.[114] The South Asian and West Indian mill workers were also particular vulnerable to exploitation because they did not have a sense of their rights and lacked proper support from their unions. In autumn 1974, the left-wing Counter Information Group published a scathing report, 'Courtaulds Inside Out', into the practices of the largest textile manufacturer, arguing that the company used race and gender to divide workers and keep wages as low as possible. 'Having been instrumental in restricting the growth of the textile industries in poor Commonwealth countries', the report argued, 'it is ironic that the firm now benefits from the exploitation of immigrant workers from these same

[109] 'An article by the Chair of the Oldham Kashmir Association, Zuber Ahmed GP', page 18-19, M166/21/10, OLSA.
[110] Stacey, *Cotton, Curry, and Commerce*, 44.
[111] Samuel Harris, Interviewed 11 June 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/11, OLSA.
[112] 'Kashmiris in Oldham' – A report compiled by the Oldham Kashmiri Association', December 2001. M166/21/10, OLSA.
[113] Pearl Williams, Interviewed 29 September 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/23, OLSA.
[114] 'Protect the Workers Call by MP', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 18 August 1982.

countries'.[115] Thus, just like the white workers before them, migrant workers usually tried to leave the industry for cleaner and better paid employment as quickly as possible.

However, the ubiquity of available employment in the mills, as discussed above, was essential to providing immigrants with an economic foundation in spite of the challenges of institutional racism and a lack of transferable skills. Ernest Campbell from Jamaica said that, in the 1960s and 1970s, 'you could leave one job Tuesday morning and have another on Wednesday morning, (…) you were never out of a job in Oldham'.[116] And in 1981, Mansoor Kazi, chairman of the Pakistani People's Association, estimated that 1,950 Pakistani Oldhamers worked in the textile industry. Considering that the Pakistani population in Oldham in 1981 was 5,000, and that few women in this community were engaged in paid work, it is clear that the vast majority of adult men in the community worked in the mills.[117] There was also a process of chain employment that brought South Asian and particularly Mirpuri men into the mills. The early arrivals in Oldham managed to build a rapport with the mill managers or foremen, and as a result they became informal employment or recruitment agents for the mill. When the foremen needed more labour, he would ask this contacts, who brought in more people of Mirpuri origin who they were related to or had friendly ties with.[118] When Raja Mohammed Mushtaq Ahmed was first hired by a mill in Greenfield, just west of Oldham, in the early 1960s, there were only 5 or 6 Pakistanis out of a total workforce of 570. However, he himself would rise to become the foreman of the night shift and was given the right to make hiring decisions. Finding that 'English people didn't really like to work at night' anyway, he hired other Pakistanis to work the night shift with him, and slowly the whole night shift came to be staffed by Pakistani migrants.[119]

Oldham's cotton textile industry had long been dependent on migration: first from other parts of England, then from Ireland and from war ravaged Eastern Europe. Even as the industry began to contract in the 1950s and 1960s, its low wages turned away all but the most desperate British school leavers, and the married women who had long provided a critical supply of labour were not 'flexible' enough to meet the needs of an industry in the process of restructuring and rationalisation. At the same time, the aftereffects of colonialism were driving the Commonwealth citizens of places like Barbados and Mirpur to look to the former imperial metropole for an opportunity to escape the poverty of their homelands. These two factors combined to create a multicultural Oldham. However, as the deindustrialisation of the textile industry accelerated, these new Oldhamers would find themselves caught in a bind of rising unemployment and racial inequality, which would combine to produce the problems found in the neighbourhood of Glodwick.

Settlement in Glodwick

Regardless of their origin, a significant proportion of postwar migrants – including Eastern Europeans, West Indians, and South Asians – initially settled in the industrial working

[115] 'Courtaulds 'used climate of fear to keep pay low'', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 13 November 1974.
[116] Ernest Campbell, Interviewed 8 February 2017: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/3, OLSA.
[117] 'Few Turn out for March to Civic Centre over Jobless', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 5 May 1981.
[118] 'Kashmiris in Oldham' – A report compiled by the Oldham Kashmiri Association', December 2001, M166/21/10, OLSA.
[119] Raja Mohammed Mushtaq Ahmed, Interviewed 2011-12 (specific date unknown): Cotton, Curry and Commerce Oral History Recordings, M185/1, OLSA.

class neighbourhood of Glodwick, directly south of the town centre. Glodwick was a cramped, poorly designed neighbourhood that had been hastily built in the late 19th century to provide cheap housing for growing ranks of textile workers. Most of Glodwick's housing was the traditional 'two-up two-down' row housing with very basic amenities – it had not aged well, and much of it was in serious need of repair or replacement. Overall, only 52 per cent of households in Oldham in 1971 had exclusive use of an indoor washroom, and in Glodwick the percentage was estimated to be as little as half that number.[120] However, these characteristics made Glodwick ideally suited to the needs of migrants looking for a place to live upon arrival in Oldham. As many migrants, especially those from South Asia, came over as single men with the intention of either sending money back to their families or saving up to afford a better quality of life on their return, they sought to find the cheapest, most convenient housing possible. They would often rent communally with a number of other men from their home village.[121] Then, as they began to build families in Oldham, or progressively brought their families from overseas, they looked to purchase a cheap family dwelling of their own. Glodwick was one of Oldham's only large reserves of centrally located private housing available both for rent and for purchase at low prices, thus providing a way for new arrivals to enter the bottom of the property market.[122]

As in many American cities, Oldham Council's housing policies may actually have helped contribute to the concentration of ethnic minorities in Glodwick. In response to complaints that Glodwick schools were 'too full of immigrants', Granville Lawrence from the Glodwick West Indian Association made the following statement at a 1982 council meeting: 'All this was brought to the council's attention more than 10 years ago. Immigrants were encouraged to settle in Glodwick, 98 per cent of the mortgages in the area were offered by the council. It wasn't willing to fund mortgages in places like Chadderton, or Derker, so it was obvious where the concentration of immigrants would be'.[123]

Although the proximity to nearby employment may have been a factor in the initial postwar migration to Glodwick, by the 1960s and early 1970s most of the mills within a short work of the neighbourhood had closed. In fact, according to a 1976 report, 58 per cent of South Asian males in Glodwick commuted outside of Oldham for work, largely to textile mills in neighbouring towns like Ashton-under-Lyne, Shaw, and Crompton. The report suggested that, 'rather than settling down to live near their work, as most English people would do, they have tended to move into the housing area first and then start looking for jobs in and around Oldham'.[124] Thus, it was primarily the availability of affordable housing and links to the already established minority communities which both attracted and forced growing numbers of first Eastern European, then West Indian, and finally South Asian migrants to settle in Glodwick. After arriving, most migrants had worked incredibly hard and frugally built up their savings, with the goal of home ownership being their top priority. By 1976, it was estimated that at least 425 of the houses in the area were owned by South Asians. They had also overcome

[120] 'Community Development Project, A First Report, produced by the County Borough of Oldham', page 11, July 1973, CDP/2/1, OLSA; 'The Social Planning of Urban Renewal, A Report on the Social Planning of Urban Renewal with Particular Reference to the North-West', page 3-6, September 1972, CDP/6/2, OLSA.
[121] Qasim, *Young, Muslim and Criminal*, 27-28.
[122] 'A Study of Mobility in a Pakistani Community by Andrea Locke, BA, University of Birmingham', preface, March 1976, CDP/4/5, OLSA. Most of this housing was owned by individual families that had previously lived in Glodwick but had moved to nicer suburban estates in recent decades.
[123] 'Glodwick schools too full of immigrants', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 29 October 1982.
[124] 'A Study of Mobility in a Pakistani Community', chapter two, CDP/4/5, OLSA.

the increasing challenge of transport to the widely scattered mills where they worked, organising a mini-bus service to drop them off and pick them up from a number of mills in Shaw and Crompton.[125] In 1970, soon after his child's birth, Mohammed Rahiem's father had immigrated to Bradford from the Mirpur district and worked in the wool textile industry in Yorkshire before moving on to Oldham. Because of the cramped lodging house conditions his father was living in at the time, Rahiem was brought up by relatives in Kashmir. However, by 1977, his father had advanced to the position of floor manager and had managed to save enough money to buy a large house of his own on Park Road, on the edge of the Glodwick neighbourhood, so Mohammed and the rest of the Rahiem family moved to Oldham to be with him.[126] The South Asian community of Glodwick was diverse, rapidly growing, innovative, and resilient. However, its dependence on the textile industry and racialized position within that industry made it vulnerable.

Deindustrialisation's Local Effects

Oldham's unemployment rate remained relatively low up to the mid-1970s, as growth in engineering and services mostly made up for the losses in textiles. However, trouble was brewing beneath the surface. Although the official unemployment rate remained low, this masked the steady erosion of local employment, with Oldham's labour force participation rate dropping from 54 per cent in 1961 to just 49.9 per cent in 1971, in contrast with a national trend of rising participation rates as more women entered paid employment.[127] The physical legacy of Oldham's industrial history was also hurting its ability to attract new employment. 81 per cent of industrial premises in Oldham had been built before 1914, compared with 50 per cent in nearby Stretford and 15 per cent in Sale, and there was little available industrial land for new development.[128] In an article in the *Guardian* in the mid-1970s about urban and industrial renewal in Greater Manchester, Oldham was described as 'one of the area's biggest urban problems'. The town's struggles to attract new industry had gotten so bad that it had placed advertisements in the hallways of the London Underground, attempting to attract investment by touting its available labour and easy transport access.[129] Although Oldham clearly was exceptional in the severity of its combined economic challenges, a milder version of the same challenges faced many other northern industrial towns in the early 1970s. Liverpool,[130] Bradford, Newcastle, Blackburn, and many others suffered from a combination of declining employment and outdated physical infrastructure, problems which were also decades in the making but which had been made much more pressing as a result of the increasingly bleak national economic context.

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[125] Ibid, chapter one, CDP/4/5, OLSA.
[126] Stacey*, Cotton, Curry, and Commerce*, page 46.
[127] 'Community Development Project, A First Report', page 6, CDP/2/1, OLSA.
[128] Ibid, page 10, CDP/2/1, OLSA.
[129] Ian Breach, 'Doing right by Engels--after 132 years of progress,' *The Guardian,* 27 October 1976, page 23. See also 'Oldham, 1976-77: The Great British Town for Industrial Growth, published by the Oldham Metropolitan Estates Department', 1976, CDP/4/6, OLSA.
[130] Liverpool's problems were arguably even worse than Oldham's – the city experienced staggering population decline in the 1960s and 1970s as its entire industrial base collapsed and the very existence of the city was called into doubt. See Peter Taafe and Tony Mulhearn, *Liverpool: A City that Dared to Fight* (London: Fortress Press, 1988).

So, when the textile industry shed significant employment, first in during the Oil Crisis-Three Day Week induced recession of 1973-4, and again in the Thatcherite recession of the early 1980s, unemployment finally skyrocketed. Between 1971 and 1991, 15,000 jobs in the Oldham textile industry disappeared, a drop of more than 80 per cent.[131] And this time, there were no other jobs to turn to, as Ferranti and the engineering firms were also shedding thousands of jobs.[132] Throughout the postwar period, Oldham's unemployment figures had almost always been lower than the national average due to the constant availability low-paid textile work, combined with growth in engineering. However, in the autumn of 1980, Oldham's unemployment rate surged past the national figure, even as the entire UK went through a severe recession.[133] Working class white women, who had long been at the centre of Oldham's textile industry, were of course badly affected by this dramatic collapse. However, as mentioned above, the number of women working in the industry had progressively declined in the postwar period as the industry rationalised production and moved towards a shift work model.[134] As a result, many women had already shifted to work in growing service and caring industries.[135] The collapse of cotton textile industry would indeed close off an avenue of opportunity for many working class women in Oldham, but they would not face the full force of deindustrialisation's depredations in the way that women working in Belfast's linen textile industry would.

On the other hand, West Indian and especially South Asian workers faced a perfect storm. Outright employment discrimination certainly existed, but it was not the primary cause of the deindustrialisation's particularly harsh effects on the South Asian community in Oldham. Instead, they were simply caught in an industry with no future, and with nowhere else to turn. In 1983, 84 per cent of unemployed men in Britain were classed as 'manual workers', which is a category that included the majority of South Asians in Oldham.[136] Coming from a peasant background, the Mirpuri community were especially likely to lack technical skills or accreditation.[137] The generalised collapse of industry across Britain meant that even those willing to travel for work struggled to find any. During a local downturn in Birmingham in the late 1960s, Pakistani men had moved to Oxford for work.[138] This was no longer possible. In addition, by the early 1980s many of the first generation migrants from Mirpur were in their late 40s or 50s, and thus faced the normal challenges of late career retraining and age discrimination.[139]

As a result of this combination of factors, unemployment in the South Asian community went through the roof and remained extremely high for decades to come. According to a 1997 report by Oldham MBC, real unemployment, which takes into account people who are otherwise employable but have been forced on to disability or out of the labour market

[131] Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks*, 126.
[132] 'Oldham Heads for 12.4pc unemployed', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 29 January 1981.
[133] 'Bid to Restore Government Aid to Oldham', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 19 September 1980.
[134] Penn, Martin & Scattergood, 'Gender Relations, Technology and Employment Change'.
[135] Tomlinson, 'De-Industrialization Not Decline', 89-92.
[136] John Burnett*, Idle Hands: The Experience of Unemployment, 1790-1990* (London: Routledge, 1994), 275.
[137] Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks*, 53-54.
[138] Alison Shaw, *A Pakistani Community in Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).
[139] Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks*, 127.

altogether, was estimated at about 14 per cent for white people, 46 per cent for Pakistani & Bangladeshi people, and 17 per cent for all other Oldhamers.[140]

Deindustrialisation + Racism = Segregation

One of the effects of this mass unemployment was the increasing segregation of the South Asian community, particularly in Glodwick. Glodwick had long-standing challenges, many of which were related to the reasons it had become a popular destination for immigrants in the first place. It had a problem with absentee landlords, its housing stock was in serious need of improvement, and there were real cultural tensions.[141] However, by the 1970s it was a genuinely multicultural neighbourhood where no ethnic group predominated. However, as the mills closed, housing prices and conditions in Glodwick began to decline further relative to the rest of the city.

William Julius Wilson famously and somewhat controversially argued for the direct relationship between deindustrialisation and the development of the modern American ghetto as African Americans, who were also heavily dependent on unskilled or semi-skilled industrial labour in Northern cities, faced mass unemployment and poverty as the intersection of race and class drove them into an untenable position.[142] Whatever the value of Wilson's model in the US, his model does help to explain the intersection of race and class seen in British neighbourhoods like Glodwick, where there was a downward spiral of opportunity for an increasingly segregated and racialized minority. The South Asian community had higher rates of home ownership than the white or West Indian communities, so they were more tied to the neighbourhood, and increasingly saw the value of their investments drain away. And this is also were the role of overt discrimination and racism comes into play. In the difficult economic environment of the 1970s, it was easy for South Asians to be made the scapegoats for the job losses and setbacks suffered by others.

In 1974, a study entitled 'Housing Improvement and the Racial Conundrum' attempted to gauge community support for clearance and rebuilding of housing along Waterloo Street in Glodwick.[143] Barr's report found that 75 per cent of area residents felt that the neighbourhood had declined in the last five years. When asked why they felt the area had declined, many whites alluded to immigration, referring to bad smells and changes in the 'life-style' of local residents. In all, 76 per cent of the non-Asian respondents made a 'negative racial comment' without being prompted in any way to do so.[144] Barr came up with the term 'racial negativism' to describe this general sense of tension and animosity. The last section of the report contained pages of tables grouping the various racial slurs recorded by the interviewers into categories and listing the most common ones, including 'Pakistanis are dirty', 'Clear the buggers out', 'Coloureds have too many children', and a variety of complaints about South Asians leaving rubbish around and making the whole neighbourhood smell like curry.[145] These comments were

[140] 'The Real Level of Unemployment in Oldham': Report of the Chief Executive's Policy Unit, June 1997, page 6. L4776, OLSA.
[141] 'Housing Improvement and the Racial Conundrum: A Report on Resident Attitudes to Housing Improvement in Glodwick, Oldham, by Alan Barr', 1974, page ii, CDP/2/6, OLSA.
[142] William J Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged.*
[143] 'Housing Improvement and the Racial Conundrum: A Report on Resident Attitudes to Housing Improvement in Glodwick, Oldham, by Alan Barr', 1974, page ii, CDP/2/6, OLSA.
[144] Ibid, page 25, CDP/2/6, OLSA.
[145] Ibid, page 46-47, CDP/2/6, OLSA.

then reported in the *Evening Chronicle* under the headline 'Glodwick: The Racial Ghetto of the Future?' which did nothing to improve community relations in the neighbourhood.[146]

And the local discourse on race was of course shaped by the national discourse, mostly in negative ways. After remaining silent on the race question for some years, Enoch Powell re-emerged in February 1975, to launch into another incendiary tirade about multiculturalism leading to the death of the nation.[147] Although the racial dynamics of Glodwick were unique and shaped at a very local level, to abstract them from this broader national context would be a serious mistake. The incendiary language and stereotyping coming across the television screens and airwaves of Oldham households shaped perceptions on both sides of Oldham's racial divide.

As unemployment spiraled out of control in Glodwick, and racial tensions were exploited, those who were able to leave the neighbourhood did. This was not just the case for members of the white community but also for middle class South Asians – people who had been successful in business or had become community leaders – many of whom would move into the row of palatial houses originally built for mill owners on the Park Road on the edge of Glodwick. For example, in 1981, 51 per cent of Asian men in the Glodwick area were out of work – compared with 31per cent of the non-Asian population. Clearly there was a racial component here, but Glodwick was an unemployment black spot even for the non-Asian community – their unemployment rate of 31 per cent was nearly twice the unemployment rate in the Borough as a whole.[148] In essence, Glodwick was massively disadvantaged by deindustrialisation and urban neglect, and it would be poorer segments of the South Asian community, those with the least mobility and least opportunity, who would pay the highest price.

Through this combination of racism, unemployment, and declining house values, many South Asians were effectively trapped in Glodwick, and thus experienced high rates of overcrowding, a stunning development in a town where the overall population was in decline. In 1991, around 30 per cent of households headed by a person of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin contained more than one person per room, a common measure of overcrowding, and the figure was even higher for residents living in Glodwick.[149] A 1985 Oldham Council survey of the area found 16 cases in Glodwick where nine people were sharing a two-bedroom house. However, in a stunning abdication of responsibility, the *Chronicle* reported that 'council officials admit that there is nothing they can do about the bad housing – at least in the near future.'[150]

Glodwick residents were also trapped in other ways. 43 per cent of all households in the Oldham Borough did not have access to a car in 1992, one of the highest figures in the country, and the figure was over 60 per cent in both Glodwick and in the predominately British Bangladeshi ward of Coldhurst.[151] In a time when the mills were still operating, the lack of a car was not a serious problem, as there was plenty of employment in the local area, and if that failed a mini-bus service could be implemented. But in a post-industrial world, with jobs scattered much more widely across the region, and with the decline of local bus services, the

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[146] 'Glodwick – The Racial Ghetto of the Future?: Immigrant Groups Becoming Segregated from the Rest', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 16 January 1976.
[147] Peter Cole, 'Enoch back in the rivers of blood', *The Guardian,* February 28, 1975, page 1.
[148] 'New Survey of Glodwick Reveals the Area's Plight', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 17 September 1985.
[149] Oldham Borough Pakistani Community Profile (from the 1991 census), page 7, L1470, OLSA.
[150] 'New Survey of Glodwick Reveals the Area's Plight', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 17 September 1985.
[151] Oldham Borough Pakistani Community Profile (from the 1991 census), page 7, L1470, OLSA.

lack of personal transport became a real disadvantage, especially because of the nature of the local economy of Oldham. As the economy began to pick up again in the 1990s, Oldham's unemployment rate began to decline, though the rate for South Asians remained twice as high as for white people.[152] But these jobs would be primarily in low-end service positions: call centres, retail, and distribution. Without greenfield development land or a well-educated workforce, both direct legacies of the process of deindustrialisation described above, Oldham's defining economic problem would become one of consistently low wages and a permanently depressed labour market. In April 1992, 75 per cent of jobs advertised at the Oldham Job Centre paid less than £3.85 per hour, and 15 per cent paid less than £2.65 per hour.[153] And this problem has persisted into the 21st century. In 2005, the average gross weekly pay was £388 in Oldham, £438 in the North-west generally, and £476 in Great Britain.[154] Well-paying jobs, however, are not far away, as Oldham is by no means geographically isolated. But many of these jobs are simply out of reach of those without cars. Access to the booming employment district of Manchester city centre for residents of Glodwick has been significantly improved by the opening of the Metrolink tram line in recent years, but transport remains a considerable obstacle which forces Glodwick residents to accept low wages and thereby keeps the local labour market depressed.[155]

Segregation of both a racial and economic nature thus reached extreme levels in Oldham by the 1980s and 90s, and Britons of South Asian ancestry now make up between 80 and 95 per cent of the population in all the census output areas which cover the core of the Glodwick neighbourhood. Meanwhile, the neighbouring Fitton Hill council estate remains almost entirely white.[156] A 1994 study by Geographer David Owen assessed the likelihood of a member of an ethnic minority group having as a neighbour another member of the same group. By this measure Oldham's Bangladeshi community was the most segregated in the country, and Oldham's Pakistani community the second most. And although Oldham may be unique in its severity, this is a process which took place across the industrial north: seven of the ten most segregated towns in England are post-industrial communities in Lancashire or West Yorkshire.[157] Thus, deindustrialisation's particular effects on South Asian workers, the settlement patterns of those workers, and the racial divisions in postwar British society combined to produce a stark form of segregation that would cut working class South Asians off from economic opportunity.

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[152] Oldham Council Business Intelligence Unit, *Oldham 2011 Census Ethnicity Report*, February 2016, page 18.
[153] £3.85 in 1992 equals approximately £8.03 in 2020 when adjusted for inflation. £2.65 in 1992 equals approximately £5.53 in 2020. Both of these figures are below the April 2020 National Living Wage of £8.72 per hour. 'Poverty Profile of Oldham': Report of the Chief Executive's Policy Unit, March 1993, page 9-10, Retrieved from historical ephemera collection, OLSA.
[154] 'Oldham Economic Assessment, 2005 – A Final Synthesis Report to the Oldham Economic Partnership', Oldham Economic Partnership files, 2000-06, M166/20/4/1, OLSA.
[155] *'Oldham Together, the Outlook's Bright': Oldham Independent Review: A Detailed Response, June 2002*, 'Section 8.0 – The Local Economy and Regeneration', published by Oldham Council, Greater Manchester Police and the GM Police Authority, TU11/4/5/2, OLSA.
[156] David Owen, 'Spatial Variations in Ethnic Minority Group Populations in Britain', *Population Trends* 78 (1994): 23-33.
[157] Ibid, 25.

The Turn to Community

This chapter has explored the nature of the cotton industry's decline, and how that decline was interwoven with race to create segregation in Glodwick. What was the response to this process, either from government or from the community itself? As we have seen, there was not a concerted, campaign to save the industry, unlike for example in the steel industry. There were of course efforts to save individual mills, petitions from local MPs, and some trade union strikes – most of which were unsuccessful.[158] But there was another process or response that would fundamentally reshape both Oldham, and by extension the structure of British society. That process was the turn to community.

There was an incredible flowering of local organisations, neighbourhood associations, and immigrant support groups in Oldham in the 1970s. The Oldham and District Community Council's lists of such organisations grew into the hundreds over the course of the 1970s.[159] This was a process that was happening all across the United Kingdom in the 1970s, and it was happening for a number of reasons. It was influenced by the development of community relations councils, which encouraged the creation of such groups, by the decline of traditional forms of organisation like the trade unions, and simply by the desire of local people to fight new ways to organise and interact. Particularly significant would be the creation of local organisations by ethnic minorities as they established roots in Oldham. For example, early in 1974, the Pakistani Women's Association was formed, and over the following decades it would help immigrant women adjust to life in Oldham, giving them an opportunity to build a social life outside of the home. It would also work to break down social barriers between immigrants and the rest of the Oldham community, particularly through the provision of free Urdu language classes open to all.[160] But there are two ways in which this flowering of local organisations was specifically related to the process of deindustrialisation in Oldham.

First, there was the specific role of government. In 1971 Glodwick and several neighbouring council estates were chosen as one of twelve sites for a central government project known as the Community Development Project (CDP). The project was highly experimental, with 75 per cent of all costs being covered by the Home Office through its 'Urban Aid' funds and the remaining 25 per cent shouldered by the local authority.[161] The stated goal of the project was to alleviate localised poverty by teaching the local community to 'help themselves', particularly by helping them to set up neighbourhood associations, community associations (along the lines of ethnicity), and housing improvement associations.[162] The origins of the CDP are somewhat opaque. Reading through CDP publications and press reports about the project, it is repeatedly stated that the project was basically a 'replication of the American Poverty Programmes of the 1960s'.[163] However, in the context of a multicultural neighbourhood such as

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[158] See for example the Textile Industry Support Campaign, founded in Oldham in 1971. 'New Campaign to Save Textile Industry: Oldham Leads Fight to Stop Closures', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 18 October 1971.
[159] 'Oldham and District Community Council Newsletter', September 1974, L31914, OLSA; 'Oldham and District Community Council Newsletter', September 1975, L31915, OLSA; 'Tried and Tested: Community Work in Oldham' – The First Annual Report and Review of the Community Work Unit (1977-78), L6563, OLSA.
[160] 'Oldham Bulletin', March 1979, page 7, section entitled 'Pakistani Women's Association', L31674, OLSA.
[161] 'Community Development Project, A First Report', page 1-2, CDP/2/1, OLSA.
[162] Martin Loney, *Community against Government: The British Community Development Project, 1968-78 – A Study of Government Incompetence* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 8-18.
[163] 'What Happened to CDPs?', report produced by Ken Jones, University of York, February 1978, page 2, CDP/1/7, OLSA.

Glodwick, the CDP appears to have drawn heavily on models of community development first practiced in the late empire and then applied to help Commonwealth citizens organise themselves and thereby integrate into British society upon their arrival from the 1950s. The 'Migrant Services Division of the Commission in the United Kingdom for the West Indies', set up in 1954, is a particularly good example of this effort.[164] Imperial officials had sought to govern the empire through the identification of discrete groups with distinct interests and leaders.[165] The CDP treated Glodwick as essentially a colonial space that needed to governed in much the same way.

In addition to perpetuating imperial governance methods in the post-imperial and increasingly post-industrial metropole, the CDP represented the beginning of a significant ideological shift. Full employment had always been considered one of the pillars of the social democratic consensus. However, full employment had clearly disappeared in Glodwick by the 1970s. The crisis in the textile industry had thus exposed the hollowness of the promise of full employment, especially for women and Commonwealth citizens. The CDP was amounted to a government response to deindustrialisation and its effects on the diverse population of Glodwick, but rather than reaffirming the commitment to full employment, the CDP placed the burden of change and adaptation on the people of Glodwick itself. As mentioned above, the idea behind the CDP was that the 'community', whether that be the neighbourhood, an ethnic group, or a specific housing estate – would learn to self-organise, self-regulate, and self-improve. Thus, new 'grassroots' groups like the Glodwick Action Group were formed with the help of CDP officials and provided with small grants by the CDP, but were expected to be staffed by volunteers and were entirely on their own once the CDP was closed down in 1978.[166] Sociologist Nikolas Rose refers to this process as 'The Death of the Social'. He argues that from as early as the 1970s, the idea of society, which stands above the market and sometimes needs to be protected from the market, is replaced with a concept of individuals and communities responsible for their own success or failure in the market.[167] Deindustrialisation in places like Oldham opened the way for one of the first concrete manifestations of this intellectual shift that would come to reshape British society up to the present.

The second distinctive feature of the 'turn to community' in Oldham is how many of these new local organisations, often created through the top-down CDP process, developed a logic of their own, providing a genuinely valuable form of community mobilisation in the context of accelerating deindustrialisation. An example of the latter was the Pakistani People's Association. The textile trade unions were by the 1970s not only impotent and fragmented, but their leadership was cut off from the increasingly diverse shop floor workforce. In 1979 Amalgamated Textile Workers' Union refused to support the largely South Asian workforce of the Maple Mill in Hathershaw in their complaints against intolerable working conditions. But the workers went ahead with the protests on their own, and won.[168] Two years later, in 1981,

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[164] Natarajan, *Organizing Community*, 47-55.
[165] Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012).
[166] 'Mayoress to Open Advice Centre', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 15 July 1974; 'Tried and Tested: Community Work in Oldham' – The First Annual Report and Review of the Community Work Unit (1977-78), 'Community Work in Glodwick', page 4, L6563, OLSA.
[167] Nikolas Rose, 'The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government,' *Economy and Society* 25, 3 (1996): 327-356.
[168] 'Few Turn out for March to Civic Centre over Jobless', *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 5 May 1981.

the Pakistani People's Association, a small Glodwick based organisation, helped to found the Textile Workers' Movement. Mansoor Kazi, whom we have already seen was the chairman of the Pakistani People's Association, was also the spokesman for the Textile Workers' Movement. He said that the movement was particularly concerned that the unions involved in the textile mill closures were not actually fighting against closures, and that when closures occurred, they failed to fight for redundancy payments. Far from representing union members, Kasi argued, the union leadership represented 'the rich against the workers'. Even when the workers organised and fought for their rights, Kazi said, the union leadership 'acts like the firemen of the capitalists and tries to put down our struggles.'[169]

The Textile Workers' Movement would largely fail in achieving its goals, but its actions would energize the Pakistani People's Association, helping it to attract new members and strengthen its claim to be the primary voice of Pakistani immigrants in Oldham. Then, as the cotton mills continued to close in the 1980s and 90s, groups like the Pakistani People's Association began to shift their focus from fighting deindustrialisation to helping members of their community move on from deindustrialisation. In this shift, the Pakistani People's Association followed the path already being trodden by the Glodwick West Indian Association. The Glodwick West Indian Association was officially founded in 1977, although the club had informally operated in the basement of the Oddfellows building since 1962.[170] It remains at the heart of the community, and in the above-mentioned oral history of West Indian Oldhamers, nearly every interviewee mentioned the Association. Over the years, it has served a variety of purposes. Iva Mottley, a nurse from Barbados, met her future husband there, while Curtis Lynch made the connections that would allow him to open a taxi business.[171] But it originated as a support group members of the community facing redundancy, and later, in the 1980s, it came to function as a youth and adult education centre, helping members of the community gain the skills needed to adapt to a post-industrial job market.

One way that such organisations attempted to smooth the transition to a post-industrial reality was in advocating for appropriate supports for women wishing to enter the workforce, and affordable childcare and continuing education in particular. As we will see, this was a common demand of local organisations that mobilised in response to deindustrialisation across the entire UK. Although the nature of textile work meant that Oldham had a long history of high levels of married women's employment, childcare provisions were even worse than the national average. And as industrial employment collapsed and male unemployment skyrocketed, many working class women had no choice but to work in order to support their families. Naturally, it would be South Asian women who would face the greatest burdens and the highest barriers. In 1979, the *Oldham Bulletin*, a joint publication of a new coalition of local community groups, did a study of low paid work, and found dozens of cases of people working for pay of less than 35p an hour. In every single case, the workers in question were women, the majority were South Asian, and they were working at home, generally doing piecemeal clothing

[169] Ibid.
[170] 'Tried and Tested: Community Work in Oldham' – The First Annual Report and Review of the Community Work Unit (1977-78), section entitled 'Community Work in Glodwick', page 4, L6563, OLSA.
[171] Iva Mottley, Interviewed 5 October 2016: 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/17, OLSA; Curtis Lynch, Interviewed 25 June 2016': 'High Expectations' Oral History Project, WIC/1/15, OLSA.

repairs for local factories and businesses.[172] Why were these women doing this horribly underpaid work at home? The Bulletin provided a hypothesis: 'We believe it is not coincidence that many of the women we talked to had tried to get their children in a Nursery, Playgroup or with a child minder and had not been able to. Oldham's preschool provision is very low and until it is vastly improved many women will be forced to accept these WAGES OF POVERTY'.[173] The Bulletin authors made two arguments in support of improved childcare: first, that women had a right to self-fulfillment just as men did, but also that households needed a dual income, and only with decent daycare was that possible. They were not pushing for a return to the days of the 'housewife shift', or introduction of the male breadwinner model to Lancashire. They recognised that Oldham faced a post-industrial reality and believed that daycare was essential if women were to make a full contribution to its economic recovery.

Finally though, the most important role of these local organisations in helping Oldhamers, and especially ethnic minority Oldhamers, adapt to a post-industrial reality was the way they helped unemployed former textile workers open small businesses, providing assistance with loans, regulatory issues, and language barriers. The stories of South Asian Oldhamers who escaped unemployment and poverty by opening businesses or operating taxis, captured in the recent Council-supported oral history projects, are impressive and inspiring. Akhtar Zahid opened a successful car repair shop, Mohammed Ashraf set up a video and mobile phone business, and Abdul Mannan operated the largest restaurant in the town.[174] But in the context of the Thatcherism and the 'death of the social', these efforts had great ideological value for the government. Under Thatcher, the British government began to actively celebrate 'Asian entrepreneurship', especially but not exclusively the 'model minority' of Ugandan Asians, pointing to it as proof that the property owning democracy could lift all boats.[175] Thus, both local and national government increasingly redirected funds to local organisations that were explicitly aimed at fostering and supporting entrepreneurship.

The Asian Business Association

This process would culminate in the creation of the Asian Business Association in 1996, largely from the leading members of Pakistani People's Association and Bangladeshi Association of Oldham. The ABA would become enormously successful and became one of the central cultural and economic institutions in Oldham as a whole. It would be the Asian Business Association, in concert with Oldham Council, which in 2013 would fund and organise the creation of the collection of oral histories of Asian business owners in Oldham, which has been repeatedly cited in this chapter. The resulting publication, Cotton, Curry and Commerce, is beautifully done and is a fitting testament to the hard work of South Asian business owners in Oldham. But what can be seen in the packaging that the council has done, and in the interviews themselves, is how consciously this archetype of the self-improving business owner is sold as the defining feature of Oldham's Asian community. This is a community that, to quote Michael

[172] 'Oldham Bulletin, March 1979', section entitled 'So You Think You Are Low Paid', page 5, L31674, OLSA. 35p in 1979 is equal to just £1.78 in 2020 when adjusted for inflation, a tiny fraction of the living wage. The lowest reported wage in the study was 20p, or just £1.02 when adjusted for inflation.
[173] Ibid, L31674, OLSA. All caps in the original.
[174] Stacey, *Cotton, Curry, and Commerce*.
[175] For a further discussion of this concept and its impact on race in Britain, see Joanna Herbert, 'The British Ugandan Asian Diaspora: Multiple and Contested Belongings,' *Global Networks* 12, no. 3 (2012): 296-313.

Meacher, the long-time (now former) MP for Oldham West, is 'thrusting', 'resilient', and 'dynamic'. The South Asian migrants possessed 'natural business instincts' that were just waiting to be unleashed.[176] The message is that, with exception of some language support and training on business regulation, this 'model minority' did not need the help of government to succeed in a post-industrial context.

There is a significant ethnic bias within the Asian Business Association recordings, one which reflects the differing opportunities and challenges faced by different segments of the Oldham South Asian population. Approximately a third of interviewees claimed that their families were from Pakistan, a third from Bangladesh, and a third from India. Only one interviewee, Mohammad Rahiem, noted that his family had specifically come from Mirpur in Kashmir.[177] This is a serious under-representation considering the size of the Mirpur community in Oldham. As discussed above, it was the Mirpuri migrants, more than any other group, who were particularly dependent on employment in the textile industry, and who lacked transferable skills because of their peasant farming background. Although it is impossible to glean an exact figure because the census includes Mirpurs/Kashmiris in the British Pakistani category, it appears that it is primarily the Mirpuri community that has been trapped and segregated in Glodwick in recent decades.[178] Thus, this attempt to show how South Asian Oldhamers have overcome the challenges of deindustrialisation to forge entrepreneurial success stories actually overlooks the segment of the South Asian community most impacted by the depredations of deindustrialisation.

If the Mirpuri community is underrepresented in the Asian Business Association and in the narrative of South Asian success that Oldham Council has attempted to put forward in recent years, the Indian community has been overrepresented. British Indians are by far the smallest segment of the broader South Asian population and have never exceeded 1 per cent of the total population of Oldham.[179] In addition, the interviewees from the Indian community appear to have come largely from more middle class backgrounds. Bharat Kumar Sisodia was the son of a high ranking Indian judge, and was sent to England for education because that was the tradition at the time.[180] Gunvant Kumpavent's family owned a large farm in Gujarat.[181] The oral history collection thus side-stepped the question of how different levels of privilege and education affected the immigrant experience, and thereby was able to more convincingly put forward the argument that any South Asian Oldhamer could have succeeded with enough effort and drive.

When Glodwick comes up in the interviews, it is as a place that the interviewees escaped or left behind. Glodwick is referenced to emphasise the challenges that the business owners faced – they lived in poverty in Glodwick, but they worked hard and overcame myriad difficulties and escaped. Mashukul Hoque's grandfather was one of the first South Asians to

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[176] Michael Meacher, Interviewed 2011-12 (specific date unknown): Cotton, Curry and Commerce Oral History Recordings, M185/17, OLSA.
[177] Mohammed Rahiem, Interviewed 2011-12 (specific date unknown): Cotton, Curry and Commerce Oral History Recordings, M185/18, OLSA.
[178] Kalra, *From Textile Mills to Taxi Ranks*, 156. See also 'Kashmiris in Oldham' – A report compiled by the Oldham Kashmiri Association', December 2001, M166/21/10, OLSA.
[179] Oldham Council Business Intelligence Unit, *Oldham 2011 Census Ethnicity Report*, February 2016, page 3.
[180] Bharat Kumar Sisodia, Interviewed 2011-12 (specific date unknown): Cotton, Curry and Commerce Oral History Recordings, M185/20, OLSA.
[181] Gunvant Kumpavent, Interviewed 2011-12 (specific date unknown): Cotton, Curry and Commerce Oral History Recordings, M185/12, OLSA.

settle in Glodwick, arriving there in 1951 or 52 and saving up money with relatives to buy a house together in the neighbourhood in 1959 for £300. But Hoque's grandfather recognised that the textile industry was in decline, and set up a small grocery shop in 1972. The business proved incredibly successful, and by 1977 the family owned three grocery shops and three cars. In 1979, the family moved to Manchester, primarily because the schools in Glodwick were horrifically bad. 'Looking back on it now', Hoque said, 'a lot of the teachers were openly racist, the teaching was non-existent in certain areas.' Hoque would go on to study computing at Liverpool University, and now employs 24 people at a company providing 'database integration services' to large firms. He lives in the Cheshire stockbrokers' belt, and his son Zubair Hoque is the only British Asian in single-seat formula racing.[182]

This deeply compelling story of personal and family success is broadly representative of the stories recounted in the Asian Business Association oral histories. But it is not broadly representative of the experience of South Asians in Oldham, and especially the largely Mirpuri community in Glodwick. By holding up a segment of the South Asian community that had 'escaped' Glodwick, the Council could distract from the systemic reasons why so many people had not: unemployment, racism, depressed housing prices, and the blatant racism of the Council itself. In 1990, an Oldham Council report revealed systematic bias against South Asians in housing allocation policy, and a 1993 report of the Commission for Racial Equality found the council guilty of 'unlawful discrimination'.[183] However, the Council continued to do very little to fix these problems, and as of 2001 only 2.6 per cent of the council's staff was non-white and discrimination in housing provision remained endemic.[184]

It is natural that Oldham would want to celebrate South Asian community leaders, but the implication that Glodwick was a place to be 'escaped' plays into the conceptualisation, which we have traced back to the 1970s, of the Glodwick 'ghetto'. It is through this discourse, and with the justification of this discourse, that Glodwick has been residualised and 'othered' in recent decades. Like other communities that have lost their economic purpose due to deindustrialisation, Glodwick has been made out as a place outside of mainstream liberal society, home to people who have failed to self-improve and thus are not deserving of further government support.[185] And when Glodwick experienced riots in 2001, it would be through this lens that they would be viewed.

Conclusion

On the 26th of May 2001, the worst rioting Britain had seen in almost two decades began in Oldham. Over the next two days, dozens of people were injured, cars were burned, storefronts were destroyed, deputy Mayor Riaz Ahmad's house was firebombed, and hundreds of white and South Asian youths engaged in running street battles with each other and with ranks of riot police called in from across Greater Manchester. Although rioting occurred in several inner-city neighbourhoods, the most serious violence was concentrated on the edges of

[182] Mashukul Hoque, Interviewed 2011-12 (specific date unknown): Cotton, Curry and Commerce Oral History Recordings, M185/11, OLSA.
[183] Fasial Bodi, 'Ghettos in the North', *The Guardian,* June 25, 2001, page 13.
[184] David Ward, 'Ignorance, Misunderstanding, and Fear: Oldham Council Blamed for Failing to Act on Segregation', *The Guardian,* 12 December 2001, page 5.
[185] Nadine Dolby & Greg Dimitriadis, 'Learning to Labor in New Times, An Introduction', in *Learning to Labor in New Times*, eds. Willis, Dimitriadis & Dolby, 1-16.

Glodwick. The intensity of the violence reinforced negative stereotypes about Oldham as a deprived and 'racist' place.[186]

The riots had complex causes: frustrations with police discrimination, racist media coverage (including in the *Oldham Evening Chronicle*), the activities of the British National Party in the town, and generation cleavages within the South Asian community.[187] However, underlying the legitimate rage felt by South Asians in Glodwick was a quarter century of deep socio-economic trauma, caused by the intersection of deindustrialisation with the racial inequalities of post-imperial Britain.[188] The riots revealed that the rosy image provided by the Asian Business Association did not represent the full picture of the reality faced by South Asian Oldhamers at the beginning of the 21st century.

No segment of the British population felt the impact of industrial decline more forcefully than black and minority ethnic Britons in places like Oldham. Oldham experienced a protracted process of deindustrialisation over the second half of the 20th century as the cotton textile industry gradually lost both foreign and domestic markets to overseas competitions. The slow speed of this decline is significant, because the persistence of labour shortages as late as the 1970s spurred the development of a vibrant multicultural community in inner city wards like Glodwick. Then, as the speed of deindustrialisation accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s, it intertwined with racism and led to a process of segregation whereby the poorest segment of the South Asian community was trapped in Glodwick, forced to grapple with a combination of declining house values, structural racism, and limited opportunities.

With the pillars of the social-democratic welfare state crumbling, government in the 1970s embraced 'community development', a form of governance that had originated in the imperial context. In practice, community development meant trying to teach impoverished neighbourhoods to 'help themselves', and Oldham thus became a sort of laboratory for a new relationship between government and society which would take full shape in the 1980s. Nevertheless, this rise of 'community' was not only a top-down process. Many of these local organisations developed a logic of their own, and would help minorities, women, and young people to adapt to and thrive in the post-industrial economy. They thus form a critical and often overlooked social legacy of deindustrialisation. However, some of these organisations, through their celebration and promotion of a particular model of entrepreneurial success, helped to justify and reinforce the neglect of those who were left behind, providing often unintentional cover for the withdrawal of government support and protection for the poor and disadvantaged in neighbourhoods like Glodwick. As the spinning wheels of Oldham stopped turning, the foundations of the modern neo-liberal order were being assembled.

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[186] Letters to the Editor, *Oldham Chronicle*, 31 May 2001.

[187] See the following works for a discussion of these diverse issues: Virinder Kalra, 'Police Lore and Community Disorder: Diversity in the Criminal Justice System,' in *Explaining Ethnic Differences: Changing Patterns of Disadvantage in Britain*, ed. David Mason (Bristol: Policy Press, 2003), 139-52; Ash Amin, 'Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity', *Environment and Planning A* 34 (2002): 959-80; Arun Kundnani, 'From Oldham to Bradford: The Violence of the Violated', *Race and Class* 43 (2001): 105-10; Yasmin Hussain & Paul Bagguley, 'Citizenship, Ethnicity and Identity: British Pakistanis after the 2001 'Riots'', *Sociology* 39 (2005): 407-425.

[188] The government's own report into the riots largely endorsed this interpretation: David Ritchie et al, *Oldham Independent Review: One Oldham, One Future (The Ritchie Report)* (Oldham: Oldham Independent Review Panel, 2001), 2-16, 69-72.

Chapter 2:
Troubled in Many Ways: Reintegrating Belfast into Postwar UK History

Unlike Oldham, Belfast has never been a 'one-industry' community. Until the early 20th century Belfast was 'Linenopolis', the single largest centre of linen textile production in the world. Linked to this was a highly specialised engineering sector, headed by James Mackie & Sons, one of the world's leading manufacturers of textile machinery. And in 1861, Edward Harland and Gustav Wolff founded Harland & Wolff on Queen's Island at the mouth of the River Lagan[1]. Harland & Wolff would become one of the world's most famous shipbuilders, best known for building the ill-fated passenger liner the RMS *Titanic*. The aerospace industry would also become a critical piece of the city's industrial base in the 20th century. But each of these industries would suffer a painful, prolonged decline from the Second World War onward, a decline which would become intertwined with Northern Ireland's famous sectarian 'Troubles'.

Northern Ireland in the 20th century is often seen as a place apart.[2] In 1922, Northern Ireland was cut out of the story of the new Irish nation-state and was left as an unwanted and oft-forgotten appendage of the United Kingdom. 'A Protestant Parliament for a Protestant People',[3] Northern Ireland's government for its first fifty years of existence was a one-party ethno-state, largely left to its own devices by those in London. The Troubles, of course, have been compared extensively with low-level civil conflicts in other parts of late 20th century Europe and the globe,[4] but they are not readily connected to the broader patterns of British or European history.[5] Roy Foster has argued that the lack of a clear generational aspect to the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland made it distinct from the global youth revolts of the late 1960s.[6] Its economic history is also seen as being outside the British and European mainstream: for example, Nicholas Crafts has suggested that Northern Ireland simply missed out on the postwar European 'Golden Age'.[7]

There is no doubt that Belfast is a unique city, with a unique history. Arriving in Belfast for the first time on the ferry from Liverpool in the spring of 2017, I remember feeling a sense of nervous excitement that I never felt at any other time during my research travels in the British Isles. In the eyes of many in both Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, Belfast is a deeply foreign place. It has been said that Northern Ireland is one of the most studied places in the world,[8] and academics of all disciplines have done a remarkable job of dissecting and explaining the intricacies of Northern Irish politics, economics, and culture. However, just as

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[1] Tom McCluskie, *The Rise and Fall of Harland and Wolff* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2013).
[2] Dervla Murphy, *A Place Apart: Northern Ireland in the 1970s* (London: John Murray Ltd., 1978).
[3] This line has been attributed to James Craig (Lord Craigavon), but it is likely that he never used this exact phrase. However, it has become a well-established description of Northern Irish political institutions in the 50 years before the Troubles.
[4] See for example John McGarry, *Northern Ireland and the Divided World: The Northern Ireland Conflict and the Good Friday Agreement in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Lorenzo Bosi & Gianluca De Fazio (eds.), *The Troubles in Northern Ireland and Theories of Social Movements* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).
[5] A notable exception is Simon Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68: Civil Rights, Global Revolt and the Origins of the Troubles* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007).
[6] Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1989), 587.
[7] Nicholas Crafts, 'The Golden Age of Economic Growth in Western Europe: Why did Northern Ireland Miss Out?' *Irish Economic and Social History* 22 (1995): 5-25.
[8] Paul Dixon & Eamonn O'Kane, *Northern Ireland since 1969* (London: Routledge, 2014), appendix.

Simon Prince has tried to integrate Northern Ireland's 20th century political history into the mainstream of British and Euro-American history, it is time to consider how the economic and social history of Northern Ireland fits within broader histories of deindustrialisation in the United Kingdom.[9]

This chapter aims to do just that. It begins with a brief discussion of the development of the linen industry, before discussing how Belfast's post-Second World War economic problems were both similar but distinct to those in the rest of the UK. It will explore the nature of Belfast's industrial structure, including the surprising diversity of some of the industrial leadership and the problems of sectarian discrimination in shipbuilding. It will then consider the political response to deindustrialisation. The Unionist government at Stormont was aligned with the Tories at Westminster, but it required the support of the Protestant working classes to retain its lock on power in a divided society. Thus, it was forced to maintain a highly interventionist economic approach, particularly with regard to the shipbuilding industry, the crown jewel of the industrial edifice of (Protestant) Ulster. Deindustrialisation, which accelerated from the late 1950s, even in the face of Unionist efforts to protect jobs, was thus a grave threat to their political control, and for a short while the Northern Ireland Labour Party seemed poised to unglue the Unionist party from its voter base in working class Belfast. However, class unity was elusive, and the onset of the Troubles caused a sharpening of the religious/sectarian divide that remains the dominant feature of Ulster politics to this day.

This chapter will demonstrate how deindustrialisation and violence reinforced each other, dragging both Protestant and Catholic areas of inner-city Belfast into deep poverty and breaking the social structures of local community in the process. As in the rest of the UK, local organisations filled the gaps, and these local organisations were actively courted by government. Governments – both the Unionists and the subsequent Direct Rule administration – wanted to be seen to be solving the social problems of troubled areas, but to do so in a way that reduced their level of responsibility and financial liability. In this way, a form of neoliberalism came to Northern Ireland, but it was an incomplete form of neoliberalism, as all government leaders including Thatcher recognised that austerity and spending cuts would spur further death and destruction. As a result, when local organisations came knocking on the door of government, they found it wide open. What they repeatedly demanded above all else was the expansion of daycare, youth programmes, and safe after-school activities. These demands represented the rejection of a long Northern Irish tradition of devaluing women's labour, the recognition of the end of the male-breadwinner model in working class areas, and the deep desire to ensure that children received the educational upbringing necessary to thrive in a post-industrial economy. These local organisations are thus a critically important, gendered, and largely grassroots response to the social consequences of deindustrialisation in working class neighbourhoods. The chapter will then end with a discussion of some of the enduring legacies of deindustrialisation on the cultural and physical landscape of working-class Belfast. Deindustrialisation deserves to be at the centre of the story of 20th century Belfast, and 20th century Belfast deserves to be at the centre of the story of how deindustrialisation remade the structure of UK communities.

In addition to local and central government files and community organisation reports, this chapter uses oral history transcripts from the Living Linen collection housed at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, and from the Duchas oral history archive managed by the Falls

[9] Simon Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68,* 6.

Community Council. The latter archive was created to record and preserve the sometimes painful and traumatic memories of the Troubles and its enduring legacy in the lives of the people of West Belfast. These archives are essential to the writing of social history which captures the diversity and complexity of Belfast, and in particular does not silence the voices of women, who are often narrated into subordinate roles in the telling of histories of the Troubles.[10] As Claire Hackett and Bill Rolston have discussed in their article on 'the burden of memory', storytelling is always political and it has the potential to reopen old wounds.[11] Stories such as those recorded by Duchas must be handled with care, and not used to parrot official narratives. Hackett and Rolston remind their readers that it is easy to think of the interviewees of victims and understand their testimonies entirely in this light, but this is a vast oversimplification of their identities which limits our ability to listen to what is being said.[12] My approach to these files explicitly rejects the focus on victimhood, in that it looks beyond the Troubles altogether to explore the way these stories can shed light on other socio-economic processes affecting life in Belfast in the mid-to-late 20th century, especially deindustrialisation. The Troubles do not define the lives or memories of the people of Belfast, and nor should it define the history of modern Belfast. The Duchas archive has an explicit 'counter-hegemonic purpose',[13] and in using these records to explore the impact of deindustrialisation on the people of Belfast, I hope to further that purpose.

Development of the Linen Industry

Like the wool industry in England, the linen industry in Northern Ireland began in rural communities. Flax cultivation in the northern part of Ireland dates back at least to the middle ages, though initially the majority of this flax was exported to England via Dublin and then woven on handlooms through the north of England. This changed with the arrival of Huguenot settlers in the late 17th century, the most famous of which was Louis Crommelin, who settled in Lisburn in the 1690s and brought continental equipment and techniques to Ireland.[14] In 1696 duties were removed from Irish flax products entering England, and the Irish linen manufacturing industry was born.

For the next century this remained primarily a cottage industry, and all stages of production were completed by a single household. There was a clear gendered division of labour– the men sowed and harvested the flax, and their wives, daughters, and (in the case of the large plantations) female servants spun it into yarn. The men would then use hand-looms to weave the yarn into cloth during the agricultural off-season, and bleaching would also be done at home. However, by the early 19th century, production methods borrowed from the cotton industry plus the arrival of steam power, caused the collapse of home based hand spinning and the proliferation of mills, particularly in the Lagan Valley close to ports for the importation of coal and export of the finished product. Power looms took a little longer to eliminate

[10] Claire Hackett, 'Narratives of Political Activism from Women in West Belfast', in *Irish Women and Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags*, eds. Louise Ryan & Margaret Ward (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004), 145-66.
[11] Claire Hackett & Bill Rolston, 'The Burden of Memory: Victims, Storytelling and Resistance in Northern Ireland', *Memory Studies* 2, 3 (2009): 355-58. Claire Hackett currently oversees the Duchas oral history archive at Falls Community Council and kindly provided access to the archive for the purposes of this study.
[12] Hackett & Rolston, 'The Burden of Memory', 361-64.
[13] Ibid, 369.
[14] W. A. McCutcheon, *The Industrial Archaeology of Northern Ireland* (Belfast: HMSO, 1980), 283-84.

handlooms, but following the decimation of the rural economy by the Great Famine, a fully industrialised linen industry took form.[15] Belfast experienced a population explosion similar to English industrial cities, growing from 20 000 in 1803 to more than 100 000 in 1851, and then to 350 000 by 1900, by which point it had surpassed Dublin to become the largest city in Ireland.[16]

This considerable migration into Belfast in the middle part of the 19th century created the densely populated suburbs, like the Shankill, which would in turn become the 'inner-city' flashpoints of the late 20th century.[17] At a time when much of Ireland continued to face entrenched poverty and its economic development and industrialisation continued to be stunted by the nature of British rule, Belfast was the exception, with plentiful employment and English-level wages. Thus, it attracted migrants from across the island in the second half of the 19th century.[18] E. R. R. Green has argued that, in this period, 'Belfast was not only the solitary Irish industrial city, but became (…) an outpost of industrial Britain.[19]

Gendered and Divided Workforces

Many of the linen mills had mixed workforces in terms of religion, unlike the shipyards and aerospace industries, which were dominated by Protestants. Lily FitzSimons was born to a Catholic family on Carrick Hill, just north-west of the city centre, in 1938, and was interviewed for the Duchas oral history project in 2010. She left school at 14 and immediately went to work in linen, as her mother and grandmother had, getting her first job at Ewart's Mill, on the Crumlin Road.[20] Ewart's had a mixed workforce – Protestants were probably the majority, but not an overwhelming one. She had her first experience with sectarianism in the mill, and it was through experiencing this discrimination that she began to understand her identity and the grievances of her community.

The majority of workers in the linen industry were always women, though specific statistics on the gender breakdown are hard to come by. Generally, the idea was that the wages of women would supplement that of the 'head of the household', a father or husband, and this was used as justification for wages well below those of other industries. However, often women textile workers were the only wage earners in the household, especially during the repeated economic downturns in shipbuilding. In the early 20th century, people in Belfast would say that when 'there was green grass growing in the shipyards', the wages of women 'put the bread on the table'.[21]

Almost all of the spinning and much of the weaving was completed by women, but there were limited opportunities for women to advance beyond the factory or mill floor. McLaughlin and Ingram found that the horizontal and vertical segregation in the Northern Irish textile and

[15] Betty Messenger, *Picking up the Linen Threads*: *A Study in Industrial Folklore* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1978), 14-17.
[16] E. R. R. Green, 'The Beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in Belfast', in *Ulster since 1800: A Political and Economic Survey*, eds. Theodore Moody & James Beckett (London: BBC, 1955), 28-38.
[17] Norman Gillespie, *The Vital Statistics, Shankill Employment Report* (Belfast: Shankill Community Council, 1983), 3.
[18] Ibid, 5.
[19] E. R. R. Green, 'The Beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in Belfast'.
[20] Lily Fitzsimmons, Interviewed 20 October 2010: Duchas Oral History Archive, Falls Community Council miscellaneous interview collection (viewable by appointment only).
[21] Messenger, *Picking up the Linen Threads*, 18-20.

clothing industries enabled considerable discrimination of women in terms of pay and work conditions.[22] And because of the gendered division of labour in working class Belfast, women had few opportunities for employment beyond linen. Máire Mhic Shéain, born to a poor Irish Gaelic-speaking Catholic family on the Falls Road in 1940, recalls that 'there weren't many women out working. But if they were, they worked in what we called the 'wear rooms'. That's where clothes were made. Or maybe they worked in a cafe'.[23]

Although the first union for women textile workers was founded in 1893, Lily Messenger found in her oral history study that unionisation efforts were patchy at best, and trade unions did not feature prominently in how they remembered their experiences in the industry.[24] Trade unions did not create the sense of community and class solidarity seen in coal mining or the more centralised industries such as steel and shipbuilding. Religious sectarianism was a particularly significant impediment to unionisation, as the conflicting loyalties of class and religion mean that Protestant workers often did not want to ally themselves with Catholics in struggle against the largely Protestant employers. Unionisation and class formation were also hampered by the small scale of most mills and factories, the fact that most trade union organisers did not see the unionisation of women as a priority, and the persistence of divisions between different segments of the workforce, especially between spinners and weavers.[25]

The Beginnings of Deindustrialisation in Linen

Although (Northern) Ireland was renowned for its incredibly high-quality linen, the industry faced growing competition in the 20th century from Western Europe and later from South and South-east Asia. Much like in the English cotton textile industry, this competition grew after the Second World War when Northern Ireland lost its protected market in the British Empire, and its fragmented organisational structure left it disadvantaged in comparison with more modern competitors.[26] Alan Kilgore, born in 1912, worked in Belfast linen mills for more than fifty years.[27] Kilgore was a man of few words, and is fairly blunt when asked for his opinion on why the linen industry had declined: 'There were just too many firms. Too many at it'. In addition, the cultivation of high quality flax had largely moved to continental Europe by the immediate postwar period, so the potential cost savings from the local availability of raw materials was lost. The Northern Irish agricultural sector was technologically backward and insufficiently rationalised to compete with European imports.[28]

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[22] Eithne McLaughlin & Kate Ingram, *All Stitched Up: Sex Segregation in the Northern Ireland Clothing Industry* (Belfast: Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, 1991).
[23] Máire Mhic Shéain, Interviewed by Hugh Corcoran for the 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project, Duchas Oral History Archive (translated from Irish by Duchas).
[24] Messenger, *Picking up the Linen Threads*, 208.
[25] Ibid, 207. It should be noted that all three of these impediments featured in the weakness of the cotton textile industry in Lancashire. The division between spinners and weavers was mentioned in several Duchas oral history interviews: Beatrice Elliott, Interviewed by Tom Harrison for the 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project', Duchas Oral History Archive; Margaret Smith, Interviewed 7 August 2013: Duchas Oral History Archive, Falls Community Council miscellaneous interview collection (viewable by appointment only).
[26] Ron Wiener, *The Rape & Plunder of the Shankill in Belfast: Community Action, The Belfast Experience* (Belfast: Farset Co-operative Press Ltd., 1980), 27.
[27] Alan Kilgore, Interviewed 14 August 2001: 'Living Linen Collection', R2001.115, National Museums of Northern Ireland (NMNI).
[28] Derek Alexander & Michael Drake, *Breaking New Ground: Fifty Years of Change in Northern Ireland Agriculture, 1952-2002* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2002), 2-3.

And as with the cotton textile industry in Lancashire, the primary threat to the Northern Irish linen industry initially came not from the global south, but from Europe. The Irish linen industry had long benefitted from complex links with producers and suppliers on the European continent, but in the postwar era the trade balance underwent a considerable shift. In particular, Czech linens flooded the British market in the postwar era – initially the higher end producers were reasonably safe, but merchants who imported Czech linens and then finished them to a higher quality in the UK were able to make inroads into even the luxury markets.[29] The process by which this sort of business developed this can be seen in the story of the Sochors. Joseph Sochor had a textile print company in the Czechoslovakia in the interwar years, employing more than 2000 people. He fled during the early years of the Nazi regime, settled in Belfast, received a loan from the Northern Ireland government, and set up Belfast Silk and Rayon, another textile printing business, in an abandoned flax spinning mill near the Royal Victoria Hospital in West Belfast. In his Living Linen interview, Joseph's son Paul states that there was a small group of Czechs living in the Fall Roads area, who fit in religiously with the broader Catholic community in the area. Belfast Silk & Rayon bleached and dyed cloth as well as printing it, giving them control of the entire finishing process, and eventually diversified into printing for household textiles and tea towels. The second generation of Sochors, led by son Paul, continued the business, in several different iterations, and retained important UK customers, including Marks & Spencer, over the decades. However, it became increasingly unprofitable. In the end, the business was bought by Ulster Weavers in 1984, a high-end producer with a royal warrant for the style of kitchen textiles. At the time of the Living Linen interview in 2001, Paul Sochor was still in the textile business, but instead of production, he was now buying and selling imported textiles from his native Czech Republic, using long-standing family connections with Czech producers to obtain the best deals.[30]

The story of the Sochors is first and foremost a useful corrective to assumptions about the closed nature – ethnically, politically, and economically – of 20th century Northern Irish society. It reminds us of the ways the textile industry in Belfast was part of global networks and benefitted from foreign expertise just as much as it shared that expertise with the rest of the world. Just like the German textile manufacturers who brought capital and skills to England in the 19th century – including the father of Friedrich Engels – the Czech families who came to Belfast in the early-to-mid 20th century helped re-invigorate the industry with new ideas and products. But it is also a story of how those global networks shaped the process of deindustrialisation, and of how individual businesses adapted to changing market circumstances.

Initial Government Responses

Northern Ireland's economic challenges in the postwar years were both similar to those in other heavily industrialised parts of the UK, but of a more extreme variety. Northern Ireland's particular over-reliance on 'sunset industries' like linen and shipbuilding resulted in a problem of structural unemployment in the immediate postwar period was almost unique in the postwar UK. As mentioned in the introduction, Nicholas Crafts has suggested that Northern Ireland simply missed out on the postwar European 'Golden Age'.[31] Northern Ireland's unemployment rate never fell below 4 per cent in the entire postwar era, while Great Britain's

[29] Jim Mills, Interviewed 13 March 2001: 'Living Linen Collection', R2001.55, NMNI.
[30] Paul Zdenek Sochor, Interviewed 16 October 2001: 'Living Linen Collection', R2001.150, NMNI.
[31] Nicholas Crafts, 'The Golden Age of Economic Growth in Western Europe', 5-25.

unemployment rate generally hovered around 2 per cent.[32] However, the first decade after the Second World War, just as in the rest of the UK, would be a period of relative prosperity, at least in retrospective. The situation began to change rapidly in the mid 1950s. This reality would have a particularly destabilising impact on the Protestant working classes. According to McAuley and McCormack, 'by the mid-1950s . . . it had become clear that the traditional industrial base of shipbuilding, textiles and engineering could not guarantee a viable and prosperous economy.'[33]

Thus, by 1962, employment in the linen industry had fallen to 40,000, down from 52,000 only six years earlier. Government officials expected it to fall further.[34] According to Finance Minister Terence O'Neill, speaking to his colleagues at a March 1962 cabinet meeting, 'The linen industry consisted in the main of private companies, many of them making a totally inadequate return on their capital but kept in being for a variety of private reasons'[35]. O'Neill was a moderate, modernising Unionist, and an admirer of American President John F. Kennedy.[36] O'Neill hoped that American textile manufacturers would prove Northern Ireland's saviour, attracted to the province by its textile traditions as well as concession rents and grants. He went on to urge 'that it would be far better for the long-term interests of Northern Ireland if the local clothing and textile industry were to go into partnership with the Americans instead of making efforts to keep them out.'[37] The New Industries Policy provided a '33½ per cent grant which was available towards expenditure on buildings and machinery' to anyone proposing to set up new manufacturing facilities in Northern Ireland.[38] Unionists like O'Neill recognised that the industrial base of Northern Ireland was in serious peril, and as an isolated jurisdiction with a tiny local market, it would require outside support and investment to remain viable.

Already in the early 1960s, the nature of linen manufacturing was changing, and these changes imperilled the livelihoods of working-class Belfast. Commenting on the effort to increase manufacturing employment through the 'New Industries Policy', the Minister of Commerce said at a June 1962 cabinet meeting 'that the exclusion from the unemployment figures of men who were unlikely to obtain factory employment would reduce the number suitable for industrial jobs by 11,000 to 16,200; in the case of women about 50 per cent, or roughly 6,000 out of a total of 11,000, were regarded as "not available".'[39] Why were these groups 'unlikely to be employed'? For the most part, it was because they were unskilled, with no specific technical qualifications, and were over the age of forty and thus unlikely to be able to gain new skills. The nature of manufacturing had already changed: according to the Minister of Commerce, 'most modern factories depended on a minimum of skilled mechanics while

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[32] Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle, 6 September 1967, CAB/4/1371, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI).
[33] James McAuley & P. J. McCormack. 'The Protestant Working Class in Northern Ireland since 1930 – A Problematic Relationship', in *Ireland's Histories – Aspects of State, Society and Ideology*, eds. Sean Hutton & Paul Stewart (London: Routledge, 1991), 118.
[34] 'Subject 3, Grant to the Irish Linen Guild', Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle, 29 March 1962, CAB/4/1190, PRONI.
[35] Ibid, CAB/4/1190, PRONI.
[36] Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68*, 25-26.
[37] 'Subject 3, 'Grant to the Irish Linen Guild', Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle, 29 March 1962, CAB/4/1190, PRONI.
[38] 'Subject 5, 'New Industries Policy', Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held in the PM's Room, Parliament Buildings, 19 June 1962, CAB/4/1195, PRONI.
[39] Ibid, CAB/4/1195, PRONI.

actual production work was performed by skilled machine operators who had to be specially trained'.[40] Unskilled labourers, including thousands of married women who had relied on part-time work to help support their families, were losing their economic position as the traditional industries of Northern Ireland, particularly linen, faded away. The government seemed uncertain how hard to push this idea that some people were 'unlikely to obtain factory employment'. On the one hand, these 'unemployable' unskilled workers drove up the unemployment figures in Northern Ireland and brought on negative comparisons with the rest of the UK. On the other hand, it was politically impossible to admit that thousands of Northern Ireland citizens might never work again. Such an admission would seem callous, and would also open the government up to the counter-charge 'that many of those receiving National Assistance (and not registered for employment) should be reckoned as in need of work'.[41] And despite all these continued government support efforts, employment in the linen industry continued to drop, falling to just 26,201 by the onset of the Troubles in 1968.[42]

Meanwhile, the jewel in the crown of Northern Irish industry was also struggling. Harland & Wolff, despite significant government aid from the late 1950s onwards, went through repeated mass redundancies in this period. Harland & Wolff had reached a peak workforce of 62,000 by the end of the Second World War, and as late as 1951 every slipway was full, mostly with ships built in support of the UK's postwar military buildup.[43] But just as in so many other British heavy industries, the brief postwar age of prosperity was not to last. Tom McCluskie, author of the definitive history of the great shipbuilding company, identifies 1955 as the year when rebuilt German and Japanese shipyards closed the gap and began to overcome their British competition.[44] In the late 1950s, it made a loss of nearly £2 million on the SS Canberra, the last passenger liner it would every construct, and by the mid-1960s the financial position of the company was of considerable concern.[45] With declining orders and spiraling costs, the company began to cut its workforce dramatically. In 1960, 25,500 were still employed in shipbuilding, and thus it was still central to the prosperity of Protestant Belfast. However, in the next eight years 16,000 jobs were lost.[46] When combined with the figures in the linen industry, this meant that Northern Ireland's two 'staple industries' had lost 30,000 jobs in the immediate lead-up to the Troubles, about 3 per cent of the adult population and 5 per cent of the workforce. That this fact is rarely mentioned in studies of the violence is puzzling.

The government also faced enormous pressure to protect jobs at Short Brothers and Harland Limited, the second largest single employer in Northern Ireland. Short Brothers was originally based in England and was among the pioneers of the British aerospace industry.[47] In 1936, the UK government had established a new airplane factory in Belfast, to be jointly owned by Short Brothers and Harland & Wolff. Thus, 'Shorts and Harland' was born. Production difficulties caused it to be brought under majority government ownership in 1943, and it

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[40] Ibid, CAB/4/1195, PRONI.
[41] Ibid, CAB/4/1195, PRONI.
[42] CRC Working Paper, 'Proposal for Community Development in East Belfast', August 1972, Community Development files, CREL/2/8, PRONI.
[43] See David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[44] Tom McCluskie, *The Rise and Fall of Harland and Wolff,* 79.
[45] Ibid, 79-84.
[46] 'Statistics Showing Position of Redundant Harland & Wolff Workers', various dates (late 1960s), Harland and Wolff Ltd – Redundancies files, DMS/3/53, PRONI.
[47] David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Academic and Professional, 1991), 18-58.

remained so until the 1980s. With its continued focus on military aircraft, Shorts and Harland was thus doubly dependent on the UK government for its very existence, and Northern Ireland officials were constantly pressing their colleagues in London to place further orders in Belfast.

Over the course of this period, the Unionists had commissioned a series of reports, trying to identify the specific nature of Northern Ireland's economic problems and develop concrete solutions. A series of economic plans had been developed, including the 1963 Matthew Plan and the 1965 Wilson Plan. The Ministry of Commerce offered a series of extremely generous grants to companies wishing to set up or expand in Northern Ireland, and it had assisted 317 factory-building projects and the creation of nearly 250 new firms in the quarter century following the end of the Second World War.[48]

When attempting to attract new industries, the government placed a particular focus on industries that would employ more women, recognising that the decline of the linen industry had a disproportionate impact on female employment. According to a 1960 report by the Minister of Commerce Lord Glentoran, 17 per cent of married women were employed in Northern Ireland, compared with 25 per cent in Great Britain. The focus was thus on attracting light industry that might employ women, especially outside of the Belfast area.[49] Based on the minutes of a cabinet meeting in 1962 (the cabinet included no women), ministers seemed to be very aware of the importance of well-paying jobs for women in overall prosperity: 'The wages in the linen industry were still below the average female wages in other industries, and accordingly in districts where the industry remained predominant the inhabitants had been denied the prosperity which new female-employing factories had brought to other areas.'[50] However, they did not seem to put much thought into the factors that influenced the employment decisions of married women, particularly household and childcare responsibilities. According to the Minister of Commerce, 'in England the percentage of married women employed was much higher than in Northern Ireland. There must, accordingly, be a large local reserve of married labour ready to take up work when an attractive new factory was established in their neighbourhood.'[51] The Unionists recognised that the industrial economy of postwar Belfast could not support a 'male breadwinner model' of family employment: the women of Belfast had always worked outside the home, and their labour was even more essential in the context of deindustrialisation. To the extent that working-class men could still find jobs, they were jobs that would require the supplement of a second income to achieve a decent level of family prosperity. However, the Unionists failed to give any thought to the social supports that women with children would need in order to be able to perform this essential economic function. In the end, it would be women themselves who would fight to change the government's approach.

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[48] CRC Working Paper, 'Proposal for Community Development in East Belfast (Source 21: Government Action on Unemployment in Northern Ireland)', August 1972, CREL/2/8, PRONI.
[49] 'Establishment of New Industries Requiring Females: Summary of Memorandum by the Minister of Commerce', Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held in the PM's Room, Parliament Buildings, 19 June 1962, CAB/4/1195/3, PRONI.
[50] 'Subject 3, 'Grant to the Irish Linen Guild', Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle, 29, March 1962, CAB/4/1190, PRONI.
[51] Ibid, CAB/4/1190, PRONI.

Class and Sectarianism – the Failure of the NILP

Why did the Unionists go to such lengths to try to prevent the decline of traditional industries like linen and shipbuilding? To answer this, it is worth briefly considering who exactly the Unionists were. The 'Official' Unionist Party had governed Northern Ireland continuously since partition, usually with minimal opposition. Every Unionist Prime Minister except the last one, Brian Faulkner, was member of the landed gentry or gentrified industrial elite, and the leadership of the Unionist Party was arguably even more patrician than the British Tories.[52] In the early years of the Stormont government, Unionists retained an iron grip Protestant majority by marshalling both the spectre of Dublin (i.e. Vatican) rule and the raw fear of British abandonment.[53] However, the Second World War would challenge the status quo of UK politics, and Northern Ireland was no exception. The Belfast Blitz had exposed the appalling levels of inner-city poverty in the capital, and Prime Minister Basil Brooke (later Lord Brookeborough) realised that the Unionists would need to embrace the welfare state.[54] Speaking about the Protestant working class in 1947, Brooke asked rhetorically: 'are those men going to be satisfied if we reject the social services and other benefits we have had by going step by step with Britain?'[55] The challenge for Brooke, was to ensure that the welfare state was biased in favour of Protestants without being explicitly or blatantly so and thereby provoking the ire of Westminster.[56] So long as this was done effectively, the Unionists assumed, the working classes would remain divided on the basis of religion and they would retain the vast majority of the Protestant vote.

However, deindustrialisation in the postwar era had the potential to throw this assumption out of the window. Linen and especially shipbuilding were Protestant heavy industries. If Protestants in Belfast began to fall serious economic pain, would their loyalty to the Unionists atrophy? Graham Walker has noted that the Protestant working classes in Belfast were no better off than their fellow British industrial workers on Tyneside, Merseyside or Clydeside. They certainly were not the 'labour aristocracy' that some have suggested.[57] However, they were a lot better off than the Catholic working class, and they had come to expect that their material conditions would be protected. What if that was no longer possible?

As deindustrialisation threatened the position of the Protestant working class, numerous efforts were made to break down sectarian divides and unite workers against the Unionist government. For example, the 25 April 1959 edition of the 'Workers' Voice', the newsletter of the Communist Party of Ireland, pointed out that ministerial secretaries were getting a raise of £1000 a year even as unemployment was rising. It also noted out that the Queen Mother had recently dined with the Pope and Cardinals, a meeting that was celebrated both by Protestant

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[52] Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68*, 18-19.
[53] Henry Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.
[54] Brian Barton, *The Blitz: Belfast in the War Years* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1989), 108, 155-6, 263-4.
[55] Prince, *Northern Ireland's '68*, 19.
[56] There are many excellent studies of discrimination of Catholics in the 'cold house' of Unionist Northern Ireland. See for example Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief* (Aldershot: Ashgate Pub., 2006); Robert Cormack & Robert Osborne (eds.), *Discrimination and Public Policy in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Maura Sheehan and Mike Tomlinson (eds.), *The Unequal Unemployed: Discrimination, Unemployment and State Policy in Northern Ireland* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999).
[57] Graham Walker, 'Loyalist Culture, Unionist Politics: A Response to Stephen Howe', *Open Democracy* [Blog], October 2005, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/protestant_2910jsp/.

and Catholic elites on the island of Ireland. Its point was that the sectarianism, drummed up by the elites, was fake, a tool to divide and weaken the power of the working classes. 'A question presents itself for the Shankill and Falls Road workers. If the top notchers, from the 'Irish News' to Pope John, Margaret and the ex-Queen, can get together, bury all past quarrels and form a united front, why cannot the lower downs do the same'.[58] The Communist Party of Ireland, an all-Ireland party,[59] had a presence in many of the major industries of Northern Ireland, including a 16 strong branch in the Shorts & Harland Airplane factory in the spring of 1958.[60]

However, despite their fascinating pamphlets and energetic organisation, the Communists' influence on the politics of Northern Ireland was relatively limited. The Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP), on the other hand, was a real threat to the dominance of the Official Unionists. The party's breakthrough came in the 1958 election, when it won four Belfast seats from the Unionists, including seats covering the shipyard area in East Belfast and the Shankill in West Belfast. Even though the Unionists still won a massive majority, the losses were a tremendous blow to the prestige of the party and their claim to represent Protestants of all backgrounds. Provided Northern Irish elections were fought on a sectarian basis, the Unionists would never lose, but the NILP was the first labour party since partition to win substantial support from Protestant workers. Thus, the Unionists sprang into action. In the autumn of 1959, the Ulster Unionist Council, the governing body of the party, requested that every constituency party invite two local trade union leaders to a special meeting on 5 December in Belfast.[61] Some of the constituency parties outside of Belfast were resistant to the idea, with the Central Armagh branch aguing that they 'get the fullest co-operation of the working classes' and that the 'Trade Union element' would only create problems.[62] However, most constituencies would send representatives, and the Unionists' Trade Union Advisory Council was born.

The opening speech at the inaugural meeting laid out the key goal: 'we could not afford to have a second Party like the Socialists in Northern Ireland'. The minutes reveal the level of concern within unionist labour circles about the rise of the NILP and the challenge of retaining working class support in a troubled economy. Some, such as Mr. Johnston from Ormeau (Belfast) argued that a lack of organisation and effective propaganda was the issue. Mr. King wanted more blatant sectarianism: 'the wrong type of people were getting employment' in government-sponsored factories in Antrim. Mr. Patton from Victoria, one of the East Belfast seats won by the NILP the previous year, 'was very vigorous in his denunciation of the Socialist Party', but noted that 'in the shipyards you are reminded that you could not be a good Trade Unionist and be a member of the Unionist Party'. Miss Mawhinney from the Shankill, one of two women to speak at the meeting, noted the same problem in the textile industry: 'where the employees had a grievance and took this to the employers, they were labelled as Socialists, and

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[58] 'Did You Hear This', *Workers' Voice*, 25 April 1959, Community Party of Ireland Files, D2162/A/73, PRONI.
[59] There were also distinct communist parties in both Northern Ireland the Republic of Ireland, the result of a Second World War era split. Matt Treacy, *The Communist Party of Ireland, 1921-2011: Volume I, 1921-1969* (Dublin: Brocaire Books, 2012).
[60] Shorts' Branch Meeting Notes, 23 May 1958, Community Party of Ireland files, D2162/A/55, PRONI.
[61] 'Replies to Circulars Re. Trade Union Delegates', December 1959, Ulster Unionist Council files, D/1327/11/6/1, PRONI.
[62] 'Letter from Central Armagh Unionist Association to W. Douglas, UUC Secretary', 2 October 1959, Ulster Unionist Council files, D/1327/11/6/1, PRONI.

that some remedy should be found for this'.[63] This 'we love the working class but we know what is best for them, and keep the trade unions out' mentality expressed by the Central Armagh branch was a real problem for the party in heavily unionised workplaces like Harland & Wolff. Class divides could overwhelm religious/sectarian unity, particularly in a precarious economic situation.

These meetings of the Unionists Trade Union Advisory Council would continue over the next four years. Free 'political education' classes were offered to trade unionists to help them understand the goals and policies of the Unionists.[64] There were also efforts to expand the activities of the Ulster Unionist Labour Association, which recruited trade union members to join the Unionist party.[65] The Unionists marshalled sectarianism to fight the growth of the NILP, arguing that Labour could not be trusted on the question of the Union, and that they only pretended to support the British connection because they were running in majority-Protestant areas.[66] However, the Unionists recognised that fanning the flames of division would not be enough. They would also need to open the purse-strings.

The threat of the NILP to the Unionist government was never greater than at the 1962 election. In the lead-up to the crucial election, the Unionists delivered a Queen's Speech almost entirely devoted to promoting the success of their industrial development plans and promising further financial assistance for industry.[67] Then, as the election got underway, the Unionist cabinet devoted a considerable portion of their meetings to the discussion of the NILP's manifesto, and discussed ways that it could match many of the economic proposals.[68] This was the same cabinet meeting where the New Industries Policy and the new grants for the linen industry were finalised.[69] This was likely not a coincidence.

The NILP had their best ever election result in 1962, winning a quarter of the overall vote. But it was not enough. They held their four inner Belfast seats, but made no gains. The Unionists retained a super majority, and the Nationalists remained the largest opposition. After the election, the NILP attempted to keep up the pressure, demanding the immediate recall of Stormont in the middle of the summer to discuss the threat of job losses at Shorts, the subject of which would take up most of the 24 July 1962 cabinet meeting.[70] Thus, in his note to Cabinet in June 1962, the Minister of Commerce argued that 'during the Debate this week it is necessary to show publicly that this Government, after keeping in touch with the firm, have not ceased to urge on all United Kingdom Ministers concerned of the need for more work at Shorts.'

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[63] Minutes of Trade Union Meeting, 5 December 1959, Ulster Unionist Council files, D/1327/11/6/2, PRONI.
[64] Minutes of Trade Union Advisory Committee Meeting, 2 April 1960, Ulster Unionist Council files, D/1327/11/6/4, PRONI.
[65] 'Mr J. O. Baillie addressing the Ulster Unionist Labour Association', January 1961, Ulster Unionist Council files. D/1327/11/6/8, PRONI. For more information, see Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon & Henry Patterson (eds.), *Northern Ireland, 1921-2001: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London: Serif, 2002); Henry Patterson, 'The Decline of the Collaborators: The Ulster Unionist Labour Association and Post-War Unionist Politics', in *Essays in Irish Labour History: A Festshrift for Elizabeth and John W. Boyle*, eds. Francis Devine, Fintan Lane & Niamh Puirseil (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 238-56.
[66] 'Mr J. O. Baillie addressing the Ulster Unionist Labour Association', January 1961, Ulster Unionist Council files, D/1327/11/6/8, PRONI.
[67] 'Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at Stormont Castle', 22 February 1962, CAB/4/1188, PRONI.
[68] 'Ulster Labour and the Sixties (NILP Election Manifesto)', included in Cabinet Meeting Minutes, 29 March 1962, CAB/4/1190/4, PRONI.
[69] 'Subject 3, Grant to the Irish Linen Guild', Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle, 29 March 1962, CAB/4/1190, PRONI.
[70] Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held at Stormont Castle, 24 July 1962, CAB/4/1200, PRONI.

And the NILP continued to be a threat. The files of Stanley McMaster's campaign to hold the East Belfast seat at Westminster[71] reflect a campaign that was extremely nervous about the threat posed by the NILP: urgent requests were sent out for additional help, and speeches were prepared on the 'new spirit of co-operation' between trade unions and management that the Unionists were working to create.[72] This was a new sort of Unionism, designed to respond to a new sort of threat.

However, in the end the NILP could never quite overcome the sectarianism of Northern Ireland politics, and just when it looked possible that it finally might, the onset of the Troubles made it almost an impossibility.[73] The NILP would struggle on into the 1970s, fighting to retain a cross-community, working class support base. In 1973 its leaders would meet with the Northern Ireland Secretary and press them to intervene further in the economy. It endorsed the creation of a power-sharing executive and offered to help build bridges with the government in Dublin through its relationship with the Irish Labour Party.[74] Its support for the Union made it toxic for many nationalists, and its support for some form of power-sharing made it toxic to unionists who felt their culture and identity under threat. There was simply no way forward, and the party largely disappeared by the end of the 1970s. But the party had had a deep impact on Northern Irish politics, forcing the Unionists to fight for working class votes by protecting industry and attempting to slow down the pace of deindustrialisation.

Discrimination in the Workforce & The Response

As mentioned above, Harland & Wolff's workforce was almost exclusively Protestant. According to the Reverend Brian Brady, writing in the 1980s, 'Harland and Wolff is *the* (emphasis in the original) symbol of anti-Catholic bigotry in Northern Ireland and has been such for generations'.[75] What did that mean in practice for the Catholic working class of Belfast? Pilib Ó Ruanaí grew up in the Short Strand in the 1960s, the only majority Catholic community on the East side of Belfast, within walking distance of the Sirocco Works and the H&W shipyards. Ruanaí says 'I don't think there was anyone, as far as I know, employed there (at H&W) from Short Strand. We used to see those people walk up and down the road at lunchtime or after work going home to the Newtownards Road or Castlereagh Road or wherever. People didn't think much of it, they didn't pay much attention to the fact that nobody from the area was employed there.'[76]

Norman McMaster, a Protestant working in the shipyard, says that discrimination actually deepened in the early years of the Troubles. McMaster attempted to help his Catholic co-workers, but to no avail: 'There was a brave few Catholics worked down in the ship-yard. The time the Troubles started the stagers came around and put them all out. You felt sorry for

[71] Westminster or UK elections were often known as the 'Imperial' elections in this period, to contrast with the Parliamentary (NI) elections.
[72] 'Files from 1964 East Belfast Campaign', Ulster Unionist Council files, D/1327/16/2/57, PRONI.
[73] Aaron Edwards, *A History of the Northern Ireland Labour Party: Democratic Socialism and Sectarianism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).
[74] 'Note of Meeting between the Secretary of State and Deputation from the Northern Ireland Labour Party', 13 March 1973, Northern Ireland Office files, CJ/4/313, The National Archives, (hereafter TNA).
[75] Brian Brady, *Short Brothers Limited Belfast: A Case Study in Anti-Catholic Discrimination* (Washington DC: Irish National Caucus, 1983), 3.
[76] Pilib Ó Ruanaí, Interviewed by Hugh Corcoran for the 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project, Duchas Oral History Archive (translated from Irish by Duchas).

them. They were going to their work, innocent people, and you were trying to wire them off, 'away on down that way there, the stagers are coming in that way'.[77]

The most famous sectarian incident in the postwar history of the shipyard occurred in June 1970. After a sectarian shooting of a Protestant shipyard worker in the working class Ballymacarrett area on the weekend, Catholic workers arrived at work on Monday 29 June to threats from a small group of extremists and warnings from Protestant moderates to leave for their own safety.[78] One Catholic who had worked at Harland & Wolff for twenty years told the Irish Times: 'I was working on the cabin of a ship just after the 10:30 break when a group of hostile-looking men came and threatened me. They said: 'You're a Fenian bastard. If you don't go you'll get what our boys got over the weekend''.[79] Most of the approximately 500 Catholic Harland & Wolff employees walked off the job. Emergency meetings followed in both London and Belfast meetings including the Northern Irish Prime Minister Chichester-Clark, trade union representatives, and the new Tory Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling. An 'industrial peace committee' was set up. On Wednesday, the Chairman of Harland & Wolff visited the yard and warned that those making threats would face 'instant dismissal', and by Thursday many of the Catholic workers had returned. However, Home Office reports stated that 300 workers, mostly Catholic, had reported to local employment exchanges by the end of the week.[80] Many would never set foot in the shipyard again, and Harland & Wolff's workforce would remain almost entirely Protestant through the Troubles.

This level of overt discrimination was a real problem for the Unionist leadership. The maintenance of Protestant supremacy in key industries like Harland & Wolff was at the core of their promise to the Protestant working classes. But at time when they needed Westminster support to prop up the shipyard, they could not be seen to endorse such sectarian violence. A Foreign Office note on the economic situation in Northern Ireland was fairly blunt about the nature of the dilemma:

> The rate of unemployment in Northern Ireland continues to be (…) significantly higher than in the rest of the UK. Before 1969 this problem was always resolved by the Protestants taking most of the available jobs leaving the Catholics to live on the dole. The new elements in the situation are that Westminster is no longer prepared to turn a blind eye to such discrimination and that the Protestants themselves are suffering from unemployment on a scale which is unfamiliar to them.[81]

Deindustrialisation was thus at the core of several distinct processes which collectively were destabilising the traditional assumptions of unionist Northern Ireland and sending it hurtling down into violence.

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[77] Norman McMaster, Interviewed by Jackie McBurney for the 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project, Duchas Oral History Archive.
[78] Home Office note, 'Intimidation of Catholics at Harland & Wolff', 1970, CJ/4/27, TNA.
[79] Clipping, 'Peace Bid to Combat Shipyard Conflict', *The Irish Times*, 30 June 1970, page 1. Retrieved from Home Office files, CJ/4/27, TNA.
[80] Home Office note: 'Intimidation of Catholics at Harland & Wolff', 1970, CJ/4/27, TNA.
[81] Letter from M. Hodge (Republic of Ireland Department) to Mr Harding, 12 August 1976, Foreign and Commonwealth Office files, Northern Ireland Economy, FCO 87/591, TNA.

Brian Grogan was a Catholic from Ballymurphy, which was originally a fairly mixed area of West Belfast, and Grogan remembered doing house repairs on the Shankill Road as a teenager in the late 1950s.[82] He got a job at Harland & Wolff in 1969, working for a subcontractor and tasked with cleaning welds and cutting down on rust. As he did not work directly for Harland & Wolff, he was a second-class employee within the shipyard, there was no sick pay or benefits, and employment could be unstable. Grogan had to walk by the union huts on his way into the shipyard each morning, many of which were decorated with the symbols and slogans of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). The daily pattern of sectarian violence would affect the atmosphere in the yard: 'just for an example, if there had been a couple of cops shot dead you could feel the atmosphere in that hut. Now there was a different atmosphere if it was a couple of Catholics shot dead. They were more relaxed, as if it never happened.'[83] However, Grogan had a good personal relationship with his Protestant co-workers, and they would often have a drink together after work on the neutral ground of Belfast city centre.'[84]

It was the process of deindustrialisation, however, that brought Grogan face-to-face with overt workplace discrimination. By 1980, Grogan was on unemployment benefits and travelled to the union officials every fortnight to 'sign the union book' and pay his dues, which was supposed to put him in line for any available work at the yard. He did this for at least a year and a half, and found that others were getting work instead of him.[85] He took his case to the Fair Employment Agency after it became clear that he was being discriminated against based on his religion. What really upset him was that he had to fight not with his employer, but with his union: 'I suppose it was worse because it was your union, and you expect the union to be on your side.'[86]

Although Harland & Wolff was a particularly egregious case, Catholic discrimination was a fact of life across many sectors of Northern Irish industry, and it persisted well into the era of the Troubles. According to a 1984 report by York City Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin looking into employment patterns and practices in Northern Ireland, the engineering firm Sirocco had only four Catholic employees out of a total workforce of 850 in the early 1980s, despite the factory being located next to the Catholic Short Strand neighbourhood on the east bank of the Lagan.[87] Goldin cited statistics from studies produced by the Reverend Brian Brady, a leading Nationalist figure based at St. Joseph's College of Education with connections to the Irish National Caucus.[88] These figures suggested that Catholics made up only 11.7 per cent of employment in auto & aircraft manufacture and assembly, 16 per cent in general and Mechanical engineering, 19.8 per cent in instrument engineering, and were even underrepresented in textiles, where they made up 23.6 per cent of the workforce.[89]

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[82] Brian Grogan, Interviewed 4 September 2002: Duchas Oral History Archive, Falls Community Council miscellaneous interview collection (viewable by appointment only).
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] 'Report on Northern Ireland, January 1985, Harrison J. Goldin', copy included in Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.
[88] Brady, *Short Brothers Limited Belfast.*
[89] Brian Brady, *Anti-Catholic Discrimination in Manufacturing Industry in Northern Ireland – the American Dimension.* Submission to the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee on Irish Affairs, Washington (July 22, 1981) – cited by 'Report on Northern Ireland, January 1985, Harrison J. Goldin', CENT/3/31A, PRONI.

But why was a New York City comptroller writing a report in employment discrimination in Northern Ireland, and why does this matter? As countless other scholars have noted, American public opinion and the role of Irish-American monetary support and political pressure was critical to the process by which Northern Ireland moved haltingly towards peace in the 1980s and 90s.[90] As an Irish-American leader, Comptroller Goldin recognised that the best way to force change with regard to Catholic discrimination was to threaten the already fragile Northern Ireland economy. So, in addition to the report, he proposed a set of fair employment guidelines for American companies with operations and investments in Northern Ireland.[91] These guidelines, which became known as the McBride Principles (named after a founder of Amnesty International), were modelled after similar guidance for American companies investing in apartheid South Africa.[92] The principles included 'the banning of provocative religious or political emblems from the workplace', the development of training programmes to prepare minority employees for skilled jobs, and increasing the representation of religious minorities in 'managerial, supervisory, administrative, clerical, and technical jobs'.[93] . Goldin encouraged companies to divest if they could not guarantee that their subsidiaries or investment partners adhered to the Principles.[94]

Recognising the potentially catastrophic economic impact of this divestment to the already fragile Northern Ireland economy, as well as the damage to the reputation of the direct rule government, British officials sprung into action, drafting a report responding to Goldin's allegations and sending representatives to New York City to meet with elected officials and members of the Catholic hierarchy.[95] The leading Nationalist politician John Hume agreed to speak directly with the Catholic Archbishop of New York, making the argument that any divestment would make the economic and unemployment situation for Catholics even worse.[96] The letter from New York Mayor Koch was similar, noting that industries employing large numbers of Catholics (like linen) had been in decline in recent years and that 'the investment by American companies in Northern Ireland has in general played a major part in furthering equality of opportunity'.[97] The 'medium term' goal was to 'discredit' the Goldin report, with a three-pronged approach focussing on New York City Council, the federal administration, and US companies.[98] The draft response to Goldin's report was abrasive and direct, arguing that his

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[90] Paul Collier, 'Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Implications for Policy', *The World Bank Working Papers* no. 19 (2000); Josiah Beeman & Robert Mahony, 'The Institutional Churches and the Process of Reconciliation in Northern Ireland: Recent Progress in Presbyterian-Roman Catholic Relationships' in *Northern Ireland and the Politics of Reconciliation*, eds. Dermot Keogh & Michael Haltzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 153-54.

[91] Beeman & Mahony, 'The Institutional Churches and the Process of Reconciliation in Northern Ireland', 154.

[92] Niall O'Dowd, 'Behind the MacBride Principles,' *Irish America* (November-December 1985): 15-17.

[93] Briefing note, 'The McBride Principles', 19 February 1985, Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.

[94] Letter from Harrison Goldin to Frank Kennedy, 13 April 1985, Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.

[95] 'Divestment from USA, Note of a Meeting Held on 22 February 1985 in Conference Room A, Netherleigh', Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.

[96] Letter from R. S. Reeve, Political Affairs Division, 20 February 1985, Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.

[97] Letter from R. G. Cooper to Mayor Ed Koch, 19 February 1985, Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.

[98] 'Divestment from USA, Note of a Meeting Held on 22 February 1985', Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.

work was 'selective, unbalanced and simplistic', defined by 'superficiality, lack of balance and plain dishonesty'.[99] Nevertheless, everyone in government recognised that things needed to change.

The Goldin Report was not the first time that Americans had successfully placed pressures on Northern Ireland on the question of employment discrimination. In 1983, a number of members of the US Congress, backed by the lobbying efforts of the Irish National Caucus, fought to oppose the US Airforce decision to purchase the Sherpa freight aircraft from Short Brothers. The effort was unsuccessful, but recognising the need to placate Irish-American opinion, Short Brothers (at this point still owned by the UK government) announced that it would build the Sherpa at a new plant on the site of the De Lorean factory, at Dunmurry in the south-western outskirts, a majority Catholic area.[100]

The direct rule government in Northern Ireland was determined to downplay the level of economic disadvantage and discrimination faced by Catholics in order to prevent American divestment. But in February 1985 the Department for Finance and Personnel produced a short paper on 'Religion and Unemployment in Northern Ireland' which suggested that Goldin's report was not far from the truth.[101] As noted by A J Merifield, 'we may fault the American paper (the Goldin Report) for the way it attributes some of the causes of deprivation and proscribes change, but it is difficult not to accept a good deal of their analysis about the depth of deprivation. (…) it is not easy to dismiss it out of hand.'[102]

Discrimination of Catholics in industrial work persisted well into the era of the Troubles. In a context of deindustrialisation, solving the problem was not easy: the pie was getting smaller, not bigger, and giving more of the pie to one group meant taking away from the other group. As we will see, government was already deeply afraid that Protestant job losses would spur violence and rebellion. However, deindustrialisation made Northern Ireland dependent on American investment, and thus more susceptible to American/Irish-American pressure to change this situation. Deindustrialisation made discrimination harder to fix, but also harder to ignore.

Deindustrialisation & Violence in One Neighbourhood

The Shankill, a Protestant neighbourhood in West Belfast, is one of the most famous in all of Ireland, holding a special place in the blood-stained modern history of the island. During the Troubles, the Shankill became notorious as a breeding ground for loyalist para-militaries, the most famous of whom were the Shankill Butchers, who killed at least 23 people in the late 1970s. Forty years on from that terrible period, 'Peace Walls' remain in place between the predominately loyalist Shankill and the nationalist Falls district, but the violence has largely passed away.

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[99] 'Report on Northern Ireland by Comptroller Goldin, New York City Council – A Response', 5 April 1985, Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.
[100] 'Report on Northern Ireland, January 1985, Harrison J. Goldin', page 21, copy included in Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.
[101] 'Religion and Unemployment in Northern Ireland': report produced by K.F. Sweeney, Social Division DFP, 12 February 1985, included in Disinvestment - The McBride Principles files, CENT/3/31A, PRONI.
[102] Letter from A.J. Merifield to Mr. Bloomfield, re Employment Opportunities, 14 February 1985, Disinvestment - The McBride Principles, CENT/3/31A files, PRONI.

Figure 4: The Shankill Road (creative commons)

The Shankill was particularly negatively affected by the structural economic changes of the 1960s and 1970s. In the pre-war era, many Shankill households had relied on a combination of employment to make ends meet, with women working in linen and the men in the Harland & Wolff shipyards, construction, or other manual labour jobs. These multiple incomes provided a safety blanket in downturns, particularly in quiet times at the shipyard. The serious contraction in both industries left the Shankill in a bind with both a terrible local job market and lacking a safety valve because of Northern Ireland's wider economic malaise.[103] The Shankill's population thus began to decline in the 1950s, and dropped by 50 per cent between 1971 and 1985 alone, a rate that was more than twice that of Belfast as a whole, which of course had a significant impact on the fabric of the community.[104]

[103] 'Ministry of Commerce official brief for the Minister of State, Mr Van Straubenzee', 1 June 1973, Ministry of Commerce files, COM/69/80, PRONI.
[104] *A Social & Economic Profile of the Households in the Lower Shankill* (Belfast: Belfast Centre for the Unemployed: 1988), 16 (Retrieved from the Linen Hall Library, Belfast).

Figure 5: The Lower Shankill, 2017 (photo taken by author, 2017)

The outbreak of the Troubles in the late 1960s thus came at a time when the economic and social fabric of the Shankill had already experienced serious disruption. The question of what role the Troubles played in Northern Ireland's overall economic challenges, and vice versa, is obviously a complex one, and there remains no definitive answer. Despite a link being drawn in a number of other examples of civil conflict in other parts of the world,[105] Robert White and J. L. P. Thompson have argued that economic conditions did not influence the timing or intensity of violence in Northern Ireland. In fact, they find that increased unemployment correlates with somewhat reduced levels of violence.[106] However, James Honaker has disaggregated unemployment into separate rates for Catholics and Protestants a given area, and when this is done, 'unemployment becomes a significant causal mechanism for the intensity of conflict'.[107] Qualitative studies have found a similar connection.[108] As noted by Maura

[105] See for example Douglas Hibbs Jr, *Mass Political Violence: A Cross-National Analysis* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1973); Nicholas Sambanis, 'Do Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes? A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry (Part 1)', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45 (2001): 259-282; Edward Muller & Mitchell Seligson, 'Inequality and Insurgency', *American Political Science Review* 81, no. 2 (1987): 425-452.
[106] J. L. P. Thompson, 'Deprivation and Political Violence in Northern Ireland, 1922-1985. A Time-Series Analysis', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 33 (1989): 676-699; Robert White, 'On Measuring Political Violence: Northern Ireland, 1969 to 1980', *American Sociological Review* 58 (1993): 575-585.
[107] James Honaker, 'Unemployment and Violence in Northern Ireland: A Missing Data Model for Ecological Inference', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 2005.
[108] Kevin Boyle, Tom Hadden and Paddy Hillyard, *Ten Years in Northern Ireland* (Nottingham: The Cobden Trust, 1980); Joseph O'Donoghue & Mary O'Donoghue, 'Towards Understanding Group Conflict in Northern Ireland Conflict', in *Dimensions in Irish Terrorism*, ed. Alan O'Day (New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1994).

Sheehan and Mike Tomlinson in their exploration of class and religious discrimination in conflict-ridden parts of Northern Ireland, 'the overall unemployment rate of almost 20% in the North provided a constant source of out of work recruits for both the IRA and the Protestant extremists'.[109]

Governments, both in Stormont and Whitehall, were constantly being reminded of the relationship between deindustrialisation and sectarian violence. In January 1970, key trade union leader Billy Blease rang an official in the Home Office to warn that government inaction on redundancies risked causing increased political tension. According to Blease, trade unions 'were deeply worried about the consequences for the industrial situation in Northern Ireland of any further redundancies. A year ago, they might have been able to cope with this problem; but unless something was done, they would find it very difficult to hold the situation on the shop floor'.[110] Of course, it is possible that Blease was using spectre of violence as a threat to get the attention of the Home Office and encourage government action on the economy, but the threat would not have been effective if the relationship seemed implausible or was not already on the mind of Home Office officials. And indeed, it was on their mind. A secret 'political appraisal' of the Northern Ireland situation prepared for the Home Secretary noted that 'the overall effect of a worsening economic situation on the political stability of the Province is difficult to estimate (but) it is likely to be serious'.[111]

But just as trade unions were connecting deindustrialisation to violence in order to force the government to intervene economically, the government was linking violence to deindustrialisation in order to put pressure on the paramilitaries and make the public aware of the continuing cost of 'disorder'. In 1970 and 1971, the government made several attempts to place a specific price tag on the violence: first they commissioned the Touche Ross Management Consultancy to interview corporate leaders and prepare a report on the cost to manufacturing, but they were not satisfied when the report found the impact to be 'remarkably slight'.[112] An Auditor General report put the cost to the Northern Ireland government in the 1969-70 fiscal year at £5.47 million, but this only included verifiable expenses; an internal study at Stormont put the figure at approximately £14 million over a slightly longer time period.[113] A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) report in September 1970 used government figures on tourism losses and insurance claims to come up with a figure of £44 million over two years.[114] More than a decade later, the Northern Ireland Office would again attempt to make a calculation, this time including all additional expenditure on law and order, including prisons, police, and the courts above and beyond per capita spending in Wales. For the fiscal year 1982-83, the estimate was the truly incredible figure of £290 million, rising to £323 million by 1986-87.[115]

The overall relationship between deindustrialisation and violence is thus a complex one, open to debate and easy to twist in order to fit different arguments. But on the Shankill, one of

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[109] Sheehan & Tomlinson, *The Unequal Unemployed,* 84.
[110] Letter from Oliver Wright to Neil Cairncross, 29 January 1970, Home Office files, CJ/4/22, TNA.
[111] Ministerial Note, 'Northern Ireland, A Political Appraisal', undated (probably January 1970), CJ/4/22, TNA.
[112] 'Has Civil Disorder Affected Manufacturing Industry in Northern Ireland', report by Touche Ross & Company, Management Consultants, June 1971, CJ/4/217, TNA.
[113] Letter from L. S. Duncan, NI Cabinet Office to I. M. Burns, Home Office files, 4 January 1971, CJ/4/217, TNA.
[114] Clipping, '£44m. – the Cost of Two Years', *Belfast News-Letter*, 23 September 1970, retrieved from Home Office files, CJ/4/217, TNA.
[115] 'QPH Radical Review: Costs of a Divided Society', 10 December 1986, Department of Finance and Personnel files, DFP/19/12, PRONI.

Northern Ireland's most troubled streets, the relationship is undeniable.[116] Four of the forty remaining businesses in the Shankill received bomb damage during the first five years of the Troubles.[117] The Troubles exacerbated the unemployment problems in West Belfast because the road blocks put in place along the primary interfaces made it very difficult for residents of the Falls and Shankill to travel to other parts of the city for work. Even when travel across interfaces was possible, it was often avoided out of fear. A letter from an official in the Manpower Services Department summarises the problem: 'Their reluctance (understandable in present circumstances) to move into or through what they regard as alien or positively hostile territory is not only depriving existing industry of manpower resources it badly needs but is also postponing the date of a solution to the problem of unemployment in West Belfast.'[118] And, according to a 1973 Ministry of Commerce brief, businesses, particularly those controlled by foreign investors, were also afraid to locate in the area because of its violent reputation.[119]

But the flow of causation also went the other way. Although few in the government were willing to explicitly acknowledge that poverty helped spur violence, any observant person could notice that the worst violence and tension tended to be found along the interface of declining working-class areas. Paddy Devlin, a major figure in the Social Democratic and Labour Party, emphasised this point: 'Everyone was looking for jobs. Those who threw stones and bombs did not realise that the physical destruction they caused also wrecked the Province's economy. But then they had no stake in its economic prosperity – they had no jobs. They had no motive for looking after their own property.'[120] Unless the people of the Shankill were given reason to hope for employment and a better life for their children, it would be hard to prevent folks from joining the UVF or UDA.

The economic situation facing West Belfast was not simply that there were not enough jobs, but also that the community was not well equipped for the jobs that did exist. In 1973, the Department of Employment attempted to place forty-nine unemployed men in jobs at Mackie's engineering, the largest single employer in West Belfast. Of those, nine men were accepted and hired on the spot; twelve men were deemed unsuitable or unavailable for the shifts required; twelve men refused an offer, and sixteen failed to attend the interview. Among the twelve that refused, three claimed to be 'afraid of the area'. The DoE report speculated that poor working conditions and a lack of tea breaks could be at least a part of Mackie's trouble attracting and retaining labour. Then in February 1974, company Director Leslie Mackie wrote to the Department of Manpower to complain that the company was losing skilled workers a rate faster than could be replaced. In less than three months, Mackie's had lost 120 fitters, 11 turners, 13

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[116] Graham Brownlow, 'Business and Labour Since 1945', in *Ulster since 1600: Politics, Economy, and Society,* eds. Liam Kennedy & Philip Ollerenshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 295-96.
[117] 'Brief for Mr Van Straubenzee', 1 June 1973, COM/69/80, PRONI.
[118] Letter from Department of Manpower Services to Basil McIvor, Minister of Education, undated (1973), West Belfast industrial interests files, DMS/2/7, PRONI.
[119] 'Brief for Mr Van Straubenzee', 1 June 1973, COM/69/80, PRONI.
[120] 'Notes from Minister of State's Meeting with Delegations from West Belfast to Discuss Future Use of West Bog Meadows', 30 July 1974, DMS/2/7, PRONI. In his interview with the Duchas archives, Billy Hutchinson – a prominent Shankill loyalist and currently the leader of the aggressively loyalist, left-leaning Progressive Unionist Party – speaks of the way unemployment drove Shankill men into the paramilitaries. Growing up in the 1950s and 60s, he remembers that many Shankill men enlisted in the British Army, leaving to fight in Korea and Aden, but then failing to find a job on their return, and with their sense of betrayal and military training they were ideal UDA and UVF recruits. To the extent that men on his street had jobs, it was usually at Mackie's, while the women worked at Edenberry and Ewarts linen mills. Billy Hutchinson, Interviewed by Lisa Faulkner for 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project, Duchas Oral History Archive.

electricians, 94 apprentices, and 240 machinists. Mackie blamed the losses primarily on poaching by Harland & Wolff and Short Brothers (now Bombardier Aerospace). Drew Johnston, from the Shankill, worked at Mackie's during this period and remembers that it was sometimes difficult and even dangerous getting to and from work between of the threat of violence. One of his co-workers and friends at Mackie's had lost both legs in the Abercorn bomb and sometimes the army would help protect him on his walk home. Apparently 'on two occasions they fired on the workers coming out of Mackie's and injured three of them.'[121]

For those with strong engineering or technical skills, there were still many jobs in Belfast to choose from, and almost all provided tea breaks. Unfortunately though, more than 70 per cent of Shankill children left the local schools in the 1960s and 1970s with no qualifications whatsoever, lacking in both technical and academic training.[122] The local schools were underfunded, segregated, and completely devoid of after school programming. Deindustrialisation had changed the nature of the labour market but the education system had not adapted, instead continuing to send out unqualified school leavers for whom there would never be any jobs.[123] Thus the Shankill had, by a combination of structural economic change, inadequate social services, and sectarian violence, sunk into a desperate hole by the 1970s.

It is of course hard to separate the economic and sectarian causes of population displacement, as violence and job loss fed each other in an inexorable downward spiral in many troubled areas of Northern Ireland. But there was more than just violence and its immediate effects driving the exodus from the Shankill. To the extent that new jobs were being created in Northern Ireland during the early years of the Troubles, they were being created in relatively peaceful, almost entirely Protestant satellite towns like Ballymena, Larne, Carrickfergus and Antrim.[124] The largely Protestant exodus to these satellite towns has played a major role in transforming the sectarian balance in Belfast and in the social collapse of working class Protestant communities in the inner city. As pointed out by Chestnutt, Protestants had 'greater mobility and wider choice of alternative accommodation in the suburbs and growth towns'.[125] This dispersal was actually promoted by the Northern Ireland government, most notably with the scheme to develop the large, predominately Protestant 'Craigavon' new town to the south-west of Belfast.[126] And of course, those who had left were often those with education and skills, and thus were those who would have most able to support and strengthen the economic recovery of the area.[127] Pete Shirlow has argued that the Protestant working class was 'residualised', left behind in decaying, inner city neighbourhoods with limited community amenities or leadership, cut off from sources of well-paying employment and from the leadership of the Protestant

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[121] Drew Johnston, Interviewed by John Dougan for the 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project, Duchas Oral History Archive.
[122] Ruth Taillon, *Who Cares?: Childcare and Women's Lives in the Shankill Today: A Report for the Greater Shankill Development Agency* (University of Ulster, Centre for Research on Women, 1992), 39.
[123] For a further discussion on the nature of this problem, see Nadine Dolby; Greg Dimitriadis & Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor in New Time*s.
[124] Bill Rolston, Mike Tomlinson & Geraldine McAteer, *Unemployment in West Belfast: The Obair Report* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1988).
[125] R. V. Chestnutt, *Dividing a Housed Community: The Effects of Increasing Sectarian Polarisation on Public Housing policy in Belfast, 1968– 1988* (MSc thesis: Institute of Housing, Belfast College of Technology, 1988), 26.
[126] Martin McCleery, 'The Creation of the 'New City' of Craigavon: A Case Study of Politics, Planning and Modernisation in Northern Ireland in the Early 1960s', *Irish Political Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012): 89–109.
[127] Taillon, *Who Cares?,* 8.

community.[128] A 1989 study, once again completed by the Touche Ross consultancy, found 'that it is crucial to the area's regeneration that it is able to retain its present population, particularly those in the younger, economically active households and devise measures to encourage younger families to stay'.[129] Deindustrialisation had produced a spatial realignment of the Belfast urban area, and neighbourhoods like the Shankill had been left behind. Government had allowed this to happen. What, then could government do to help reverse the process?

Community Development Under Unionist Control?

In its final, dying days, there was a considerable pressure placed the Unionist Northern Ireland Government on expand community relations and outreach. The Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (CRC) was established in 1969 as an 'independent', 'bi-partisan' entity: according to Ministry of Community Relations (MCR) documents, 'the keynote of the Commission's work is reconciliation, acting as an intermediary who should be acceptable to both sides in a conflict.' The focus was conflict resolution and on what were assumed to be the proximate causes of the conflict – sectarian animosity and misunderstanding. Underlying causes, such as unemployment, poverty, or even discrimination and police brutality were not mentioned as focusses of this new entity.[130] However, the following year, the government agreed to expand the Community Relations Commission (CRC), and 17 field workers were hired to work directly with local communities.

Who exactly were they going to be working with? A variety of new local organisations were being formed in urban areas: some were clearly sectarian, but most were organised around neighbourhood or church and were focussed on improving employment opportunities, fighting against a housing redevelopment scheme, or getting money to repair a community centre. In fact, far from being sectarian, often these organisations were created to divert people away from the paramilitaries. Their creation also reflected deeper structural changes in working class communities. At the heart of Northern Ireland working class communities, especially the Protestant ones, had long been two key institutions: the churches, and the trade unions. However, deindustrialisation had hollowed out the trade unions and generational & cultural change had weakened the hold of the churches. At Home Secretary Reginald Maudling's meeting with Protestant church leaders in July 1970, ministry officials noted that 'the influence of the churches including the Roman Catholic church was much diminished and that they could no longer pretend to having (sic) a strong influence on the behaviour of the community at large'.[131]

The government wanted to use the development of these local organisations to its advantage, and saw the CRC as a tool by which to marshal these local organisations to deal with

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[128] Northern Ireland Assembly, Committee for Education, *Educational Disadvantage and the Protestant Working Class: A Call to Action, Official Report,* 14 December 2011, accessed at http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/official-reports/education/2011-2012/educationaldisadvantage14.12.11.pdf.

[129] Touche Ross Management Consultants, *Greater Shankill Population and Housing Study, Stage I Investigation*, (1989), Appendix C, paragraph 15, cited in Taillon, *Who Cares?*, 10-11.

[130] Ministerial Note: 'The Ministry of Community Relations and the Community Relations Commission – Roles', December 1971, Ministry of Community Relations files, DCR/1/35, PRONI.

[131] 'Note for the Record: The Home's Secretary's Meeting with Representatives of the Protestant churches', 24 July 1970, CJ/4/21, TNA.

sectarianism and social dysfunction. Just as in Oldham, the field workers were to focus on 'community development', which was defined by the MCR as the following:

> Encouraging people on both sides of the sectarian divide to involve themselves in community problems and helping them to acquire the ability to deal with these. The object (of community development) was to help people see that their immediate problems were social ones rather than religious ones and that they were something which the people themselves could tackle directly and successfully.[132]

But if the goal was now to divert attention away from sectarianism and towards the 'tackling of social problems', how substantive would the government aid be in the tackling of those problems? As we have seen in Oldham, the community development approach required significant manpower and resources just for a small, neighbourhood level project. And so the following year, the CRC was back to ask for significantly more money – between £350,000 and £400,000,[133] so that it could train community development workers to 'develop institutions at local level through which people can participate' across all of Northern Ireland.[134] They wanted to increase their workforce to over 100, to expand their geographic reach, and to lead the entire 'Social Needs' programme, which had been approved in 1970 and essentially involved the provision of small grants to help neighbourhoods to help themselves.[135] They made a hard sell, with the Director of the CRC arguing in a letter to the Ministry that 'the whole credibility of Government in the field of community relations depends on their willingness to allow us to come to grips with the situation in some significant scale'.[136] In a brief to the minister on the issue, departmental staff argued that an enhanced community relations action was key to broader efforts to heal the sectarian divide and in turn protect the government's credibility at a time when it was coming under intense pressure from Westminster.

> In the circumstances of Northern Ireland today it would be particularly desirable that the Government should be seen to be associated with sympathetic and helpful approaches to community problems. It is a central feature of the Government's own approach to community relations that minority distrust and suspicion of the Government should be shown to be unfounded and should be dispelled.[137]

However, the MCR feared for its own role, noting that the expanded Commission 'would very much reduce the present functions of the Ministry, to such an extent as to call in question the

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[132] Ministerial Note, 'Community Development Expansion: Background and Summary', 25 November 1971, DCR/1/35, PRONI.
[133] Northern Ireland CRC, 'A Community Development Programme for Northern Ireland', 17 November 1971, DCR/1/35, PRONI.
[134] Letter from Maurice Hayes, CRC Director, to Prime Minister Faulkner, 19 November 1971, DCR/1/35, PRONI.
[135] Ministerial Note, 'Community Relations Commission – Current Issues', 4 January 1972, DCR/1/35, PRONI.
[136] Letter from Maurice Hayes, CRC Director, to W. Slinger, Ministry of Community Relations, 19 November 1971, DCR/1/35, PRONI.
[137] Brief for Minister, 'Expansion of Community Development' (undated, likely November 1971), DCR/1/35, PRONI.

continuing need for a separate Ministry of Community Relations at all'.[138] But it is also clear that the government desperately wanted to receive credit for the improvement of inner-city social conditions, particularly in Catholic areas, and did not want to share that credit with an 'independent' entity like the CRC. In a ministerial note on the respective roles of the CRC and MCR, the importance of the government receiving credit was emphasised:

> The essence of the Ministry's role is that it is part of Government.[139] (…) The keynote of the Ministry's work is therefore to show the sympathetic side of Government to the community and to ensure that the Government receives credit for goodwill. By winning trust and confidence from recalcitrant groups the Ministry hopes to show these groups that Government Departments – and thus the Government as a whole – are not to be condemned out of hand but deserve to be judged on their merits.[140]

The government needed the credit, and it also needed control over the process of defining 'social problems' so that the Unionists were not implicated in causing those problems. Independent community development work could lead to radical critiques of government, as the Community Development Project (CDP) would do in England, which would further damage the legitimacy of the Unionists' new claims to represent all people in Northern Ireland. Included in the research files of the CRC was a long article, 'Strategies for Change at the Local Level – Some Reflections', written by an English community development officer named John Benington. As we will see, John Benington would lead the CDP in Hillfields, Coventry, where he would end up concluding that poverty was an inevitable consequence of the market system and that a revolutionary economic change was necessary. This sort of thinking was certainly not welcome in Unionist Northern Ireland.[141] Also, a CRC working paper on community development in Northern Ireland identified 'institutional violence' as one of the driving forces behind the terrible situation in inner-city areas: 'the imposition of redevelopment and urban motorway plans, internment, and an inability to provide adequate amenities, social services, and employment in many 'working-class' communities'.[142] The last thing that the beleaguered Faulkner government needed was to be accused of institutional violence against Catholics in West Belfast by its own appointees.

Facing considerable resistance to his proposals, the CRC Director Maurice Hayes resigned February, and the imposition of Direct Rule brought the whole debate over expansion to a temporary halt.[143] In its dying days, the Unionist Government had turned to the idea of community development as a potential panacea: it could rebuild relations with Catholics, improve the social conditions in inner city areas, and reduce violence. It would help avoid the collapse of the Government. In the end, though, the costs and risks of a full-scale expansion of

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[138] Letter from Basil McIvor to Maurice Hayes, 14 January 1972, DCR/1/35, PRONI.
[139] In contrast to that of the Community Relations Commission.
[140] Ministerial Note 'The Ministry of Community Relations and the Community Relations Commission – Roles', December 1971, DCR/1/35, PRONI.
[141] Article Draft, 'Strategies for Change at the Local Level – Some Reflections' by John Benington, 1973, CREL/2/8, PRONI.
[142] CRC Working Paper, 'Community Development and Community Relations in Northern Ireland – Some Proposals', page 3, 1974, CREL/2/8, PRONI.
[143] Ibid, page 7, CREL/2/8, PRONI.

CRC-led community development were more than initially expected, and the government realised that it was unlikely to benefit in the eyes of the public or the eyes of Westminster.

Despite the reluctance to grant the CRC such power and money, the Unionist government had indeed embraced the value of shifting responsibility for solving those problems onto local organisations. They would thus attempt community development on the cheap. In 1971 and 1972, CRC compiled a list of every 'community group', and every 'youth club' in Belfast, broken down by ward, and did research into the various categories of social challenges in each area: housing and redevelopment, the elderly, youth, community relations, education & training, et cetera.[144] This information was then used by CRC staff in their work on the ground with various organisations. The ministry, as always wanting to be seen as the Santa Claus, and maintained direct correspondence with many of these local organisations, soliciting applications for community projects under the 'Social Needs' legislation and encouraging new local initiatives. These efforts were actually extended after the imposition of Direct Rule: the new Tory ministers were aware of the distrust that they faced from both sides in 1972, and they wanted to be seen to be taking an active interest in the social well-being of Northern Irish communities. Often, they received pressure from the British Army, which more than any other government institution recognised the social, political, and ultimately physical cost of poverty and economic abandonment in the divided parts of Belfast. For example, Major R. L. T. Jones of the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment wrote to MCR officials pleading with them to fund the construction of a community centre for the Mayo Street Youth Club in the Shankill, signing off by writing: 'I am sure you will agree that this is an area in great need: the people are willing to help themselves and I am sure we must help them to do so'.[145] And so, meetings were arranged between William van Straubenzee, the Northern Ireland minister with responsibly for the MCR, and many of the local organisations in question. The correspondence and meeting notes from these efforts make for interesting reading, and reveal both the efforts of government to move the responsibility for solving social problems onto the shoulders of local organisations, but also the specific social priorities of deindustrialising working class communities.

Community Development in Practice

North Lurgan Community Council served a troubled, mostly Catholic part of the textile town on the edge of the Belfast Urban Area. The Council was well organised and seemed to have developed independently of any government mobilisation efforts. In early 1970 it had completed a social survey of approximately 270 respondents (out of approximately 3800 adult residents in the neighbourhood). The surveys found that, while more than 60 per cent of locals were satisfied with primary and secondary school provision, less than 30 per cent were satisfied with access to nurseries/creches. More than 80 per cent of local respondents supported the expansion of youth clubs, nearly 90 per cent supported the provision of social advice for the elderly, and 95 per cent supported the creation of a baby-sitting service. Only 5 respondents rejected the construction of a community centre.[146]

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[144] CRC Working Paper, 'Proposal for Community Development in East Belfast', August 1972, CREL/2/8, PRONI.
[145] Letter from Major R. L. T. Jones, 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment to Donald Davidson, MCR, 16 July 1971, Mayo Street Community Centre (Shankill) files, DCR/2/2, PRONI.
[146] 'North Lurgan Community Council: Social Survey', June 1970, North Lurgan Community Council files, DCR/2/1, PRONI.

In the summer of 1970, the ministry was unwilling to provide a grant for a community centre under the Social Needs legislation, arguing that the economic and political tension in the area was insufficient to justify the extra support.[147] However, by November 1971, the ministry's tune had changed. Job losses in textiles and at the nearby Goodyear tyre plant, combined with outbreaks of sectarianism caused a 'deterioration' in the social conditions of the mostly Catholic Kilwilke and Lurgantarry estates. Ministry officials recommended that 'we should classify the above two estates as being of special social need'.[148] There was still concern that the council was not representative of the neighbourhood as a whole – it was dominated by the 'moderates', and that the Catholic Church was putting up 25 per cent of the cost, potentially giving them a degree of control.[149] However, the grant was eventually made, and then in August 1972 it was made even more generous, with a promise to fund 90 per cent of costs up to £7500.[150] But the council recognised an opportunity to press its luck, and demanded a larger overall grant. By September 1973, the Ministry had given in, offering 90 per cent on a building costing £24,000.[151] However, by this point the project was at risk: there had been violence in the area and increased Army activity, frightening away potential builders.[152] By January 1974, ministry officials warned that the council leadership 'are now despondent and enthusiasm is fading', and by March the situation seemed bleak: 'Mr Creery (North Lurgan Community Council) stressed the need for urgent action. His council are quickly losing support and credibility in the area'.[153] Then, in May, a sudden shift occurred. Craigavon District Council had agreed 'to accept responsibility for the provision, maintenance and management of this project'.[154] The grant to North Lurgan Community Council was withdrawn and the funds channelled to local government. At this point the documentation comes to an end and there is no evidence that central government had anything more to do with North Lurgan Community Council.

In North Lurgan, the government had attempted to solve social problems on the cheap, shifting responsibility on to a local organisation while appearing generous and winning support from a Catholic area in the process. In the end, the effort failed. Local organisations in troubled, deindustrialising areas such as North Lurgan were built on shaky ground. They were usually unrepresentative and their legitimacy, both in the eyes of government and local residents, was paper thin. In the end, they were always a substitute for direct government intervention. And this is where Northern Ireland was different from the rest of the UK. In Oldham, the failure of the Community Development Project gave way to an abandonment of working class communities, and eventually to a Thatcherite approach that prioritised entrepreneurialism and funding for start-ups rather than community centres. The government would 'help the community help itself', or it would not help at all – no other option existed. But in Northern Ireland, the government had to help – the cost of not helping was deadly violence.

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[147] Letter from J. L. Semple (MCR) to Brendan McStravick (North Lurgan CC), July 1970, DCR/2/1, PRONI.
[148] Letter from J. S. Smith (MCR) to J. L. Semple (MCR), 25 November 1971, DCR/2/1, PRONI.
[149] Letter from David Gordon (MCR) to J. L. Semple (MCR), 2 December 1971, DCR/2/1, PRONI.
[150] Letter from David Gordon (MCR) to Brendan McStravick (North Lurgan CC), 21 August 1972, DCR/2/1, PRONI.
[151] Letter from J. S. Smith (MCR) to J. L. Creery (North Lurgan CC), 13 September 1973, DCR/2/1, PRONI.
[152] 'Note from John Palmer (MCR) summarising discussion with J. L. Creery re. North Lurgan CC', 28 January 1974, DCR/2/1, PRONI.
[153] 'Note from John Palmer (MCR) summarising discussion with J. L. Creery re. North Lurgan CC', 25 March 1974, DCR/2/1, PRONI.
[154] Letter from John Palmer (MCR) to J. L. Creery (North Lurgan CC), 28 May 1974, DCR/2/1, PRONI.

And so, if necessary, government would revert back to a more traditional model, and build community facilities on its own.

The other important thing to note about the files of North Lurgan Community Council is what the community seemed to be focussed on. There was lots of support for provisions for the elderly, but nothing was more universally embraced than the idea of a baby-sitting service. Youth clubs and nursery provisions were also considered essential. This focus on the needs of parents, and particularly mothers, in both looking after and enriching the educational lives of their children, would be a recurring theme in the files of other local organisations from across Northern Ireland.

In 1973, the Donegall Road Community Association, from a mostly Protestant area south-west of Belfast city centre, successfully obtained a grant for the construction of a community centre that would provide a safe, supervised location for children to play.[155] The management committee of the association was made of seven women and no men: at the meeting with ministry officials, two male members of the association were supposed to join the female leadership team, but they 'arrived in the later stages having misunderstood the starting time'.[156] After problems with vandalism at the proposed site and divisions within the leadership of the association, the community centre would be built, and seemed to have been well used in 1974.[157] Unfortunately it would burn down in 1977.[158]

Internal divisions, vandalism, and the eventual collapse of community efforts would be a recurring theme in these files. In Garnerville, a Protestant estate on the east side of Belfast, the efforts to expand the community centre were put in jeopardy when the UDA began infiltrating the youth clubs that were to use the new facility. According to the ministry official in charge of the file, 'the organisational ability of the Committee is most unimpressive', and the leader of the project Mrs Wolfe was 'most undiplomatic' and 'hasn't got it up top'.[159] Then in May 1973, the community centre was burnt down, likely the 'work of hard-line elements who did not want to see any sort of community project succeed'.[160] In Clarawood, another estate on the eastern edge of the city, Protestant extremists 'infiltrating' the tenants association meant that an effort to build a new youth club never managed to get off the ground, and the ministry eventually withdrew the Social Needs grant.[161]

In the Catholic area of Andersontown on the city's south-west, two different tenants' associations put forward competing proposals for the construction of a community centre.[162] A community centre was eventually built, but was of low quality, and two years later the ministry was commissioning major repairs as 'the building will probably have a short life and has

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[155] J. M. Lynch (MRC), 'Note of a Meeting held at Midgely Park Playcentre', 13 June 1972, Donegall Road Community Association Files, DCR/2/8, PRONI.
[156] J. M. Lynch (MRC), 'Notes re. Meeting Held at 55 Moltke Street with Donegall Road CA', 1 March 1973, DCR/2/8, PRONI.
[157] 'Note from B. Moreland (MRC) detailing conversation with Mrs Thompson, Chairman, Donegall Road CA', 25 April 1974, DCR/2/8, PRONI.
[158] Letter from Neill Jailson (sic) to Mr Palmer re Donegall Road Community Centre, 1 August 1980, DCR/2/8, PRONI.
[159] 'Note from R. Roy to M. McGleenon re. Garnerville Community Centre', 6 December 1972, Garnerville Community Association files, DCR/2/9, PRONI.
[160] Note from R. Roy to M. McGleenon re. Garnerville Community Centre, 3 May 1973, DCR/2/9, PRONI.
[161] Letter from B. Moreland (MCR) to B. Watson re. Clarawood Youth Club, 11 December 1974, Clarawood Youth Club files, DCR/2/22, PRONI.
[162] D. Thompson (MCR), 'Note re. West Andersontown Projects', 6 March 1973, Glen Road Tenants Association Community Centre files, DCR/2/11, PRONI.

suffered severely from vandalism'.[163] The playground built on the Silversteam estate in North Belfast was also largely abandoned within two years of its construction due to persistent vandalism.[164]

The ministry claimed to want to help communities as they were, but in reality it only wanted to do business with a sub-set of the neighbourhood – the well-educated political moderates. However, the areas that needed the most help were naturally areas with deep social problems, problems which were fundamentally tied to deindustrialisation, but which often manifested in the form of vandalism, political extremism, suspicion of authority, and limited organisational capacity. The Social Needs grants were a bandage on a wound that would not heal. And they were a very flimsy bandage at that – as can be seen in the examples above, the grants were only enough for facilities of low quality, which were particularly susceptible to damage and vandalism. If a neighbourhood wanted a fancier facility, it would have to provide the money. There was also no long-term financial support above and beyond the usual community grants that would ensure that these community centres could be well maintained and actually serve the critical social purposes for which they were built. Thus, although the Social Needs grants were a more generous provision of public money for inner city social problems than in the rest of the UK, they still fit the general UK wide pattern of governmental abandonment of deindustrialising communities in the 1970s, with local organisations expected to shoulder social burdens that they were not designed to shoulder.

Returning to the earlier point, about the specific priorities of these local organisations were making, two unique requests for Social Needs grants should be identified. In addition to the many fully formed local organisations and associations which applied for grants under the Social Needs legislation, two of the grant proposals were made by individual women. In the summer of 1970, Monica Slavin would single-handedly drive forward efforts to improve provision for the youth of the troubled Turf Lodge estate in West Belfast. Slavin had for some time been 'organising activities such as a discotheque session for some 200 young people in the Assembly Hall of the school', and requested a Social Needs grant for new amplifying equipment.[165] The proposal was readily accepted. By the autumn, she was proposing something considerably larger: the purchase of a 'large old house' in the Turf Lodge area to provide a permanent home for the youth club. Slavin felt that if area youths 'can get away from the cramped, overcrowded conditions which they experience at home (…) I know that they can become very useful citizens'.[166] Ministry officials were open to the idea: several officials noted how 'impressed' they were with her organisation of youth activities.[167] But at this point, local politics intervened – the Catholic Parish Youth Committee, led by Fr. McKillop, moved to block the proposal. The reason is unclear: possibly McKillop was concerned about the morality of the youth group, but more likely he simply wanted the church to retain control of youth activities

[163] Letter from C. Donaghy (MRC) to G. Gibson, Architect, 28 January 1975, DCR/2/11, PRONI.
[164] Letter from R. E. Ferguson (Department of Education) to W. A. Thornton (Silverstream Tenants' Association) re. Silverstream Play Centre, 10 April 1975, Silverstream Tenants Association and Community Relations Centre files, DCR/2/28, PRONI.
[165] Letter from J. L. Semple (MRC) to J. Murray (Ministry of Finance), 10 July 1970, Mrs Slevin files, DCR/2/21, PRONI.
[166] Letter from Monica Slavin to D. Davidson (MRC), 17 November 1970, DCR/2/21, PRONI.
[167] Letter from H. W. Henning (MRC) to Hywel Griffiths (CRC) re. Turf Lodge, 4 May 1971, DCR/2/21, PRONI.

and resented the success and influence of Slavin.[168] By the spring of 1971, not only had the purchase effort been abandoned, but Slavin's youth group had ceased to exist.[169]

On the other side of Belfast, another female leader was attempting to organise her community. In November 1972, K. Hamilton and 'some locals, i.e. herself and 2 more housewives' (to quote the rather dismissive Ministry report) 'came together to see if something could be done to take the youths off the streets'. Her group proposed the creation of a youth club in a vacant property on Jocelyn Ave. in south-east Belfast.[170] However, after more dismissive and gendered comments between officials about Hamilton's proposal, including the claims that she was 'a one man band', and that 'she has no idea of management or control of a project such as this', the application was rejected.[171]

These two examples reveal much about the nature of community development in deindustrialising inner-city Belfast. Once again, we see that government officials had a certain idea of what a community leader should be: middle class, well-educated, and preferably male. Definitely a housewife like Mrs. Hamilton was not what they had in mind. Despite the fact that these local organisations developed partly because of the declining influence of religious and other traditional institutions, the church continued to act as a gatekeeper and marker of respectability in local community mobilisation. Very little could happen without at least the acquiescence of the church. But it was often housewives like Hamilton, rather than curates like Fr. McKillop, who had the clearest sense of the social problems of their neighbourhoods and the types of solutions that would be necessary to solve them. And the focus of these women, just as in the survey in North Lurgan, was on better provisions for youth – to keep them out of harm's way, to help them develop more fully into adults, and to reduce the enormous unpaid labour required by mothers. This would also be the focus on one of the largest and most prominent local organisations in all of Belfast, the Shankill Community Council.

The Shankill Community Council

The Shankill Community Council (SCC) was one of the largest local organisations to engage with the community development apparatus of the government. The Council, formed in the spring of 1971, covered a wide area, rather than a specific neighbourhood. The goal was to bring together the voices of the widest possible spectrum of the community, including representatives from a variety of social institutions ranging from the YMCA to community centres to churches, and take broadly held community concerns to government. This was obviously a Protestant organisation, but it was actively non-sectarian, and only a minority of the council members were in any way affiliated with loyalist paramilitaries, and the agenda was certainly not dominated by them. Two of the ten representatives who met with the were church pastors, and the churches played a leading role in its organisation.[172] Thus it is important not to see this new generation of local organisations as a complete replacement of an older, church-centric form of community mobilisation. There was considerable overlap. In addition, the

[168] Note by D. Davidson (MRC) re Mrs Slavin, Norglen Drive, 5 November 1970, DCR/2/21, PRONI.
[169] Letter from H. W. Henning (MRC) to Hywel Griffiths (CRC) re. Turf Lodge, 4 May 1971, DCR/2/21, PRONI.
[170] Note by M. McGleenon (MRC) re Jocelyn Avenue Community Centre, 24 November 1972, Jocelyn Avenue Community Centre files, DCR/2/12, PRONI.
[171] Note by M. McGleenon (MRC) re Jocelyn Avenue Community Centre, 29 November 1972, DCR/2/12, PRONI.
[172] 'Civil Representative E Cadden's Background Brief on the Shankill Community Council', February 1973, COM/69/80, PRONI.

Council consciously modelled itself after similar organisations in England and the Republic of Ireland.[173]

The primary goal of the SCC was to ensure that the redevelopment of the Lower and Middle Shankill, which had been underway since the 1960s, would help to create a more economically and socially resilient community. Part of this of course meant fighting for more employment and economic aid for the area. The organisation helped in the ultimately futile effort to convince Harland & Wolff to set up a branch factory in the Conway Street area, a perfect location because it 'would have equal ease of access from the Falls Road and the Shankill Road' and thus would probably be able to attract a mixed workforce.[174] Linked to this was the Council's somewhat more successful fight against the government's proposal to complete the M1 north from the Broadway roundabout into the city centre and to widen the Shankill Road itself to four lanes. The Council emphasised that the entire 'Urban Motorway scheme' would lead to the destruction of 3500 homes, including most of the Lower Shankill, and completely isolate the Shankill from the rest of Belfast.[175] So the current configuration of the A12 Westlink is partly a result of Shankill Community Council pressure. The Council recognised that, as Belfast's economy was being transformed, the Shankill needed to be connected and accessible if its residents were to grasp new opportunities.

However, even more important to the leaders of the SCC was the effort to ensure that the redevelopment of the Lower and Middle Shankill included a fully equipped leisure centre, at least two multi-purpose community centres with crèches, and new playing fields for the youth.[176] First, the SCC leaders realised that better youth facilities would be essential if the next generation of Shankill residents were to be able to stay away from violence and compete for jobs with those from more advantaged areas. Second, the Council, the leadership of which included both men and women, realised that the lack of daycare and crèche facilities was making it all but impossible for married women in the Shankill to re-enter the workforce and support their families. The goal does not seem to have been gender equality, as this is never mentioned in the Council's papers, but simply to do something to adapt to and overcome the poverty and dislocation caused by the collapse of the Shankill's economic base.

The SCC would have several meetings with William van Straubenzee in the 18 months following the imposition of direct rule, each time sending a diverse delegation including three women and two church ministers.[177] And each time, the focus was on community & leisure centres, youth programmes, and welfare supports. The SCC wanted support for the construction of a second community centre in the highly distressed area of the Lower Shankill, which was slated for redevelopment, for a partnership with the Education Area Boards to develop youth clubs, and funding for lunch clubs and community run summer schools. The Minister was immediately ready to support all of these proposals. The SCC was a great partner for the government in their ongoing project to move the responsibility for inner city social needs off their hands.

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[173] 'Shankill Community Council Draft Paper to Ministry of Commerce', #1: The Re-organisation of Local Government, for meeting 14 February 1973, COM/69/80, PRONI.
[174] Official letter from Shankill Community Council to Basil McIvor, Minister of Education, undated (1973), DMS/2/7, PRONI.
[175] 'Shankill Community Council Draft Paper to Ministry of Commerce', #2: Re-development ('Road Transport and the Shankill'), for meeting 14 February 1973, COM/69/80, PRONI.
[176] Ibid, #2: Redevelopment ('Community Schools and the Leisure Centre'), COM/69/80, PRONI.
[177] 'Note of a Meeting between the Minister of State and a Deputation from the Shankill Community Council', 7 June 1973, CJ/4/304, TNA.

Childcare and Deindustrialisation

However, where the government failed to respond was on the question of childcare. As we have seen earlier, various governments in Northern Ireland had long been concerned about getting more women, and especially married women, into formal employment. Despite this, there was little consideration made of the realities of working-class women's lives and the trade-offs that working women often had to make. Even more fundamentally, there has long been a discrepancy in the way in which government both records and responds to unemployment among men and women. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, Audrey Hunt found that government employment statistics often did not include female-dominated industries: for example, the Census of Employment did not include domestic service.[178] The binary conception of employment and unemployment did not reflect the reality of many women's lives, and especially important for our purposes, it did not account for factors like crèche availability or maternity leave provisions. If anything, the biased focus on male-dominated sectors and a gendered conception of employment was even greater in Northern Ireland. Thirty years ago, Eithne McLaughlin wrote that 'women in Northern Ireland are particularly oppressed by the influence of conservative religious ideologies and by the parochial or inward-looking nature of life in a divided and troubled society', and argued that this patriarchy affected social and political understandings of female work.[179] Potter & Hill's study has also found that Northern Irish society has particularly strong conceptions of 'male jobs' and 'female jobs' that have led to the persistence of gender segregation and a limitation of employment opportunities for women.[180] A persistent bias towards the male breadwinner model can be seen even at the level of the government's community development work. The Central Community Relations Unit completed two research reports into male and female unemployment in Belfast in the early 1990s – while the report on women is a concise 20-page document, the report on unemployed men is 196 pages plus bibliography, with vastly deeper analysis.[181]

A study by Gillian Robinson et al in the early 1990s found that while women's overall economic participation rates in Northern Ireland were considerably lower than in the rest of the UK, the participation rate among mothers' of young children was actually slightly higher.[182] As discussed earlier, the industrial base of Northern Ireland was not strong enough to support a male breadwinner model, even if that is what married women wanted, and thus these women were essentially working two jobs to support their families, with little substantive support from the state.[183] A study in the late 1980s found the UK to have the worst childcare provisions in the

[178] Audrey Hunt, 'Some Gaps and Problems Arising from Government Statistics on Women at Work', *EOC Research Bulletin* no. 40 (1980).
[179] Eithne McLaughlin, 'A Problem Postponed', in *Women Employment and Social Policy: A Problem Postponed?*, eds. Celia Davies & Eithne McLaughlin (Belfast: Policy Research Institute, 1991), 6.
[180] Michael Potter & Myrtle Hill, 'Women into Non-Traditional Sectors: Addressing Gender Segregation in the Northern Ireland Workplace', *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 61 (2009): 134-35.
[181] Anthony Murphy, *Research Report #2 – A Picture of the Catholic and Protestant Male Unemployed* (Belfast: Central Community Relations Unit, 1992); Anthony Murphy, *A Picture of the Catholic and Protestant Female Labour Force and Unemployed in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Central Community Relations Unit, 1996).
[182] Gillian Robinson, Norma Heaton & Celia Davies, 'Ignored and Apparently Invisible: Women at Work in Northern Ireland', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 1 (1994): 52. It should be noted that male participation rates were also lower in Northern Ireland – to a large extent both figures are a feature of the depressed economy and higher levels of general economic inactivity in Northern Ireland.
[183] Helen McCarthy, 'Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-War Britain', *Women's History Review* 26 (2017): 46-61.

whole of Western Europe, and Northern Ireland was certainly not any better off than England, Scotland, or Wales in this respect.[184] Thus, the efforts made by local organisations, and sometimes even individual women like Monica Slavin, to improve the provision of daycare, youth clubs, and after-school programmes, must be seen as a critical grassroots response to both deindustrialisation and institutionalised misogyny.

Returning to the Shankill, we can see the true impact of limited childcare on women's lives, and in turn on the economic future of the area. According to the Greater Shankill Development Agency's (GSDA) 1992 report 'Who Cares', 'women's lives in this area are strongly dominated by the responsibility for childcare. It is a responsibility that large proportions of women are carrying out without the support of a male partner, and, in an area where there are fears about safety and security, that does not lessen as children reach their teenage years'.[185] In the report, 57 per cent of women reported that 'lack of childcare has restricted their opportunities for employment', and 'half of those not in work would look for work immediately or within the next year if childcare were available'.[186] Overall, the study found that only 4.9 per cent of Shankill parents were satisfied and more than 78 per cent were dissatisfied with after-school provisions.[187] Mothers complained that they could not get their children into nurseries and that playgroups had been closed down.

The lack of childcare exposed the deeper inequalities and limits on women's lives in the Shankill. Despite the fact that, among married or cohabitating mothers, 44 per cent had male partners who were unemployed or otherwise not working, women still did the vast majority of the housework. 82 per cent of women did *all* of the cleaning (in most of the remainder of households it was a shared responsibility), 81 per cent did all of the laundry, 75 per cent did all of the cooking, 74 did all of the childcare, and 69 per cent did all of the shopping.[188]

The existence of childcare would also open up educational opportunities – 70 per cent of area women had no training or qualifications, and over 40 per cent said they would be interested in training or educational opportunities if they did not have childcare responsibilities, with interest highest among the 26-35 age group.[189] When asked what the primary benefits of improved childcare would be, 80 per cent of Shankill women thought it would give benefits for the children, while 70 per cent thought it would 'give women time for themselves'.[190] It was a win-win situation in an economically and socially troubled community.

And the GSDA study found that the problem was not simply one of supply of childcare. In fact, in the Shankill area there were 'seven nurseries run by the Belfast Education and Library Board, a number of playgroups, and several parent/toddler groups'.[191] So what was the problem? First, the operation of the facilities was not designed to help women seek employment. The crèches and parent/toddler groups required the parent to be present along with the child, and the nurseries generally operated 3-4 hours a day, with parents expected to drop children off around 9-9:30am and pick them up before 2pm. All of the nurseries had

[184] Bronwen Cohen, *Caring for Children: Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities in the United Kingdom* (London: Commission of the European Communities, 1988).
[185] Taillon, *Who Cares?*, 1.
[186] Ibid, 3.
[187] Ibid, 24
[188] Ibid, 27.
[189] Ibid, 3.
[190] Ibid, 4.
[191] Ibid, 11.

waiting lists, and the only other available service was that of 'Registered Childminders', but their costs were generally beyond the ability of working-class households to pay.[192]

The Troubles had increased the economic challenges faced by families in the Shankill, and also had made the need for safe and nurturing spaces for children that much greater. The greatest single demand by women in the GSDA study was actually not for nursery care, but rather for after-school care for children aged 6 to 11, who otherwise might find themselves out on the streets and potentially caught up in violence or trouble.[193]

Only 57 per cent of households with children in the Shankill were two-parent households, vastly below the Northern Ireland and Great Britain averages of 82 and 83 per cent respectively.[194] The economic challenges and violence that came with living in the Shankill likely helped shape these challenging familial circumstances,[195] which in turn placed further pressure on working class women struggling to balance childcare, employment, and the need for improved education. Not surprisingly, lone parent households had significantly lower family income: while only 36 per cent of 2-parent households had an income of less than £110 a week, 82 per cent of lone parent families were struggling below this threshold.[196]

Thus, the study found that the vast majority of families had no access to regular childcare, and among those who did, 78 per cent relied on the services of a grandmother or other relative, while only 22 per benefitted from the regular services of a nursery, playgroup or childminder.[197] Among parents with older children, few had access to regular after-school provisions, though it should be noted that most children did participate in some after-school activities, the most common being church-organised activities.[198]

The Fight Goes On

After the meeting of June 1973, there is no record of any further meetings between the Shankill Community Council (SCC) and the government. Although the SCC did not keep records, it appears that it continued to exist down into the 21st century, when it was amalgamated into the Greater Shankill Partnership. The Greater Shankill Partnership is a quasi-grassroots, quasi-governmental agency founded in 1996 which received funding in the post Good Friday agreement era to do many of the things that the SCC had been pushing for back in the 1970s, including operating an affordable daycare and having a more permanent role in advising on redevelopment issues.[199] The Shankill Women's Centre also developed out of the efforts of the SCC. Founded in 1986, the Women's Centre also runs a daycare, provides

[192] Ibid, 12-13.
[193] Ibid, 4.
[194] Ibid, 17.
[195] For more on this complex relationship, see Marvin Sussman et al (eds.), *Single Parent Families: Diversity, Myths and Realities* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 1995).
[196] Taillon, *Who Cares?,* 19. A weekly income of £110 in 1992 was equal to £229 in 2020 when adjusted for inflation. The Office for National Statistics considers households to be in poverty if they have a total income below 60 per cent of the median income. In 2018/19 that 60 per cent threshold was £308 per week. Department for Work and Pensions, *Households Below Average Income: An analysis of the UK income distribution: 1994/95-2018/19*, page 3.
[197] Taillon, *Who Cares?,* 22.
[198] Ibid, 22-23.
[199] Greater Shankill Partnership, 'About the Partnership' [webpage]. Accessed February 2018; http://greatershankillpartnership.org/about/.

continuing education for women, and works to bridge the 'interface' with the Falls community to the south, and was noted as an example of successful community advocacy by Hillary Clinton during her and her husband's famous 1995 visit to Belfast.[200] Created in the context of the Troubles, these more inclusive local organisations have begun the work of helping the impoverished districts of West Belfast adapt to a new era.

Organisations like the Shankill Community Council, the Shankill Women's Centre, and all of the local organisations that applied for Social Needs grants, are typically understood in the context of the Troubles. One of the critical points of the chapter is that they must also be understood as community responses to deindustrialisation, and to the need to adapt to the structural change it had caused. In particular, these organisations fought for the government's recognition that economic and social revival could only be possible when the barriers to the full participation of women in the job market had been removed. In the end, they largely failed to get the government to recognise this.

Both the Unionists and the direct rule government of the 1970s were more than happy to give out Social Needs funding of a few thousand pounds to fund the construction of a temporary structure to house a youth club. Government was aware that abandonment of inner city neighbourhoods was likely to lead to profound social dysfunction and violence, and at a time when the UK was apparently spending £300 million a year on policing the Troubles, there was a strong financial incentive to spend the money on the youth club. In this way the government's community development response to deindustrialisation was different in Belfast than it was in Oldham. However, in the end the government's goal in these community development efforts was to get the credit for the youth club, and then wash its hands of the responsibility for youth in the area. It was not there to help in the long haul. And most importantly, it was unwilling and/or unprepared to address the core demands of these organisations for improved childcare and educational provisions for youth. Twenty years after the SCC met with government ministers to demand change on this front, the 'Who Cares?' report showed how little had actually changed.

There has been considerable research showing how this shifting of power and responsibility to non-governmental/community organisations has been a global tool in the 'depoliticization' of socio-economic questions and the withdrawal of state funding for welfare.[201] However, Jennifer Curtis has found that non-governmental organisations in Belfast, particularly 'community-based organizations' – a category which largely overlaps with the local organisations discussed above – developed a local ethic of social justice and successfully fought against central government efforts to redirect or restrict funding.[202] Sam McCready also finds that these organisations played a crucial role over the 30 years of the Troubles in identifying the

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[200] Shankill Women's Centre, 'History of the Shankill Women's Centre' [webpage]. Accessed February 2018; https://www.shankillwomenscentre.org.uk/content/history-shankill-womens-centre; 'Hillary meets Women of Belfast as Equals', *The Irish Times*, 1 December 1995, page 6.

[201] For the British case, see Matthew Hilton, 'Politics is Ordinary: Non-Governmental Organizations and Political Participation in Contemporary Britain' *Twentieth Century British History* 22 (2011): 230–268. For some international/post-colonial cases, see James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Julia Elyachar, *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Non-Governmentality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[202] Jennifer Curtis, ''Profoundly Ungrateful': The Paradoxes of Thatcherism in Northern Ireland', *Political and Legal Anthropology Review: PoLAR* 33 (2010): 201-224.

needs of the local community and shaping government intervention to make it as effective as possible.[203] My research tempers these findings somewhat. The local organisations I have highlighted in this chapter did have agency, and in many cases through their grant proposals they helped direct government to respond to specific local problems. However, the basic goals and strategies of government remained unchanged. Thus the daycare services provided by the Shankill Women's Centre both represent an incredible success by community leaders in forcing government to (finally) recognise and respond to the need, but at the same time they also represent a form of neoliberal abandonment of direct responsibility for social problems in disadvantaged areas.

Deindustrialisation & Economic Management Under Direct Rule

But while the direct rule government was generally unwilling to involve itself in the direct support of daycares and crèches, it was more than willing to pour vast sums of money into money losing industry, and it is here where the 'neoliberal era' looks especially different in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain. And again, it is the fear of violence that drives much of the relevant decision making. Considering the fact that Prime Minister Ted Heath's Tory government was still attempting to back off from economic interventionism in Great Britain,[204] a memorandum from the Ministry of Commerce one month into the direct rule administration at Stormont makes for quite incredible reading. The report called for significant public spending on a variety of priorities, including an outdoor cleanup programme, and new grants for industry, and even a temporary subsidy to preserve employment in the agricultural sector. The report repeatedly called for an 'unconventional approach' to be taken, but in practice this simply meant throwing enormous amounts of money at the problem. Some of the lines of the report would have made even the left of the Labour Party blush. For example: 'employment, rather than profits or commercial viability, is the overriding objective (…) for this, public money has to be used to keep the organisation in business even though, in ordinary circumstances, it would be judged uneconomic'. The conclusion was even more stark: 'we now need a decision-in-principle on whether we should adopt (or at least examine new policies that lead us away from orthodoxy in the handling of economic development. These new policies may crudely be summed up as the spending of public money with the sole [underlining in original] object of creating or saving jobs'.[205] The economic intervention would never be quite as extensive as suggested in this report, but the fact that this report was even submitted to a Tory government is further evidence of the very different assumptions about economic management in Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

Of all the economic concerns that kept Northern Ireland government officials awake, none was more troubling than the future of Harland & Wolff. The possibility that Harland & Wolff would eventually prove unviable had been on the minds of government officials on both sides of the Irish Sea for many years. In May 1971, a UK Cabinet committee explored the

[203] Sam McCready, *Empowering People: Community Development and Conflict 1969–1999* (London: The Stationery Office, 2001).
[204] These efforts however were already flagging, and would be largely abandoned by the autumn, when wage and price controls were re-imposed. Anthony Seldon & Stuart Ball (eds.), *The Heath Government 1970-74: A Reappraisal* (London: Longman, 1996).
[205] 'Unemployment and Employment', Memorandum by the Ministry of Commerce, 26 April 1972, CJ/4/218, TNA.

potential impact of a complete shutdown on unemployment in Belfast, finding that a 'conservative estimate' was that it would increase male unemployment from 8 per cent to 14.1 per cent.[206] The report mentions several times the 'special circumstances' and 'vital social and economic importance' of the yard, and emphasises that its financial position must be closely watched.[207] Even though the yard remained in private hands until 1977, it was so dependent on government help by 1970 that it cannot be seen as a fully independent company. During this period of acute financial turmoil in 1971, Harland & Wolff had received purchase offers from the Norwegian ship owner Fred Olsen, from Swan Hunters (owners of a large shipyard at Wallsend on the Tyne), and from the famous Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis. However, Stormont (with Whitehall's blessing) decided to reject these offers and support Harland & Wolff's reorganisation proposal, with a new government-approved chairman to be appointed and further financial support offered.[208] Although a purchase could bring much needed capital investment to Queen's Island, it could make it harder for government to influence business decisions and prevent mass redundancies in the future, and that was simply not acceptable.

By the mid 1970s, the business position of Harland & Wolff was so bad as to call into question the future viability of the company. In April 1976, the Northern Ireland Secretary Merlyn Rees provided a memorandum to the Ministerial Committee on Economic and Industrial Policy, arguing that an earlier proposal to provide £60 million in assistance would almost certainly be insufficient. On this basis, Rees argued, 'we should close Harland and Wolff at the earliest possible opportunity, i.e. the end of 1976'.[209] However, there had already been 5700 redundancies in the Belfast engineering industry in the last two years – 2,000 of which had been caused by government defence cuts, mostly to the Royal Navy Aircraft Yard at Sydenham in north-east Belfast.[210] Another 9,300 redundancies from the immediate closure of Harland & Wolff could drive the local economy into a depression. And there were two political concerns. One was natural for the Labour Party: 'the charge of economic withdrawal, which I have been concerned to rebut, would be strongly renewed and the official trade union movement would be severely undermined.' But there was also a distinctly Northern Irish concern: 'a high proportion of all these redundant men live and work in East Belfast, which in itself creates special political and security problems.'[211] With this concern about the relationship between deindustrialisation and violence driving government decisions, Rees proposed that significant financial support, above and beyond the original £60 million, would need to be provided, as part of the nationalisation of the shipyard. And even with this support, significant redundancies were recommended: 'the workforce would be run down in an orderly manner from 9300 to 3800'

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[206] Cabinet Ministerial Committee on Economic Policy: 'The State of the Shipbuilding Industry, Note by the Director General, Central Policy Review Staff, Annex', 19 May 1971, CJ/4/83, TNA. Note, this review of the UK shipbuilding industry was initially completed because of the ongoing threat to Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in Scotland.
[207] Ibid, CJ/4/83, TNA.
[208] Ibid, CJ/4/83, TNA.
[209] Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 'Ministerial Committee on Economic and Industrial Policy – The Shipbuilding Industry: Harland and Wolff Ltd', 29 April 1976, CJ/4/1121, TNA.
[210] Ministerial Note, 'Northern Ireland, A Political Appraisal', Appendix A: Employment in Northern Ireland, undated (probably January 1970), CJ/4/22, TNA.
[211] Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 'Ministerial Committee on Economic and Industrial Policy – The Shipbuilding Industry: Harland and Wolff Ltd', 29 April 1976, page 4, CJ/4/1121, TNA.

over only a four-year period.[212] Even with massive state aid, deindustrialisation was continuing apace.

Thatcher's government came to power wanting to impose its ideological stamp on Northern Ireland, but even the hardest Thatcherites recognised that a full-scale neoliberal revolution would be impossible in the context of the ongoing violence and the economic dysfunction that had resulted. In a meeting with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC/ICTU) on 1 August 1979, the new Tory Northern Ireland Secretary Humphrey Atkins emphasised that there would be cuts. But at the same time, he noted that 'the Cabinet completely accepted that Northern Ireland had special problems so, for example, the incentives to industry to invest would remain the best in the UK'. Despite the cuts, expenditure would not fall as low as it had been in 1977-78.' And of course, expenditure on law and order would not be touched.[213]

In the end, the Thatcher government would approach the problem of Harland & Wolff much as the Heath and Wilson/Callaghan governments had. From a purely economic point of view, the Tories would have preferred to abandon the company to near-certain collapse, but they recognised that this was politically impossible. Instead, they were stuck pouring money into the business, attempting to slowly shrink the size of the company without causing an explosion of unemployment, and hoping that it could eventually be led back to profitability and then to a successful privatisation.

Representatives of the government visited Harland & Wolff on a regular basis, often several times a month in the fall of 1984, as the direct rule officials became increasingly focussed on reducing their financial liability in propping up the company without inadvertently causing the shipyard's collapse.[214] In a briefing note for Lord Lyell's visit in July 1985, it was emphasised that 'there is no economic or commercial justification for H&W's continued operation by means of Government aid', and that 'the Government's main aim is to reduce the overall cost of maintaining the Yard'. An emphasis was to be placed on productivity improvements and Lyell was encouraged 'to hold the line on the clear and rigorous conditions Ministers have attached to the company's future'.[215] In the decade following the nationalisation of the shipyard, £336 million had been provided in government support, largely to cover trading losses rather than for long-term investment. Despite this, employment had still decreased, from 7,740 in the spring of 1979 to 5,000 in 1985.[216] And in addition to the support given to Harland & Wolff, there was a considerable amount of state intervention in support of industrial expansion in West Belfast, particularly in Catholic areas – as we have seen, the UK government faced particular pressure from the US to rectify the sectarian imbalance in industrial employment. The most famous of these investments is the De Lorean plant in Dunmurry in the south-western outskirts, set up to build the 'Back to the Future' car, but which ended in a catastrophic financial collapse, costing the exchequer an estimated £40 million.[217]

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[212] Ibid, page 6, CJ/4/1121, TNA.
[213] 'Note of a meeting with NIC/ICTU in Stormont Castle', 1 August 1979, Northern Ireland Office NIC/ICTU files (Northern Ireland Committee/Irish Congress of Trade Unions), NIO/25/2/27A, PRONI.
[214] 'Background note on Harland and Wolff for Visit by Lord Lyell', 26 July 1985, Harland and Wolff Limited - Visits by VIP's etc., COM/112/56, PRONI.
[215] Ministerial Report, 'Mr Barry's Visit to Harland and Wolff PLC', 29 April 1985, COM/112/56, PRONI.
[216] 'Background note on Harland and Wolff for Visit by Lord Lyell', 26 July 1985, COM/112/56, PRONI.
[217] Graham Brownlow, 'Back to the Failure: An Analytic Narrative of the De Lorean Debacle,' *Business History* 57, no. 1 (2015): 156-181.

The Thatcherites realised that they needed to support Northern Irish industry, but what was their eventual vision for the economy in Ulster? In most economic situations, expanding the pool of skilled labour is a key ingredient in achieving sustained growth.[218] However, in an internal presentation on economic matters in 1987, R. B. Spence of the Central Secretariat claimed that 'the growth in the Northern Ireland labour supply is perhaps the most crucial factor' in the ever worsening employment situation. While the labour supply in Great Britain was static, the higher birth rate in Northern Ireland meant that there could be 50,000 more people in the labour market in a decade, with no jobs to fill.[219] Government labour market projections showed the labour force increasing steadily to nearly 700,000 by 1990, but total employment was shown as a perfectly horizontal line, stuck at 550,000.[220] It was hoped that the gap would be narrowed somewhat by emigration. There seemed to be no one in the government with any real optimism that they could actually increase the number of jobs available in Northern Ireland in the foreseeable future.

This is very much a 'managed decline' approach to economic policy and governance. Although that term is traditionally associated with Liverpool because of the infamous 1981 letter by Geoffrey Howe, the term probably applies more accurately to Thatcherite economic policy in Belfast than anywhere else.[221] The most direct way to solve the unemployment problem, 'a very large and sustained increase in public expenditure', was rejected out of hand, as it would 'run directly counter to national policy'. Some 'interim employment measures' were accepted, and as discussed above, Northern Ireland largely escaped the general austerity and elimination of industrial support imposed on Great Britain by the Thatcher Government.

However, in the longer term, the government strategy for turning the Northern Ireland economy did seem more optimistic, and it contained many of the usual Thatcherite features. Interestingly, the idea of lowering pay levels in Northern Ireland to encourage investment was considered, but eventually rejected. It is hard to know how unilateral cuts to private-sector salaries could be squared with a commitment to free markets. Improved skills training was recommended, though not much detail was provided. A much greater focus was placed on culture, image, and 'flexibility'. Among medium- and longer-term goals, the most important was 'to secure a real cultural change through fostering self-esteem, self-confidence and the enterprise spirit'.[222] Northern Ireland would be marketed to the world through initiatives in arts, sport, and an 'Ulster Year' celebration sometime in the early 1990s, in order to change the prevailing image of violence and sectarianism.[223] Another piece of the government plan was to boost support the redevelopment of Laganside in Belfast, a plan that included expensive condominiums and offices but was completely separate from surrounding working class neighbourhoods.[224] Responsibly for health and personal social services would be shifted onto

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[218] See Barry Eichengreen, *The European Economy since 1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 86-130.
[219] 'Draft Presentation on Economic Matters, Speaking Note, R. B. Spence, 22 July 1987', Northern Ireland Economy files, CENT/3/92, PRONI.
[220] 'Northern Ireland's Economic Prospects – Presentation of the Secretary of State', 17 June 1986, CENT/3/92, PRONI.
[221] Aaron Andrews, 'Dereliction, Decay and the Problem of De-Industrialization in Britain, c. 1968–1977', 236-256.
[222] 'Northern Ireland's Economic Prospects – Presentation of the Secretary of State', 17 June 1986, page 2, Northern Ireland Economy files, CENT/3/92, PRONI.
[223] Ibid, page 7, CENT/3/92, PRONI.
[224] Ibid, page 6, CENT/3/92, PRONI.

the backs of local communities and the voluntary sector through the 'development of community initiatives'. This, of course, was an extension of the community development efforts of the 1970s. And finally, the labour market was to be made more flexible, with a 'scheme for career breaks for civil servants', and pilot job sharing schemes in both the public and private sector.[225]

Unemployment in Northern Ireland remained at approximately double the rate of Great Britain through the early 1980s, and higher even than the particularly hard-hit North-East of England.[226] Because of the decision to shield Northern Ireland from the harsh public sector cuts seen in Great Britain in the early Thatcher years, the public sector took a larger and larger share of employment in the province, approaching 45 per cent by the mid-1980s. The biggest declines occurred in the 'Sunset Industries' (a term used by the direct rule government) of textiles, tobacco, shipbuilding, and clothing/footwear.[227] Although much focus was placed on Harland & Wolff, the majority of the big job losses were due to the closure or downsizing of branch plants of larger British or international companies: Courtaulds, Imperial Chemical Industries, British Enkalon (textiles), Goodyear Tyre, and Michelin Tyre, and Gallaher (tobacco).[228]

Although the situation in Protestant neighbourhoods like the Shankill was very poor, the Catholic districts of West Belfast were the most troubled of all. In 1989, two Lower Falls wards of Grosvenor and 'Falls' were the first and third most deprived in the entire city, and unemployment in the 'inner west' averaged 47 per cent.[229] In some Catholic communities, black taxi companies were among the biggest employers. Breige Brownlee says that 'to me black taxis, are just synonymous with everything that is West Belfast'. In particular, many ex-prisoners drove taxis because they had little chance of ever being hired by an industrial employer. In addition to being a response to deindustrialisation and unemployment, the taxis also filled a critical need in the context of the Troubles. As Brownlee accounts, they were often the only form of transport: 'when the Ulster Workers' Strike was on, there were black taxis on the road. When there were bombs, when the buses were off the road, the black taxis were on the road. When there were bomb scares and people had to get out of their houses, black taxis were there taking people to community centres'.[230] However, driving a taxi was dangerous work, and Geraldine Crawford, long-time employee of the Falls Taxi Association, remembers that 'eight drivers were shot dead while out driving and serving their community and others were murdered in their houses – just for being a Falls Road taxi driver'.[231] Terry Lyons recalls that taxi drivers would often face four Royal Ulster Constabulary roadblocks each day taking Falls Roads residents to and from work.[232]

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[225] Ibid, page 5, CENT/3/92, PRONI.
[226] 'Northern Ireland's Economic Prospects – Presentation of the Secretary of State', 17 June 1986, Appendix: presentation slides, Slide 2, CENT/3/92, PRONI.
[227] Ibid, Slide 7, CENT/3/92, PRONI.
[228] Ibid, Slide 2 & 3, CENT/3/92, PRONI.
[229] 'West Belfast Poverty Factfile', 1991-92, West Belfast Anti-Poverty Network files, D4099/5/5a, PRONI. See also Pat McGinn, *The Distribution of Deprivation in the Belfast City Council Area: An Analysis Prepared for the Community Services Department of the Belfast City Council* (Belfast: Belfast Centre for the Unemployed, 1989) (Located at the Linen Hall Library, Belfast).
[230] Breige Brownlee, Interviewed by Joe Austin for 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project, Duchas Oral History Archive.
[231] Geraldine Crawford, Interviewed by Joe Austin for 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project, Duchas Oral History Archive.
[232] Terry Lyons, Interviewed by Joe Austin for 'Living Through the Conflict, Belfast Oral Histories' Project, Duchas Oral History Archive.

Deindustrialisation and the Education Gap

Despite the particularly deep economic dislocation in Catholic neighbourhoods, an educational gap has opened up between Protestants and Catholics in recent decades, with Catholics much more likely to leave school with qualifications and to attend university. This education gap had not always been so stark – in fact, during the period of Unionist rule, when Protestants dominated most aspects of Northern Irish public life, it had run the other way. In 1971, 33 per cent of Protestants in the labour force held non-manual jobs, compared with 21 per cent of Catholics.[233] The falling behind of Protestants in the education system cannot simply be put down to poverty or inequality. Poverty remains high in working class Catholic communities like the Falls and Short Strand, but educational outcomes are better. According to a 2011 Northern Ireland Assembly study, entitled *A Call to Action*, Catholic secondary school pupils who receive free school meals are twice as likely to go to university than pupils who receive free school meals in Protestant secondary schools.[234] In regular, non-grammar secondary schools, Catholic pupils were twice as likely to obtain two or more A levels. Catholics made up only 21.9 per cent of the undergraduate student body at Queen's University in 1958-59 but were in the majority by the 1990s.[235]

There have been several studies of the social problems facing working class Protestant areas of Belfast, and they have largely found the same set of challenges. A survey by a Department for Social Development task force in 2004 pointed to 'low educational attainment, low aspirations, physical and mental problems and apparent acceptance of economic inactivity' as particularly critical problems facing areas like the Shankill.[236] Others, including Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Mark Langhammer, have to failures in middle class Protestant leadership.[237]

But what place does deindustrialisation have in this story? It has sometimes been suggested that the advantages that the male Protestant working class had in pre-Troubles Northern Ireland, including a stranglehold on many industrial sectors and increased access to housing supports, resulted in a culture that did not prioritise education.[238] Thus, the argument goes, Protestants could not adapt to deindustrialisation and the subsequent rise of the tertiary sector, while Catholics, who had never had a 'trade union protected job', had a deep-seated

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[233] Robert Osborne, *Denomination and Unemployment in Northern Ireland* (Unpublished Working Paper, 1978), page 4. (Located at the Linen Hall Library, Belfast).
[234] Northern Ireland Assembly, Committee for Education, *Educational Disadvantage and the Protestant Working Class: A Call to Action, Official Report*, December 2011, page 6.
[235] Rupert Taylor, 'The Queen's University of Belfast: The Liberal University in a Divided Society', *Higher Education Review* 20 (1988): 27–45; Leslie Clarkson, *A University in Troubled Times: Queen's, Belfast, 1945–2000* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).
[236] Philip Orr, *New Loyalties: Christian Faith and the Protestant Working Class* (Belfast: Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, 2008), 5.
[237] Cathal McManus ''Bound in Darkness and Idolatry'? Protestant Working-Class Underachievement and Unionist Hegemony', *Irish Studies Review* 23 (2015): 48-67; Mark Langhammer, *Cutting with the Grain: Policy and the Protestant Community – What is to be Done?* (Paper for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Paul Murphy and the Northern Ireland Office team, April 2003), accessed from http://free-downloads.atholbooks.org/pamphlets/Protestants.pdf
[238] See Aaron Edwards, ''Unionist Derry' is Ulster's Panama: The Northern Ireland Labour Party and the Civil Rights Issue' *Irish Political Studies* 23 (2008): 365-66.

cultural appreciation of education.[239] This is a culture-formation process similar to the one found in Paul Willis' classic sociological text, *Learning to Labour*.[240]

In 2011, the Education Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly commissioned and discussed a report entitled 'Educational Disadvantage and the Protestant Working Class: A Call to Action'.[241] The report argued that deindustrialisation and the shift to a service based economy had 'left elements of the Protestant working class with redundant skill-sets and abilities'.[242] Of course, this was not unique to Protestants, and it was not simply that the pupils themselves were uninterested in obtaining higher skills. Lily FitzSimons discussed her employment trajectory with the Duchas interviewers, saying the following: 'And I left school at 14 and went into the mill. And I must have worked in every mill on the Falls Road, in and out. Basically I just did the life of people my age, the typical sort of life'. However, when asked to discuss her education further, it becomes clear that the soft bigotry of low expectations in the education system had forced her into this path:

> I did all right at school. But it was a convent school, and I found the nuns were very discriminatory against the working class. Then, when you did the Eleven Plus everybody didn't do it, you were selected. And of course the like of me wouldn't have been picked. Because their attitude was, what's the point of you doing the Eleven Plus, you're only going to leave and go into the mill anyway.[243]

This notion that working class Protestants were uninterested in education is thus a problematic and misleading one. Gareth Mulvenna has noted that many of the industrial jobs dominated by Protestant men, especially in the shipyards, were highly technical and skilled positions that required vocational training of some sort.[244] Instead, what he finds is a pre-Troubles Protestant working class communities that respected education. This respect for education was tied into a robust working class culture and commitment to strong local institutions, particularly religious ones.[245] Mulvenna sees deindustrialisation as having at most a limited effect on this culture. It is only with the onset of the Troubles that Mulvenna finds this culture disintegrating, the hold of the churches rapidly weakening (to be replaced by the paramilitaries), and the respect for education declining as a result.[246]

However, this argument does not explain the particular educational challenges faced in Protestant communities, and Mulvenna is wrong to remove deindustrialisation from the story

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[239] See in particular Sir Ian Hall's comments on the above mentioned *A Call to Action* report, cited in Gareth Mulvenna, 'The Protestant Working Class in Belfast: Education and Civic Erosion – An Alternative Analysis,' *Irish Studies Review* 20 (2012): 430.
[240] Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor.*
[241] Northern Ireland Assembly, *Committee for Education, Educational Disadvantage and the Protestant Working Class: A Call to Action, Official Report.*
[242] Ibid.
[243] Lily Fitzsimmons, Interviewed 20 October 2010: Duchas Oral History Archive, Falls Community Council miscellaneous interview collection (viewable by appointment only).
[244] Mulvenna, 'The Protestant Working Class in Belfast', 431.
[245] Ibid, 429.
[246] Ibid, 440-42. For further discussion of the changing nature of loyalist culture, see James McAuley, *Very British Rebels?: The Culture and Politics of Ulster Loyalism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Jon Tonge et al, 'New Order: Political Change and the Protestant Orange Tradition in Northern Ireland', *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 13, no. 3 (2011): 400-419; Connal Parr, *Inventing the Myth: Political Passions and the Ulster Protestant Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

entirely. Deindustrialisation, as we have seen, was already putting enormous pressure on the structures of Protestant working class communities in years leading up to the Troubles. The valuing of skilled male industrial labour, and the assumption that the husband would earn a salary sufficient to allow his wife to stay home, were indeed cultural traits that proved problematic in a context of sudden deindustrialisation. Then, the combination of violence and deindustrialisation – which, as we have seen, were mutually reinforcing – further broke down those social structures and left behind a troubled cultural legacy. Local organisations like the Shankill Community Council attempted to fill the gap, and they placed a special priority on education and on improving the employment horizons of working mothers, the two things that were essential to breaking the downward cycle. However, in the face of government indifference, structural economic change, and continuing violence, there was only so much they could do. Thus, deindustrialisation is tied to the breakdown of the structures of loyalist communities, and plays a role in some of the ugly, dysfunctional aspects of impoverished loyalist social life.

Peace Dividend for Everyone?

In the years following the Good Friday Agreement, there was much discussion of an expected 'peace dividend'. The end of fighting, it was said, would release pent-up demand and inward investment, pulling Northern Ireland out of the economic doldrums and into a new prosperity. Again and again in writing and in speeches, either in the lead up to peace or in the celebrations afterwards, leaders spoke of the 'incredible potential of the Northern Ireland economy' if only the violence and turmoil could be eliminated.[247]

In November 1995, US President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton visited Belfast in a much-feted trip designed to help strength the drive for a peace agreement. He visited both the Shankill and Falls, and emphasised that the US would give economic support to Northern Ireland as it worked to rebuild after years of conflict. Bill Clinton's keynote address was made at Mackie's engineering, which he hailed as a symbol of reconciliation and economic rebirth: '(Mackie's) has long been a symbol of world-class engineering; the textile machines you make permit people to weave disparate threads into remarkable fabrics. That is now what you must do here with the people of Northern Ireland.'[248]

The 'Peace Dividend' may not have been as large or as transformative as some had hoped, but the face of Belfast has changed remarkably in the last twenty years. Contemporary Belfast is a city undergoing change and redevelopment to an extent almost incomparable to anywhere else in Europe. There was a 50 per cent increase in the number of hotel rooms in the city in the year 2018 alone.[249] The spring 2019 fire at the historic Primark building notwithstanding, central Belfast has experienced an extended period of rejuvenation and growth.[250] At the centre of the action is the Laganside redevelopment discussed by the Thatcher

[247] See for example, Sir George Quigley, 'Achieving Transformational Change', in *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland, 2nd Edition*, ed. Marianne Elliott (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 17.
[248] 'Mackie's Workers Win Rich Praise', *The Irish News*, 1 December 1995, page 8.
[249] Margaret Canning, 'Belfast hotel boom: city sees 47pc increase in room numbers in the past year alone', *Irish Independent*, 11 September 2018, https://www.independent.ie/business/irish/belfast-hotel-boom-city-sees-47pc-increase-in-room-numbers-in-the-past-year-alone-37303113.html.
[250] Harcourt Developments, 'Titanic Quarter: Regenerating Belfast, promotional booklet', published 2007, D4413/5/20/26, PRONI.

government and the Titanic Quarter, which together have given Belfast a new look 21st century waterfront. Much of this redevelopment has taken the form of public-private partnerships, such as the 'Northern Ireland Growth Challenge' of the 1990s.[251]

At the centre of all of these redevelopment efforts is the holy grail of tourism. Tourism is absolutely critical to the 21st century Belfast economy, but this is not always a reliable source of income, nor is it primarily a source of high-wage jobs. In a study of cultural development and event promotion in Derry/Londonderry, Philip Boland and his colleagues have found that such expansion of the cultural and creative sectors has not engendered a broad-based economic recovery and created a sense of disillusionment among the poorer segments of the population.[252] The combined legacy of deindustrialisation and the Troubles has created one of the Belfast's most successful tourist attractions: the personal black taxi tour of the murals and walls. The tours are a fascinating, deeply personal way to learn about Northern Irish history, but to some extent they also exploit the combined economic and physical trauma experienced by inner-city communities and do not provide a sound basis for broad-based economic growth.

Deindustrialisation and tourism also make for a troubling mix at the Titanic Quarter. Titanic Quarter, built on the lands of Harland & Wolff on Queen's Island,[253] is a sanitised space, a sort of historical playground for tourists and the creative classes.[254] Phil Ramsey describes it as a 'pleasingly blank canvas' on which a new neighbourhood could be built, completely disconnected from its history and surroundings.[255] It is bustling with life during the week, filled with workers from the adjacent science park and film studios, students from Belfast Metropolitan College, and researchers such as myself visiting the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). The working class has been made 'invisible', and the effects of industrial decline are largely absent from the narrative presented to visitors, of great industrial triumph symbolised by the Titanic followed by a post-industrial rebirth in the post-Troubles era. Hodson interviewed former shipyard workers who rarely travel to the area, despite living a short walk away, because they feel out of place and unwelcome.[256] Deindustrialisation and the Troubles are deeply intertwined in the history of Belfast. Just as the legacies of the Troubles lives on in divided neighbourhoods & schools, peace walls, et cetera, the legacies of deindustrialisation also live on in the built environment, the inequitable distribution of the 'peace dividend', and the erasure of the working class from the places where they once worked and lived.

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[251] Esmond Birnie & David Hitchens, *Northern Ireland Economy: Performance, Prospects, Policy* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999), 145.
[252] Philip Boland, Brendan Murtagh & Peter Shirlow, 'Neoliberal Place Competition and Culturephilia: Explored through the Lens of Derry-Londonderry', *Social & Cultural Geography* 21 (2020): 788-809
[253] H&W remains in business as of the time of writing (June 2020), despite a 2019 financial collapse and change of ownership. However, it employs less than 100 full time staff, occupies a small portion of its former property, and specialises in ship repair and some offshore construction. John Campbell, 'Harland and Wolff: Belfast shipyard bought by UK firm', *BBC News*, 1 October 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-49889573.
[254] Pete Hodson, 'Titanic Struggle: Memory, Heritage and Shipyard Deindustrialization in Belfast' *History Workshop Journal* 87 (2019): 225.
[255] Phil Ramsey, ''A Pleasingly Blank Canvas': Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland and the Case of Titanic Quarter,' *Space and Polity* 17 (2013): 164-179.
[256] Hodson, 'Titanic Struggle: Memory, Heritage and Shipyard Deindustrialization in Belfast', 232-36.

Figure 6: Titanic Quarter, Belfast (photo taken by author, 2017)

Conclusion

As we have seen in Oldham, and as we will see in Coventry and Motherwell, Belfast's economic problems were a combination of structural deindustrialisation and unique local frailties. Like Oldham, Belfast was heavily dependent on 'sunset industries' like textiles, which were in decline all across the UK. This alone explains a large proportion of the economic decline. But as in Coventry, this is not a sufficient explanation: there were specific local factors that created a particular challenging situation. Belfast was remote from the rest of the UK, with a very small local market, limited economies of scale, and a small and segregated workforce. Belfast missed out on the postwar boom era experienced by most of the rest of the UK, but even so the 1960s marked a considerable deterioration of the economic situation, which added tension to an already febrile political environment.

The process of deindustrialisation in Belfast was distinct: it was mitigated by much greater levels of economic intervention than on the mainland, but at the same time made more protracted by its intertwining with the onset of violence, creating concentrations of poverty and unemployment worse than anywhere else in the British Isles. Local organisations like the Shankill Community Council, and individual residents like Monica Slavin, fought for greater support for improved provisions for children, youth, and most importantly overworked mothers, recognising that this was the only route to a brighter economic and social future for the whole community. Government was receptive to local demands, but preferred short-term, cosmetic fixes, shifting the responsibility for long-term solutions onto localities and failing to grapple with the way structural misogyny held women back from the workplace.

Deindustrialisation has shaped so many of the key features of contemporary Northern Ireland politics and society, including the built environment of Belfast, the provision of social services, the struggle to end Catholic discrimination in the workplace, and the challenge of Protestant education outcomes. It is time that deindustrialisation be placed at the centre of the story of 20th century Belfast, and through the study of deindustrialisation, it is time that Belfast be placed back at the centre of the history of the 20th century United Kingdom.

Chapter 3:
Can the Phoenix Rise Again?: The Sudden Deindustrialisation of Britain's Motor City, Coventry

Only a few weeks into his 'English Journey', writer and commentator J. B. Priestley arrived in Coventry in the autumn of 1933 to find it humming with life. Unlike the heavy industrial towns he would encounter further north, Coventry was already bouncing back from the Great Depression. Its secret to success, Priestley believed, was the adaptability and foresight of the city's consumer-focussed manufacturing industries. Coventry, Priestley said, 'seems to have acquired the trick of keeping up with the times, a trick that many of our industrial cities find hard to learn. It made bicycles when everybody was cycling, cars when everyone wanted a motor, and now it is also busy with aeroplanes, wireless sets, and various electrical contrivances, including the apparatus used by the Talkies'.[1]

And just as it rose from the Great Depression, it would again rise like a phoenix, this time from literal flames, after the November 1940 Coventry Blitz. Coventry was a poster child of postwar social democracy - a wealthy, apparently contented city of skilled workers protected by powerful trade unions and making twenty percent higher than the average national wage.[2] In the 1950s and 60s the primary sociological question being asked of communities like Coventry was whether affluence had stripped their residents of their working class identity and outlook through the process of embourgeoisement.[3]

However, below the surface of affluence and contentment was a city that was facing serious challenges. Growing frustration with low wages and overbearing management led to unprecedented militancy on the shop floors of many automakers, which in turn created a culture of deeply acrimonious labour relations that coloured the reputation of the industry and infected civic politics. Women's work was undervalued in this staunchly 'male-breadwinner' oriented community. The growing South Asian population, who came to fill labour shortages in the car plants, quickly found themselves treated as second class citizens, even within their own unions.[4] Despite assumptions that poverty would disappear in an affluent society, it persistently failed to do so.[5] As the automakers moved out of inner-city premises to larger suburban and exurban locations, working-class inner-city neighbourhoods like Hillfields declined, and a largely racialized population was trapped by the intersection of race and class in a declining physical environment with little access to employment. Meanwhile, beneath the surface of industrial prosperity, the British car industry was running into serious trouble.

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[1] J. B. Priestley, *An English Journey* (New York: Harper's, 1934), 55.

[2] K. Knowles, J.C. Knowles & D. Robinson, 'Wage Movements in Coventry', *Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Economics and Statistics* 31, no. 1 (1969): 2.

[3] The most famous example of this literature is of course Goldthorpe's study of car workers in Luton – however, a similar work exists on Coventry: Graham Turner, *The Car Makers*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1962). John Goldthorpe et al, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[4] For a discussion of racial discrimination within trade unions, see Ron Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain* (Aldershot: Gower, 1987).

[5] The idea that poverty was actually being eliminated began to be challenged in the 1960s by the work of social researchers like Peter Townsend and Brian Abel-Smith. See their famous study, Peter Townsend & Brian Abel-Smith, *The Poor and the Poorest: A New Analysis of the Ministry of Labour's Family Expenditure Surveys of 1953-54 and 1960* (London: G. Bell, 1966).

As late as 1971, 46 per cent of all male employment and 13 per cent of female employment in Coventry was in the vehicle manufacturing industry alone. And as late as January 1974, in the middle of the Three-Day Week, the unemployment rate in Coventry was still only 3 per cent, below the national average of 3.6 per cent.[6] But the oil crisis and the rise of foreign competition exposed the long-standing weaknesses of the British car industry, and within two years both Chrysler UK and British Leyland had been bailed out and forced to undergo major restructuring by Tony Benn's Department of Industry. Then, the policies of the new Thatcher government turned the decline into a collapse, with the sale of Chrysler UK to Peugeot for just $1.00 and the virtual cessation of mass car production by British Leyland. By 1983, 53,000 manufacturing jobs had vanished, including 21,000 job losses at British Leyland and 7,000 at Chrysler/Peugeot, and official unemployment had climbed into the high teens.[7] As University of Warwick Politics Professor Stan Taylor wrote in 1980, 'Only a few years ago it was almost inconceivable that, for example, Coventry could replace Tyneside as the unemployment black spot of England; now it is probable'.[8] By the summer of 1981, the bank The Specials could sing of Coventry as a 'Ghost Town', and although some Coventrians angrily rejected the song's image of their city, it captured the bleak reality of the moment:

> This town (town) is coming like a ghost town
> Why must the youth fight against themselves?
> Government leaving the youth on the shelf
> This place (town) is coming like a ghost town
> No job to be found in this country
> Can't go on no more
> The people getting angry

This chapter will discuss many of the themes to which the song refers, including the city's abandonment by government, the impact of racial divisions and inequalities among youth in a post-industrial context, and the political ramifications of growing frustration and disillusionment.

The chapter will begin with a business and economic history, explaining the development and foibles of the British car industry, and how Coventry came to be such an important manufacturing centre, but one without any command-and-control role whatsoever. It will discuss how the conflicting demands of social democracy drove the reorganisation of the car industry in ways that damaged the position of Coventry and weakened the industry's competitiveness at the exact moment that it was beginning to lose ground to foreign car makers. It will explore the position of South Asian migrants in this industry city, and the ways they built community and mobilised politically in the face of racism and residential segregation.

Next the chapter will trace impact and aftermath of the economic crisis that hit the city starting in the early 1970s. Deindustrialisation fundamentally reshaped the very nature of class and community across the UK, but it did so in different ways, through different methods, and at

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[6] 'Publications and other papers mainly concerning economic recession in Coventry', 1978-1984, MSS.373/29, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (hereafter MRC).
[7] Michael Healey & David Clark, 'De-industrialisation and Employment Decline in the West Midlands and Coventry' (report), Coventry Polytechnic, October 1983, page 5-7, 1134/2/1/1/27, MRC.
[8] Stan Taylor, 'De-Industrialisation and Unemployment in the West Midlands', *The Political Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1981): 65.

different speeds. In some cases, like the cotton mill town of Oldham, deindustrialisation took the form of a long, drawn out process; in others, like in Coventry, it was a sudden collapse. This sudden collapse caused a particularly abrupt unraveling of the so-called social-democratic consensus, creating an environment where innovative and disruptive political ideas and movements could develop. Rather than white men, it would once again be women and ethnic minorities who would suffer the most as a result of the crisis. The rest of the chapter will focus on these impacts, but also explore a variety of different responses to the crisis, as trade unions, the Indian Workers' Association, and even the Church of England found their societal role threatened and sought to serve the community in new ways. It will then explore in more detail two responses which would come out of the same community, based on similar assumptions, but would diverge and come to be representative of two of the dominant strains of left-wing political thought in Britain over the last 40 years. Finally, the chapter will end with a postscript about the afterlife of the Coventry car industry and some thoughts about the position of industry in 'post-industrial Britain'.

The Rise of the Motor City

Coventry experienced a uniquely long period of industrial prosperity. Jefferson Cowie is quick to remind us that, for many if not most American industrial workers, the immediate postwar era of job stability, high wages, reasonable hours, and powerful unions was 'the great exception' to the majority of American working-class history.[9] In Britain, steel workers and coal miners had gone through a century of struggle to achieve improved working conditions, 40-hour weeks, and collective bargaining. For the majority-female workforces in Belfast linen mills and Oldham cotton mills, even the postwar years did not amount to a golden age – jobs remained unstable, pay remained low, and union protections limited. However, Coventry's prosperity had lasted, with several notable interruptions, since the late 19th century.

In the mid-to-late 19th century Coventry went through a difficult and profound transition from silk weaving and watchmaking to bicycle, motor and metal manufacturing.[10] For a time, the bicycle industry was most significant, but with the automobile age dawning in the final years of the century, numerous bicycle manufacturers tried to shift into building self-powered vehicles. The two most significant in the development of Coventry's auto industry were Singer and Humber. Humber Cycles was founded in the 1870s, and in 1896 it moved to new Coventry premises and produced its first automotive prototype in 1896. In 1928, the Rootes family expanded into the auto industry and acquired Humber, as well as another Coventry area car maker, Hillman. Meanwhile, George Singer opened a bicycle factory in 1875, and began motor vehicle production in 1901, producing both motorcycles and full-sized cars. With a factory on the north-east side of the city centre, Singer grew to be the third largest automaker in the UK by the late 1920s, but it struggled in the postwar market and was acquired by Rootes in 1955. Rootes would eventually concentrate operations at Ryton, a Warwickshire village on the south-east edge of Coventry, which had originally been home to a Hillman plant. At the onset of the Second World War, Rootes was tasked with building a huge factory in Ryton for the production

[9] Jefferson Cowie, *The Great Exception - the New Deal and the Limits of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).
[10] David Thoms & Tom Donnelly, *The Coventry Motor Industry: Birth to Renaissance* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 1.

of military aeroplanes. It was this factory that would be at the centre of the Coventry auto industry in the postwar era. [11]

In addition to the pieces that came together to form Rootes, Coventry was home to a variety of other small automakers in the first years of the twentieth century, benefitting from the short supply chains and concentration of expertise dating back to the bicycle boom. Triumph had also begun as a bicycle maker in the 1880s before shifted into motorcycles and automobiles after the turn of the century, operating out of a variety of factories on the north side of the city. Insolvent by the start of the Second World War, Triumph would be acquired by Standard Motors in 1944, another major Coventry based producer centred in Canley on the south-west side of the city.[12]

Coventry thus had an industrial history dating back well into the 19th century, but it grew into a large centre only in the early 20th century with the advent of the auto industry. In 1901 the population was just 69,978 but by 1911 it was 106,349. This massive expansion of the motor industry drew in migrants from across England, including almost 3,000 from London in the first decade of the 20th century.[13] This rapid growth continued in the interwar period, with the population reaching 216,000 by 1941. Despite limited trade union penetration, wages for manual workers were considerably higher than in other manpower-heavy industries like coal mining and textiles.[14] It was a city primarily of privately built, owner-occupied houses, and housing construction could not keep pace with the growth of the workforce. In 1929, an estimated 27,000 people commuted into the city from surrounding areas for work, including many thousands from Birmingham.[15] Thus Coventry was not a 'traditional working-class' city. It was a city of migrants: some from the local area, some from the depressed North, and some from the other side of the world. All were attracted by the prospect of plentiful employment, for both men and women, in clean, modern industries.

The auto industry went through cycles of boom and bust over the first half of the twentieth century. There was an initial boom in the first years of the century: 221 firms entered the industry between 1901 and 1905, but by 1914 all but twenty had either discontinued motor production or gone out of business altogether.[16] Another frantic boom occurred in 1919, with forty new models introduced to the British market in 1919 and 1920 alone.[17] Austin's plant at Longbridge, on the edge of Birmingham, had been massively expanded for munitions production during the war and now became the largest car factory in the country.[18] But in addition to domestic expansion, there was also a rapid increase in American imports, which brought demands for higher tariffs from some quarters, and Ford's decision to buy land at the Dagenham docks in 1924, opening the way to the construction of what was for a time the largest automobile manufacturing plant in Europe.[19] Once again, this over-production led to a crisis and the number of companies producing cars in Britain fell from eighty-eight in 1922 to thirty-one in 1929. And as smaller car makers fell away, a few began their climb to the top. By 1930

[11] 'CDP Reports: Cars and Coventry: The British Economy in Trouble' July 1975, 1134/2/1/1/24, MRC.
[12] Ibid, 1134/2/1/1/24, MRC.
[13] Thoms & Donnelly, *The Coventry Motor Industry*, 1-2.
[14] Edward Hunt*, Regional Wage Variations in Britain 1850-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 160-61.
[15] Christopher Saunders, *Seasonal Variations in Employment* (London: Longmans, 1936), 98; *Birmingham Gazette*, 3 November 1937.
[16] S. B. Saul, 'The Motor Industry in Britain to 1914', *Business History* 5 (1962): 22-44.
[17] William Plowden, *The Motor Car and Politics in Britain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973).
[18] Roy Church, *The Rise and Decline of the British Motor Industry* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 10.
[19] David Burgess Wise, *Ford at Dagenham: The Rise and Fall of Detroit in Europe* (Derby: Breedon Books, 2001).

Morris, Austin and Singer collectively accounted for 75 per cent of UK production, following not far behind by Ford, Vauxhall (acquired by General Motors in 1925), and Standard and Rootes.[20] Coventry was thus at the centre of the British car industry, with three of the seven largest producers headquartered in the city.

Despite the decline in prices with the arrival of Ford and the consolidation of the industry, in the interwar period car ownership was still a middle-class phenomenon. The price of an average family car could be similar to that of a semi-detached house in a mid-sized city like Coventry. In addition to the high cost of purchase and the low spending power of British consumers, from 1920 there was an annual tax on all cars of £1 per horsepower, plus a petrol duty. Collectively these taxes were eight times the equivalent imposed on car owners in the US. In 1939 there was one car in use for every twenty-four people in Britain, the same as in France and twice that of Germany, but only around a quarter of the equivalent saturation of the US market. Britain and the rest of Western Europe would not reach 1920s American levels of car ownership until the 1960s.[21] Some scholars point to interwar Britain's lack of a mass automobile market as a troubling failure, blaming the taxes, the tariffs, the management, et cetera.[22] However, it is simply unreasonable to suggest that Britain could have ever recreated the American situation, with its vast internal market, higher living standards, and incredibly cheap fuel. Ford was able to build half a million V8s in the US for 30 per cent lower than the price of the same model at Dagenham, which only produced 4,000 cars a year.[23] Britain's interwar auto industry was relatively small, but it was robust, and the prosperous Coventry seen by J. B. Priestley was at its very centre.

Postwar Reconstruction Leaves Some Behind

Military historians continue to debate Hitler's rationale for the Coventry Blitz of November 1940. Some argue that the concentration of munitions and aircraft factories, including the vast Armstrong-Whitworth factory and the various auto plants converted to aeroplane engines were behind his decision.[24] Others claim his reasons were more emotional: that the attack was in response to British raids on Munich and that Coventry was chosen because of its beautifully preserved medieval city centre. Regardless of the rationale, the Blitz destroyed much of old city, including the Cathedral and the Singer and Triumph factories.[25]

As the Second World War drew to a close, the focus turned to rebuilding. Coventry became a showcase for postwar planning and its central shopping precinct was reconstructed on the basis of the Gibson Plan, named after the City Architect Donald Gibson.[26] The competing priorities of the postwar reconstruction of Coventry proved a significant problem for the poorer inner-city neighbourhoods like Hillfields. Hillfields was the entry point for successive waves of migrants to Coventry, just as Glodwick had been in Oldham, with a large housing stock of

[20] George Maxcy & Aubrey Silberston, *The British Motor Industry* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959).
[21] Church, *The Rise and Decline of the British Motor Industry*, 18.
[22] See for example Karel Williams, John Williams & Dennis Thomas, *Why are the British Bad at Manufacturing?* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).
[23] Church, *The Rise and Decline of the British Motor Industry*, 18.
[24] David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane,* 73.
[25] Karen Farrington, *The Blitzed City: The Destruction of Coventry, 1940* (London: Aurum Press, 2015).
[26] Phil Hubbard, Lucy Faire & Keith Lilley, 'Contesting the Modern City: Reconstruction and Everyday Life in Post-War Coventry', *Planning Perspectives* 18 (2003): 377-397; Nick Tiratsoo, *Reconstruction, Affluence, and Labour Politics: Coventry 1945-60* (London: Routledge, 1990), 9-15.

dilapidated terraced housing close to major industrial employment. By 1945, it was home to most of the city's small but growing South Asian community, and it was in desperate need of renovation and revitalisation. But while £195 million was spent on major engineering and construction projects in Coventry in the twenty years following 1945, much of it was earmarked for the shopping precinct or more road expansions. With the city's population continuing to grow rapidly, there was little money left for housing improvement or re-design in Hillfields.[27] At the same time, the industry that had been interspersed through inner city neighbourhoods like Hillfields was moved to larger sites on the edge of the city. Rootes' factory at Ryton has been mentioned, and Triumph abandoned its inner-city location after one of its factories was destroyed in the Blitz, moving to an enlarged Standard factory at Canley. Thus, Hillfields was cut off from the city centre by the ring road and the precinct redesign, it lost out on funding for housing improvement, and its primary sources of employment were moved to faraway suburbs. Hillfields seemed almost destined for postwar problems.

The Auto Industry Runs into Trouble

The postwar period was essentially one of 'extensive growth' in the UK auto industry: the application of pre-existing innovations on a larger and more efficient scale to reach an expanding market.[28] Mass production techniques that had developed in the interwar period faced demand-side constraints preventing their full application during the depression years of the 1930s, constraints that disappeared in the years of postwar growth.[29] The transformation of the automobile from a luxury product to a mass-market item had begun in the interwar years, but it essentially stalled in the 30s and 40s and was only completed in Britain in the 1950s and 60s.[30]

For a short period following the end of the Second World War, Britain's auto industry faced the most advantageous market conditions imaginable. There was massive pent-up demand domestically, in Europe, and across the Commonwealth. American car makers were trying to keep up with their own domestic demand and had little extra capacity to devote to the export trade. Thus for a short period in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Britain became the leading auto exporter in the world, and car exports did wonders for the UK's tenuous balance of payments.[31] No one expected this situation to last forever, but the ramping up of French, German and Italian production allowed them to catch up with Britain by the late 1950s. By 1963, British export growth had essentially ground to a halt, and key international markets were progressively lost. The loss of Commonwealth preferences was part of the problem, as was the failure to enter the European Economic Community (EEC), which began to put up tariff barriers against British made cars.[32] Additionally, however, there were a series of growing deficiencies

[27] CDP Reports and Papers, 1973: Copy of Article by John Bennington, 'The Flaw in the Pluralist Heaven: Changing Strategies in the Coventry CDP', 1134/2/1/1/22, MRC. Also published in Ray Lees & George Smith (eds.), *Action-Research in Community Development* (London: Routledge, 1977).
[28] Barry Eichengreen, *The European Economy since 1945*, 86-130.
[29] Sue Bowden, 'Demand and Supply Constraints in the Interwar UK Car Industry: Did the Manufacturers Get It Right?', *Business History* 33, no. 2 (1991): 242-67.
[30] Church, *The Rise and Decline of the British Motor Industry*, 18-22.
[31] Ibid, 44.
[32] Sue Bowden, 'Uncertainty and the Competitive Decline of the British Motor Industry: 1945–75', *New Political Economy* 3, no. 1 (1998): 103-120.

within the British car industry, deficiencies that had been hidden in the boom years but were now exposed.

Part of the problem was the fragmented production structure. Just as we have seen in Oldham's textile industry, British car manufacturers operated relatively small plants, and none of the Coventry operations produced the 250,000 units per annum that industry analysts believed was the necessary economy of scale.[33] The fragmented ownership structure meant that no company had the type of capital necessary to fully modernise their production, and so by 1960 British plants were considerably less advanced than their German and French competitors, whose plants were generally larger and ownership more centralised. By 1960, German car production had surpassed Britain's and by 1970 Britain had fallen to fifth in the world production behind the US, Japan, Germany and France. American brands had long been a feature of the British market, but American companies had chosen to establish production in the UK, either through direct investment, such as Ford in Dagenham, or through the acquisition of a domestic manufacturer, as in GM's 1925 purchase of Vauxhall or Chrysler's takeover of Rootes in the 1960s. French, German, and Japanese-built cars, on the other hand, began arriving on the shores in large numbers in the late 1960s. In 1970, foreign-built cars accounted for 10 per cent of new registrations, but by 1981 they accounted for 56 per cent.[34] Thus the British car industry faced a perfect storm – a sudden end to the apparently inexorable rise of car ownership in Britain,[35] and an incredible wave of affordable, high-quality foreign built cars flooding into a market that they had once taken for granted.

In response to this fragmented structure, the 1960s saw a series of consolidations and purchases, often forced upon resistant ownership by government or creditors: Rootes were taken over by Chrysler, Standard-Triumph merged into Leyland, Rover merged into Leyland, Jaguar merged into BMC, and finally the 1968 merger of BMC and Leyland into the industrial behemoth of British Leyland Motor Corporation Limited. This was intended to increase economies of scale and allow the streamlining of production, but British Leyland proved incredibly unwieldy and the various pieces of the organisation continued to operate semi-independently, often competing against each other. British Leyland and Chrysler UK were thus under-capitalised and fragmented companies. In the era of peak extensive growth, they had not consolidated their operations sufficiently and the average size of their assembly plants was well below that of their European or American competitors.[36] But just as they attempted to improve their efficiency and consolidate operations, the era of extensive growth was coming to an end, with the apparently endless growth of car sales coming to an abrupt halt. In the 1970s, the global auto industry reacted to the shocks of the oil crisis and stagflation by shifting to intensive

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[33] Aubrey Silbertson, 'The Motor Industry 1955-1964', *Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Economics and Statistics* 27, no. 4 (1965): 253-86.

[34] Michael Healey & David Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response in the West Midlands: The Case of Coventry', *Regional Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 311-12.

[35] Britain experienced an incredible rise in car ownership and new car registrations through the entire postwar era: new registrations were approximately 100,000 in 1950 and rose to approximately 1.7 million at their peak in 1971. However, this trend was suddenly reversed in the context of the early 1970s recession, falling back to approximately 1 million new registrations per year by the late 1970s, a trend that would not be reversed until the mid 1980s. Healey & Clark, 'De-industrialisation and Employment Decline in the West Midlands and Coventry', figure 7, 1134/2/1/1/27, MRC; Andrew Friedman, *Industry and Labour: Class Struggle at Work and Monopoly Capitalism* (London: MacMillan Press, 1977), 184.

[36] 'Cars and Coventry: The British Economy in Trouble', report by A. Friedman of Bristol University for the Coventry Community Development Project, July 1975, 1134/2/1/1/24, MRC.

growth, using new computer technologies and just-in-time delivery to achieve flexible specialisation.[37] Britain's automakers struggled to follow suit.

Nicholas Crafts has argued that comfortable, inefficient practices on the part of both management and labour held back Britain from its true economic potential during the postwar boom years and made the country unprepared for growing international competition.[38] It is easy to pick out specific problems with the management of Britain's car companies – from the overbearing role of the Rootes family in their business to the production of unpopular and unreliable models – but the fundamental problems were structural in nature and can be seen even more clearly by focussing in on the situation in Coventry.

Coventry's Golden Age Ends Abruptly

Postwar Coventry was not wholly dependent on the auto industry. During the First World War, General Electric Company opened a factory at Copsewood Grange to produce 'magnetos', or small magnetic electricity generators. After the war, the factory shifted into the production of telephone equipment. 'GEC' would go on to be one of the mainstays of Coventry's industrial base for the remainder of the century.[39] As previously alluded to, Coventry had also been a centre of aeroplane production since the First World War.[40] Particularly significant in its development was the Siddeley company, an automotive company that switched to military planes during the war and continued with the production of passenger aircraft in the interwar era.

The defence reviews of the 1960s had a massive effect on the aerospace industry, Coventry's second biggest employer.[41] It was actually the Conservatives who began the pull back from grand aerospace projects in the late 1950s with the cancellation of the supersonic bombers and fighters in 1957.[42] However, the process continued under Labour. David Edgerton has argued the following about Labour's disregard for aerospace: 'as far as Harold Wilson was concerned, the sonic boom of the scientific revolution was an appalling waste of public money. The 'white heat' was elsewhere, in computers, machine tools, telecommunications and electronics, in technologies which could be applied quickly in industry. Wilson attacked the central pier of technological England.'[43] This was more than a shift of domestic priorities. The end of the British Empire forced a reconsideration of Britain's global role, and as with the naval retreat from east of Suez, the Royal Air Force was slowly cut back. Britain's aeroplane manufacturers, like their counterparts in the auto industry, were overly fragmented, and could not compete with American producers in terms of price or quantity, and so in 1965 Labour cancelled the HS.681 transport aircraft and bought aircraft from Lockheed in

[37] James Foreman-Peck, Sue Bowden & Alan McKinlay, *The British Motor Industry* (Manchester University Press, 1995), 217-50.
[38] Charles Bean & Nicholas Crafts, 'British Economic Growth since 1945: Relative Economic Decline...and Renaissance?', in *Economic Growth in Europe since 1945*, eds. Nicholas Crafts & Gianni Toniolo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 131-172; Martin Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*.
[39] Thoms & Donnelly, *The Coventry Motor Industry*, 6.
[40] Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane,* 7.
[41] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 306.
[42] Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane*, 90.
[43] Ibid, 91.

the USA instead.[44] Siddeley shut its plant in Baginton on the south side of Coventry as a result, and 11,000 aerospace jobs were lost in the city between 1962 and 67.[45]

The collapse of the aerospace industry was manageable in the context of the relative health of the rest of the economy, particularly as the car industry remained strong, and unemployment in Coventry had dropped back below the national average by 1969. However, the loss of this important secondary pillar of Coventry's industrial made the city even more reliant on the motor industry, and thus paved the way for the local economic calamity of the following decade.

In 1971, the Gross Domestic Product per capita of the West Midlands was 102.7 per cent of the UK average. Considering the outsized role of the City of London, even during this period, the West Midlands was a highly prosperous engine of the UK economy. However, in the following decade, even as the entire UK struggled, the West Midlands faced a complete reversal of its position, and in 1981 it had dropped to 90.6 per cent of the UK average.[46] This was the biggest shift in position of any region in the UK.[47] Nowhere was the damage felt more directly than in Coventry: the city lost 46 per cent of its manufacturing jobs between 1974 and 1982, as opposed to a drop of 27 per cent across Britain and 32 per cent in the West Midlands overall.[48] Whereas Birmingham had a variety of industries and employment, including light engineering and services, Coventry had all of its eggs in one basket. In 1978, no similarly sized city in the whole country relied on manufacturing employment to the extent that Coventry did.[49]

Coventry's problems were therefore the result of the city's particular dependence on manufacturing industries at a time when these industries were undergoing a massive contraction across the country. Unlike much of the traditional industrial heartlands, Coventry had not deindustrialised in any meaningful sense before the 1970s, and unlike London and the south-east, it had not undergone a partial transition to a service-oriented economy. Thus, it was always going to be hit disproportionately hard by the collapse of UK manufacturing.[50] Of the 53,000 manufacturing jobs lost in Coventry between 1974 and 1982, Fothergill and Gudgin's study of regional employment trends found that 31,500 of the losses are attributable simply to the national trend.[51] What about the rest? 4,500 losses were because of the specific mix of industrial sectors in Coventry, particularly the car industry, which shed jobs faster than the national average in this period. But the remainder, nearly 17,000, cannot be explained by any link to broader national trends. Fothergill and Gudgin suggest that Coventry has suffered from the 'constrained location' of its large factories, often located in old-fashioned premises in poor logistical locations with little room for expansion.[52] However, by the late 1970s Coventry City Council had worked to free up greenfield sites and reduce planning restrictions, with little

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[44] Derek Wood, *Project Cancelled: A Searching Criticism of the Abandonment of Britain's Advanced Aircraft Projects* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1975).
[45] Thoms & Donnelly, *The Coventry Motor Industry*, 8-9.
[46] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 304.
[47] Alan Townsend, *The Impact of Recession on Industry, Employment, and the Regions, 1976-1981* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).
[48] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 306.
[49] Ibid, 308.
[50] Jim Tomlinson, 'De-Industrialization Not Decline', 76-99.
[51] Stephen Fothergill & Graham Gudgin, 'Regional Employment Change: A Sub-Regional Explanation', *Progress in Planning* 12, no. 3 (1979): 155-219.
[52] Stephen Fothergill & Graham Gudgin, *Unequal Growth: Urban and Regional Employment Change in the UK* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 68.

effect.[53] Fothergill and Gudgin also pointed to the top-heavy nature of Coventry's corporate structure – the small number of very large firms in the city, they argued, tended to crowd-out smaller enterprises and thereby reduce the opportunities available to entrepreneurs.[54]

Although Coventry was an auto manufacturing centre like no other in Britain, it was not a command centre of the postwar British economy and its major employers had relatively shallow corporate roots in the city. Before the Second World War, Coventry had been the headquarters of several of Britain's most important automakers. Unfortunately, the postwar consolidation of the UK car industry brought this era to an end. Chrysler's takeover of Rootes and Leyland Motors's takeover of Standard-Triumph turned Coventry into a branch plant site for several conglomerates. Coventry may have been more dependent on the auto industry than any other community in Britain, but it was no longer the centre of anyone's business or a particularly essential piece in the structure of the industry. Thus, when Sir Michael Edwardes was given control of British Leyland in 1977 and asked to bring the company back to financial health, the Coventry operations were among the hardest hit. The company's volume car assembly was to be consolidated primarily in Birmingham and Oxford, close to body pressing and other key production facilities.[55]

Of the fifteen largest firms operating in the city, only one was headquartered in Coventry by the 1970s.[56] However, there were also other possible causes of Coventry's particularly deep economic problems. Some have suggested that the militancy of Coventry auto workers and the high wages that they achieved were also at fault.[57] According to one estimate, between 1968 and 1973 the Coventry region lost more days as a result of localised work-stoppages (as opposed to national or industry wide strikes) than any other sub-region in the UK.[58]

What was causing this level of industrial unrest? It is worthwhile to briefly pause for a moment and consider what was at the heart of Coventry's unique industrial culture. The early 1960s saw an increase in labour unrest across industry. The causes of this revival of militancy are widely debated: Alastair Reid has argued that declining unemployment and rising wages increased workers' sense of power,[59] while according to Chris Howell a new generation of workers simply refused to accept the direction of more conservative trade union bosses.[60] But no sector experienced a greater spike in labour unrest than the automotive industry. Unlike the coal industry or the railways, car workers did not have a long tradition of militancy, and in the immediate postwar period they had little job security and limited union protections.[61] Yet by the 1970s, the British auto industry had developed an international reputation for high wages and union militancy.

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[53] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 309.
[54] Fothergill And Gudgin, *Unequal Growth*, 113
[55] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 313.
[56] Ibid, 311.
[57] T. Mallier & M. Rosser, 'The Decline and Fall of the Coventry Car Industry', *The Business Economist* 13 (1982): 27.
[58] C. T. B. Smith et al, *Strikes in Britain: A Research Study of Industrial Stoppages in the United Kingdom*, (London: HMSO, 1978).
[59] Alastair Reid, *United We Stand: A History of Britain's Trade Unions* (London: Penguin Books 2005), 279–81.
[60] Chris Howell, *Trade Unions and the State: The Construction of Industrial Relations Institutions in Britain, 1890-2000* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[61] Jack Saunders, 'The Untraditional Worker: Class Re-Formation in Britain 1945-65,' *Twentieth Century British History* 26 (2015): 227-30.

Jack Saunders has argued that car workers created their own class consciousness through a constant, low-level collective struggle with management on the shop floors. This struggle was facilitated by the nature of the piecemeal system, where workers were paid a set rate for each individual task. Instead of a standardized wage-based system, where hourly rates were negotiated between top management and union bosses, the piecework system was open to constant struggle over individual rate changes and the retiming of tasks.[62] This reality is reflected in the pages of the log books of the Joint Shop Stewards at both Ryton and Canley.[63] There was a constant low grade struggle to protect pay rates, tea breaks, skill classifications, and a variety of small gains from the constant pressure of management for cost savings, with low level committees between shop stewards and foremen convened almost daily at Canley to manage these disputes.[64] The union leadership was largely absent from these struggles and often pressed workers to accept company demands. As a result, the relationship between the shop floor and the union leadership progressively deteriorated, and when the industry faced mounting challenges in the late 1970s, workers often resisted union-negotiated austerity packages, going on unauthorised strikes that cut production levels at Ryton and Canley to frighteningly low levels.[65]

The *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, under Conservative ownership, constantly blamed the 'greedy' workers for the labour unrest and in turn blamed the labour unrest for Coventry's economic problems.[66] They pointed the finger at 'Communist agitators' like Derek Robinson, whose firing at Longbridge in early 1980 caused sympathy strikes, for bringing problems to the city.[67] But in reality, this culture developed from the bottom-up, out of necessity and due to specific local conditions, as workers struggled with overbearing management and unresponsive union leadership.

Social Democracy and Political Choices

Coventry's auto industry thus struggled as a result of broken labour relationships and toxic working environments. In addition, there were other macro problems, including one which exposed many of the contradictions of the social democratic postwar consensus: regional policy. As we will see in Motherwell, the postwar social democratic commitment to the mixed economy led to some contradictory pressures on economic policy making. Even when they were in public ownership, industries like steel and automobiles needed to compete in an

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[62] Ibid, 236-40.
[63] 'Rootes/Chrysler/Talbot Joint Shop Stewards, Joint Shop Stewards' Committee', 1974-77, MSS.315/A/1/1/4, MRC; British Motor Corporation Joint Shop Stewards Committee Minutes and Correspondence, April 1970-1978, MSS.228/FILE No. 3, MRC.
[64] Transport and General Workers' Union, Internal Files, Coventry District, Canley Factory, 1969-79, MSS.208/D/10, MRC.
[65] Transport and General Workers' Union, Internal Files, Tile Hill Factory, 1959-1978. MSS.208/D/7, MRC. For a further exploration of shop floor militancy in 1970s British industry, see Hugh Armstrong Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979); David Coates, *The Crisis of Labour: Industrial Relations and the State in Contemporary Britain* (Oxford: Philip Allan, 1989); P. K. Edwards, 'The Pattern of Collective Industrial Action', in *Industrial Relations in Britain*, ed. George Sayers Bain (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 209–234.
[66] Clipping, 'Grim News for Coventry', *Coventry Evening Telegraph,* 12 February 1980, retrieved in Women's Part-Time Employment in Coventry Project files, MSS.278/6/9, MRC.
[67] Clipping, 'Firm Stand over Robbo Likely', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 2 July 1980, retrieved in Women's Part-Time Employment in Coventry Project files, MSS.278/6/2, MRC.

international market and be as financially self-sufficient as possible, but they also needed to provide employment for depressed areas, even if that labour was not needed. One of the most critical tools of postwar governments for achieving social democratic aims in the context of a market economy was regional policy, and it proved highly controversial in Coventry.[68]

In the 1950s and 60s, the success of the auto industry and the rapid growth of employment of Coventry caused government to see it as a 'source region' from which jobs could be taken and moved to areas of structural unemployment. This again reflected a very particular understanding of the economy: rather than a serious structural crisis, Britain remained a prosperous country, but with residual patches of poverty that could be covered up through a re-organisation of industry. No major change to the mixed economy was required.

According to one estimate, about 39,000 jobs were diverted or relocated from the West Midlands because of regional policy between 1960 and 1974.[69] Peter Tyler suggests that the effect of these losses were minimal, as the West Midlands was indeed producing more jobs than it needed and those lost were replaced by jobs in other sectors.[70] However, others such as Mawson and Smith have suggested that regional policy disrupted the economic structure of the region and of the automobile industry in particular.[71] Of particular significance was the relocation of the Rootes plant to Linwood, Scotland in 1963 and the opening of the Standard Triumph plant at Speke in Merseyside in 1959, both induced by considerable regional policy subsidies.[72]

The government was slow to recognise that Coventry and the West Midlands more generally was no longer the golden goose of the UK economy. As late as 1982 Coventry was still being classified as a 'growth region', along with London and the south-east, despite the complete collapse of its economic base.[73] There was an assumption in government that Coventry's problems could be cyclical, rather than structural, and thus it did not need the kind of long term support and revitalisation that Glasgow or Liverpool required.

Until 1981, firms wishing to expand in the West Midlands needed an Industrial Development Certificate (IDC).[74] There is some debate about the impact of IDCs, as few were ever denied. However, in evidence given to the House of Commons Expenditure Committee review of Regional Development Policies, Chrysler officials said 'Were there no IDCs or were there no constraint, we would undoubtedly have developed in Coventry as one major complex. We have plenty of space . . . The refusal of IDCs meant we expanded at Linwood which necessitated the purchase of land, leaving the land at Coventry unutilised'.[75]

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[68] James Cronin, *Labour and Society in Britain, 1918-1979* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1984).
[69] Peter Tyler, 'The Impact of Regional Policy on a Prosperous Region: The Experience of the West Midlands', *Oxford Economic Papers*, *New Series*, 32, no. 1 (1980): 151-162.
[70] Ibid, 152.
[71] John Mawson & Barbara Smith, *British Regional and Industrial Policy during the 1970s: A Critical Review with Special Reference to the West Midlands in the 1980s* (Birmingham: Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, 1980), 4-6.
[72] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 309.
[73] John House, 'The Regional Perspective', in *The UK Space: Resources, Environment and the Future*, ed. John House (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 1-102.
[74] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 310.
[75] Chrysler (UK) Ltd, 'Memorandum and Letter', in Expenditure Committee (Trade And Industry Sub-Committee), *Regional Development Incentives, Session 1972-73, Minutes of Evidence from October 1972 to June 1973 and Appendices* (London: HMSO, 1973), 40-47, 60.

The plants at Linwood and Speke were essential components of the postwar effort to eliminate unemployment black-spots in the UK. For twenty years, until the crisis of the auto industry swept them away too, these factories provided critical employment to their respective communities. Nevertheless, from a business sense they were completely illogical. They were isolated from their supply chains, too small to be efficient, and struggled with poor management and labour relations. Meanwhile, British Leyland and Chrysler UK remained private businesses, and they needed to compete with French, German, American and Japanese car makers. Even the nationalisation of British Leyland in 1975 did not change the basic fact that it was a corporation that needed to function and compete in a competitive global market. As Industry Secretary, Tony Benn worked hard to prevent the collapse of the company, but did not seriously consider closing the country to auto imports or providing anything beyond short term financial support for the company.[76] Yet government choices over the course of previous decades, including the use of regional policy to move components of their business outside of the West Midlands, had made it more difficult for British Leyland to compete. In the end, the whole industry would come crashing down, weakened by regional policy. This crash would undo everything that regional policy had attempted to accomplish, bringing mass unemployment back to Linwood and Speke and now spreading it to the once prosperous heartland of Coventry.

Just as the industry had been weakened by the political choices related to the propping up of social democratic regional policy, the collapse that began in the 1970s would be accelerated and deepened by the political choices of the Thatcherites. Despite the fact that British Leyland was still a nationalised company, upon its election in 1979 the new government began immediately withdrawing all government support, telling head Michael Edwardes that the business must sink or swim according to profitability.[77] No support was given to redundant workers beyond some basic retraining programs through the Manpower Services Commission.[78] This neoliberal response, which viewed job losses as the inevitable cost of competition and argued that the economy operated on a plain above government control, would outlive the Thatcher years.[79] When the Massey-Ferguson tractor plant on Banner Lane on the west side of Coventry was closed in 2002, a task force was set up to help newly redundant workers, but this was not repeated with the Jaguar plant in Browns Lane.[80]

This abandonment of British Leyland contrasts sharply with the Thatcher government's support for Nissan in Sunderland. The Wilson/Callaghan Labour government had negotiated 'voluntary export restraints' on Japanese car makers to try to stem their flow into the British market.[81] These voluntary restraints came into effect in 1977, and although they did not help save British Leyland, they did successfully encourage the Japanese manufacturers to invest in

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[76] Press Notice, 'Ryder Report: Statement by Secretary of State for Industry, Mr Tony Benn', 24 April 1975, Papers of Maurice Edelman MP (1911-1975), British Leyland, 1968-1975, MSS.125/1/3/10, MRC.
[77] Michael Edwardes, *Back from the Brink: An Apocalyptic Experience* (London: Pan Books, 1983).
[78] 'Employment in Coventry', A Report for Manpower Services Commission, March 1977, page 44-47, MSS.208/E/26, MRC.
[79] Berman, *The Primacy of Politics.*
[80] Gill Bentley, 'Dealing with Strategic Change: A Trio of Automotive Industry Closures in the West Midlands', *Strategic Change* 16, no. 8 (2007): 364.
[81] Brian Hindley, 'Motor Cars from Japan', in *What Britain Pays for Voluntary Export Restraints*, eds. David Greenaway & Brian Hindley (London: Trade Policy Research Centre, 1985), 64-99.

Britain and set up production facilities in the UK that could access both the UK and broader EEC market.[82]

The 1983 announcement of Nissan's decision to open a plant in Sunderland was a coup for the Thatcher government, as it represented the largest foreign direct investment by a Japanese automaker to date and would create jobs in a depressed region of the country.[83] In addition to refusing support to British Leyland, the Government had refused to provide aid to the nationalised shipyards in Sunderland, which closed with the loss of 2,000 jobs. Nevertheless, it was happy to provide a direct subsidy to Nissan that amounted to a third of the cost of the Sunderland plant and provide access to 930 acres of development land.[84] The Thatcher government spoke of the need for business to rise and fall according to the demands of the market. But this obscured the fact that they continued to provide a variety of supports to industry, especially foreign investors. Then, after attracting foreign investment in this old-fashioned interventionist manner, they falsely claimed that the UK's successes in luring foreign investment was a result of their promotion of an 'enterprise culture'. The nationalised industries, on the other hand, were symbols of the old, rotten, dysfunctional trade-union dominated economy of the 1970s, and thus their failures would also help prove the government's ideological argument.[85]

Thus, as the decline of the 1970s turned into the collapse of the early 1980s the era of postwar prosperity for Coventry came to an abrupt end. Every region of the UK was impacted by the economic downturn of the early Thatcher years, but nowhere was the impact deeper or more long-lasting than in the West Midlands. Baddeley, Martin and Tyler found that the deindustrialisation of the early 1980s constituted such a severe economic shock that it caused a semi-permanent 'upward structural shift in regional mean unemployment rates' in places like Coventry.[86] The Big Bang of the City of London and subsequent financialization of the UK economy would further increase the gap between the south-east and the rest of the country. Today, despite the beautiful new office towers in Birmingham and the celebration of the role of Warwick University, according to the most recent figures, the West Midlands GDP/GVA per capita languishes at around 80-82 per cent of the UK average, and has even fallen behind the North-West.[87]

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[82] James Walker, 'Voluntary Export Restraints between Britain and Japan: The Case of the UK Car Market (1971–2002)', *Business History*, 59, no. 1 (2015): 38.
[83] Peter Dicken, 'Japanese Manufacturing Investment in the UK: A Flood or Mere Trickle', *Area* 15, no. 4 (1983): 273–284.
[84] Ian Stone & J. Stevens, 'Employment on Wearside: Trends and Prospects', *Northern Economic Review* 12 (1986): 39-56; Philip Garrahan & Paul Stewart, *The Nissan Enigma: Flexibility at Work in a Local Economy* (London: Mansell, 1993).
[85] Robert Saunders, 'Crisis? What crisis?' Thatcherism and the Seventies', in *Making Thatcher's Britain*, ed. Ben Jackson & Robert Saunders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 25-42.
[86] Michelle Baddeley, Ron Martin & Peter Tyler, 'Transitory Shock or Structural shift? The Impact of the Early 1980s Recession on British Regional Unemployment', *Applied Economics* 30 (1988): 19-30.
[87] Office for National Statistics, *Regional Economic Activity by Gross Value Added (balanced), UK: 1998 to 2017*, 12 December 2018, Retrieved January 2020 from https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/bulletins/regionalgrossvalueaddedbalanceduk/1998to2017.

Shrinking Options for Youth

In 1975, the unemployment rate in Coventry jumped back above the national average and would stay there, with some brief exceptions, for the next 15 years.[88] In 1971, 65 per cent of male employment and 31 per cent of female employment was in just three sectors: vehicles, mechanical engineering, and electrical engineering. By 1976 these figures had dropped to approximately 55 and 20 per cent respectively. 5,000 women had been made redundant in vehicles and electrical engineering alone.[89] Then, after a brief stabilisation in the late 1970s, the bottom fell out of Coventry's job market in 1979.

The government's response to the unemployment crisis included the creation of the Youth Opportunities Programme, which placed school leavers in temporary roles for basic pay levels.[90] The programme quickly came under intense criticism from unions and community groups for undercutting the wages of those who still had jobs, leading young people to another employment dead end, and simply acting as an accounting trick to keep down the unemployment figures.[91]

In the summer of 1980, 4,000 youths left school in Coventry and immediately found themselves on the unemployment rolls.[92] Across the West Midlands, there were forty-six unemployed adults for every job vacancy, a worse figure that even in Scotland or the North-east.[93] The 1980 Annual Report of the Coventry Careers Service found that in 1979, 33 per cent of Coventry school leavers remained in school or continued on to further education, 42 per cent went into employment, and 19 per cent found themselves unemployed or were enrolled in the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP).[94] In 1980, the economic crisis caused a considerable shift: 34 per cent of 16 year olds remained in education, 27 per cent went into employment, and 34 per cent were unemployed or on YOP. In 1981, the crisis of youth unemployment deepened further: 40 per cent of 16 years olds remained in education, 15 per cent found employment, and 41 per cent were unemployed or enrolled in YOP.[95] In two years, the numbers of 16 year olds in Coventry finding work straight out of school had more than halved. A fundamental shift had taken place, and even when Coventry's economy recovered, these numbers would never revert back fully to the status quo anti. New jobs, when they came, would require qualifications: good GCSEs, A-levels, technical education, or a university degree. In this three-year snapshot, it becomes clear that the youth of Coventry were beginning to adapt to this new reality, with increasing numbers remaining in school, partly to shelter from likely unemployment, but also to pick up skills that might allow them to find work outside of the industrial sector.

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[88] 'Unemployment in Coventry, 2nd Draft', report attached to letter from George Hope, 1 April 1980, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[89] Ibid, page 2, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[90] 'A MSC magazine: 'Actions: Doing Something about Unemployment', Manpower Services Commission files, November 1979, PA2314/1/3/7/13, Coventry History Centre Archives (hereafter CHC).
[91] 'Draft letter from H. S. Bains, National General Secretary and Sohan Dhillon, National President, Indian Youth Association (GB)', 1979, Indian Youth Association GB files, PA2600/3/9/2, CHC.
[92] 'Unemployment in Coventry, 2nd Draft', report attached to letter from George Hope, 1 April 1980, page 1, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[93] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 305.
[94] 'The Future of Work in Coventry: Job-Sharing Seminar', Equal Opportunities Commission Files, 15 January 1982, page 8-9, PA2314/1/3/7/8/1, CHC.
[95] Ibid, PA2314/1/3/7/8/1, CHC.

Intersections of Class & Race

In 1976 Coventry was home to an estimated 26,300 black and ethnic minority (BAME) residents, or 7.9 per cent of the civic population. 62 per cent of the BAME population was born in the 'New Commonwealth', but the other 38 per cent was British born.[96] The largest single community of ethnic minority Coventrians were Punjabi-speaking Sikhs. They were the first to come to the city in large numbers and they had the most developed structure of community organisations.

Most significantly, they had formed the first branch of the Indian Workers' Association (IWA) in the city in 1938. In the early years, the association was focussed on campaigning for Indian independence and supporting the welfare of the small, diverse South Asian community in the city.[97] However, further migration from the Punjab in the 1950s and early 60s brought a distinctive political direction to the organisation. Joginder Singh, Gurdev Singh Dosanjh and Gurdev Singh Dhami were elected leaders of the association in 1953. All three had ties to the Communist Party, and they worked to turn the organisation into a force for radical political and social change in Britain, challenging discrimination in housing, policing, and employment and arguing that the British state was inherently racist. According to Joginder Singh, the organisation had a wide reach in the South Asian community in Coventry: 'were thirty of us who were very active. The numbers of people who have been active since then has steadily decreased. We had a general membership of approximately five hundred to six hundred'.[98]

The power base of the national organisation shifted to Birmingham and Southall in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but the Coventry branch continued to provide critical financial and organisational support in setting up new branches across the UK. Additionally, the IWA had much work to do in Coventry: in the early 1960s they led fights against segregated washrooms at Courtaulds and the existence of a colour bar in hiring at several GEC factories in Coventry.[99] Racism was built into the industrial structure of Coventry, and often the trade unions would either do nothing to support the struggles of South Asian workers, or would actively inhibit them. In Talvinder Gill's oral history interviews with IWA leaders, Ajmer Bains recounted the story of a strike at Mother's Pride bakery in Coventry in 1972. Eighty-five South Asians strikers were ignored and abandoned by their white counterparts and 'had to rely on the help of students from Warwick University to create a picket line'.[100] However, it was hard for the organisation to maintain a coherent political programme, pulled as it was in different directions by those in Coventry who saw it as an apolitical community support group, and by those who saw it as part of a class-based leftist movement. By 1967, there were three factions in the Coventry, each with their own idea of the association's purpose. Most prominent was the Joginder Singh group, which supported the national leadership of the IWA in its effort to use the association to forcefully break down racial divisions in the British working class and gain for South Asians their rightful place in a pan-working class leftist movement.[101] According to Gill,

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[96] 'A Racial Analysis of School-Leaving and Job-Finding in Coventry', page 3, Unemployed Workers' Centre: General Correspondence, c. Jun 1978-Feb 1979, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[97] Talvinder Gill, 'The Indian Workers' Association Coventry 1938-1990: Political and Social Action', *South Asian History and Culture* 4, no. 4 (2013): 555.
[98] Ibid, 556.
[99] Ibid, 559-63.
[100] Ibid, 559.
[101] Ibid, 557.

'they regarded their culture and ethnicity as intertwined with their class position. Simply, their political ideology allowed for a wider conception of class, one that encompassed cultural difference and rights as an ethnic minority. Essentially, they claimed recognition as equal workers and citizens.'[102]

However, the deindustrialisation of the 1970s reshaped the role of the IWA and the politics of Coventry's South Asian community. Deindustrialisation caused the collapse of one of the critical pillars of the welfare state: full employment. But deindustrialisation also further exposed the brokenness of social democracy's promise of equality through its particular impacts on BAME communities. The rapid loss of opportunities, the ghettoization, and the related rise of racism made it impossible for anyone to take seriously the idea of colour-blind social democratic equality.

According to a 1978 study by the Coventry Unemployed Workers' Centre, the unemployment rate for BAME Coventrians was running at almost twice the civic rate.[103] A study by the Unemployed Workers' Centre of Coventry's inner-city schools showed how racial biases were being perpetuated through the school system and job market, damaging the future prospects of the generation of South Asian and West Indian children growing up in the midst of deindustrialisation. Leckie School and Community College was in a working-class area with a majority-minority student body, where most students left school at 15-16 to take industrial or blue-collar jobs. However, those jobs were increasingly disappearing, and school leavers would need higher qualifications to compete in a troubled job market. Unfortunately, 69 per cent of 1975-76 school leavers at Leckie left without any qualifications in English, 72 per cent left without qualifications in math, and 63 per cent left without qualifications in any other subject.[104] At Leckie the Asian and West Indian pupils actually did considerably better than the white pupils; for example Asian and West Indian pupils were twice as likely to have received qualifications in English, running against conventional wisdom about the impact of language barriers on educational outcomes. However, at two more middle class schools in north Coventry, Asians and West Indians (who made up a smaller but still considerable percentage of the student body in these school) received considerably fewer qualifications than their white classmates. There were also vast gaps in gender outcomes among white students – particularly the very low numbers of white girls receiving qualifications in Maths, which was not replicated among the Asian and West Indian pupils.[105]

What is the explanation for these findings? Clearly class divisions were shaping white pupils' educational opportunities and decisions to a much greater extent, with huge gaps in the performance of white working class and white middle-class pupils, a division that was not replicated among the ethnic minority pupils. There is also reason to believe that racial bias may have played a role in these middle-class schools. Other studies of Coventry schools found that teachers expected lower English achievement from ethnic minorities and lower Maths achievement from girls, and these expectations and lack of encouragement caused pupils to fall into stereotyped patterns of achievement.[106]

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[102] Ibid, 561.
[103] 'A Racial Analysis of School-Leaving and Job-Finding in Coventry', page 4, Unemployed Workers' Centre: General Correspondence, c. Jun 1978-Feb 1979, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[104] Ibid, page 11, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[105] Ibid, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[106] Ibid, page 25, MSS.5/3/51, MRC. See also Darlene Leiding, *Racial Bias in the Classroom: Can Teachers Reach All Children?* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006).

Less than 10 per cent of pupils went on to higher education – however, white pupils were significantly more likely than their Asian or West Indian classmates to head immediately into work. Only 6 per cent of white school leavers in north Coventry schools went on to further education, compared with 13 per cent of Asian school leavers and 15 per cent of West Indian pupils.[107]

Despite this comparative educational success of Asians youth in north Coventry, their experiences in the job market diverged considerably from their white peers. Looking at the youth's job situation one year after leaving school, the Unemployed Workers' Centre found that 23.2 per cent of Asian youth were unemployed compared with 10 per cent of white youth. Asian school leavers also took significantly longer to find a job and required more interviews before landing a position: an average of 3.4 interviews as opposed to 2.3 interviews for white school leavers.[108] Some of the discrepancy was the result of a skills mismatch for certain apprenticeships, but this alone was not a full explanation. The report concluded 'almost without exception, wherever blacks and whites compete, whites are given preference'.[109]

Despite the traditional dominance of the car industry, which still employed a third of all Coventry workers in 1976, less than six per cent of job applications by school leavers were for work in that industry.[110] The bloom had come off the rose and Coventry youth knew that their future would have to lie elsewhere. By contrast, a quarter of all applications were made to distributive traders, 20 per cent to the metal industries, and 19 per cent to office work. Generally, despite their greater commitment to further education, Asian and West Indian youths were less likely to end up in white-collar jobs or in workplaces outside of the manufacturing industries: while they made up 36 per cent of new recruits in engineering firms and 24 per cent at British Leyland, the study did not find a single ethnic minority recruit at Coventry City Council.[111]

Thus, a polarisation of experiences for ethnic minority youth developed. On the one hand, a larger than average proportion managed to make it on to further education, which would give them a potential path to the educated middle classes, even if that path was made more difficult by the persistence of hiring discrimination. But the majority, who entered the job market immediately, found themselves struggling in a contracting industrial job market and further disadvantaged because of racial prejudice. In the intersection of race and class, working class ethnic minorities found themselves doubly disadvantaged. Whether in the northern American cities studied by William Julius Wilson, or as we have seen in Glodwick, Oldham, this double disadvantage often led to the segregation of a segment of the racialised population.[112] And indeed, a similar process could be seen in the further decline of the Hillfields neighbourhood of Coventry, which remained the centre of Coventry's South Asian community, and which would become one of the most impoverished neighbourhoods in all the West Midlands in the 1980s.[113]

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[107] Ibid, page 13, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[108] Ibid, pages 14-16, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[109] Ibid, page 18, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[110] Ibid, page 21, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[111] Ibid, page 22-24, MSS.5/3/51, MRC.
[112] William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged.*
[113] 'CDP Final report Part 1: Coventry and Hillfields - Prosperity and the persistence of inequality', March 1975, 1134/2/1/1/17/1, MRC.

Generational Upheaval

In the context of dramatic deindustrialisation, with particularly profound effects on the South Asian community, the Coventry Indian Workers' Association struggled along. In 1978, the branch appeared to have 49 full members who had paid the £1 membership fee. It is difficult to be certain, but it does not appear that any of the forty-nine members were women. This was clearly a male dominated organisation with a male-gendered conception of the class struggle.[114] The vast majority of the members lived not in Hillfields but instead in the more established skilled-working class neighbourhood of Lower Stoke, on the south side of the Gosford Green and the A4600. Twenty-four of the forty-nine members lived on St. George's Rd, Northfield Rd, Humber Ave. or Irving Rd, in a tightly bound area of respectable two-up-two-down row houses.[115] Thus they were somewhat disconnected from the ghettoization the doubly disadvantaged residents of that neighbourhood were facing. However, they continued to pursue the goal of building pan-ethnic class solidarity, with the struggle now focussed against the structural forces causing deindustrialisation and economic crisis, rather than against the bosses holding down the workers.

A 1978 IWA broadsheet argued that 'the growth of racists and fascist attacks is directly related to the crisis of the ruling class of this country. (…) Fascism is the power of finance capital itself'.[116] Whenever the ruling classes of Britain found themselves in a crisis, 'the whole superstructure of the state comes into action', and they work to divide the working class by creating a scapegoat – whether that be the Irish, the Jews, or the Bengalis.[117] For the black working class, the key was to go through 'the process of his black-consciousness being awakened so that he is aware of the true value of his exploitation and the struggle against it'. For white workers, the primary expectation was 'to support these struggles of black workers and thus come out against the deep-rooted sectarianism and racialism in the trade unions'.[118] Thus the IWA tried very hard to marry a race-based black radicalism with a pan-working class appeal against the excesses of capitalism. When listing the 'reactionary measures' of governments, the broadsheet included 'cuts to public spending, the Industrial Relations acts and racist Immigration Control Acts of 1962, 1965, 1968, 1971', thus drawing together class and race-based concerns into a single package.[119]

Similar rhetoric can be seen in a small flyer from the IWA Coventry branch calling on members to join the Peoples' March for Jobs as it passed through Coventry on Wednesday 20 May 1980:[120]

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[114] This is in spite of the fact that many South Asian women in Coventry did work outside of the home – for example for clothing manufacturers like the Forward Trading Company, which will be discussed below. As in the Oldham textile industry, but also in the Bengali jute industry and in many other examples in both the British and South Asian contexts, we see here the devaluation of women's labour both in the assumptions of government, and in the structure of the organisations that were supposed to represent workers, like the trade unions and the IWA. For a discussion of gender in the Bengali jute industry, see Samita Sen, *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India: The Bengal Jute Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[115] 'A Membership List for the IWA Coventry Branch, 1978', PA2600/3/1/10, CHC.

[116] 'On the question of Anti-Racist and Anti-Fascist Committees', undated (1978), Anti-Racism in Coventry, 1977 – 1979, Indian Workers Association files, MSS.21/1571/21, MRC.

[117] Ibid, MSS.21/1571/21, MRC.

[118] Ibid, MSS.21/1571/21, MRC.

[119] Ibid, MSS.21/1571/21, MRC.

[120] For a further exploration of the People's March for Jobs and its legacy, see Mike Carter, *All Together Now?: One Man's Walk in Search of his Father and a Lost England* (London: Guardian Faber, 2019).

> Dear Brothers and Sisters, Due to the policies of the Tory Party there are over 2.5 million people out of work. Factories after factories are being shut down. The remaining work force is subject to an overload of work. The Tories are creating industrial deserts; on the other hand the coloured community is accused of being the root cause of every evil in the country, but the working class has begun to fight back against this attack on their livelihood.[121]

But the IWA's claim to be able to unite class and race-based struggles was coming under threat from all directions. One fairly obvious challenge faced by the IWA was that the South Asian community was not a singular entity – it too was riven by class divisions.[122] In the summer of 1977, the South Asian community in Coventry became deeply divided over the dispute at the Forward Trading Company on the north side of the city. Surinder Singh, the owner of the small but prosperous clothing manufacturer, had fired six women for joining the Transport & General Workers Union (TGWU), and then subsequently fired twelve more when they walked out in support of the original six. Singh was a prominent member of both the IWA and the Communist Party. [123] In the end, the IWA pushed Singh to recognise the union, and the women were given their jobs back.[124] According to Gill, 'what this illustrates was the IWAs willingness to confront exploitation wherever it came, even when it surfaced among its own ranks'.[125] While that is certainly true, the incident exposed the fact that, as an organisation controlled by the (often wealthy and well-established) leadership of Coventry's South Asian community, the IWA was being pulled in several different directions when it attempted to fight on behalf of disadvantaged working class South Asians.

Secondly, the extent of racism in the city was casting an ominous shadow over efforts to build pan-ethnic working-class solidarity. Coventry may not have experienced the level of National Front-led racist attacks seen in Lewisham or East London. Nevertheless, the Coventry Committee Against Racism and Fascism claimed that a burning cross had been nailed to a house, black players were regularly subjected to racist abuse at Coventry City football matches, and that there had been several racist attacks on bus drivers in recent months.[126] In 1979 the Coventry Trades Council decided to merge their May Day Rally with the Coventry Committee Against Racism and Fascism's 'Carnival', to emphasise the importance of fighting deindustrialisation and the rise of the National Front and race-based divisions in the working class at the same time.[127] The carnival was held on Hearsall Common in the west end of the city

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[121] 'Handout of the Indian Workers' Association calling for support for the People's March for Jobs', 1981, PA2600/3/1/15, CHC.

[122] And the South Asian community was also divided on the basis of religion, as well as caste. For a discussion of caste divisions in South Asia and the way they complicate a Marxist analysis of labour and class politics, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism: Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[123] Cutting, *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 9 August 1977, retrieved from PA2600/3/11/8, CHC.

[124] John Andrews, 'Communist employer finally agrees to recognise union' *The Guardian*, 10 Aug 1977, page 3.

[125] Gill, 'The Indian Workers' Association Coventry', 561.

[126] Information flyer, ''Against Racialism', Coventry Carnival Against Racism', spring 1979, Anti-Racism in Coventry, 1977 – 1979 collection, MSS.21/1571/21, MRC.

[127] Clipping, 'Not the Road to Harmony', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 24 January 1979, page 3, retrieved from MSS.21/1571/21, MRC.

and included multicultural music and dance, exhibit stalls, and a supervised play area for visitors with children.[128] However, these efforts did not prevent the continued growth of racial tension in the city, nor did it prevent many from continuing to deny its existence. The *Coventry Evening Telegraph* called the Carnival 'provocative' and argued that it created more problems than it solved. The racism got ever progressively worse, culminating in the racist murder of Satnam Singh Gill on the streets of Coventry in 1981.[129]

This racist violence and its growing effect on community outlook came as the South Asian community was also reshaping its relationship with a critical arm of the British state. Community Relations Councils (CRCs) developed organically in the 1950s, but in 1965 they essentially became an arm of state welfare provision which received direct funding from the Wilson government.[130] The goal of the CRCs was theoretically to help ethnic minorities overcome barriers to their full, equal participation in British society and receive their full rights to welfare, employment, and housing as British Commonwealth citizens. However, as we have seen in Oldham, community relations and community development strategies often simply exposed the extent to which Commonwealth citizens and other ethnic minorities were excluded from the full promises of postwar British social democracy. Radhika Natarajan showed that, in an effort to achieve the universalism promised by social democracy, they actually 'othered' Commonwealth citizens and labelled them as socially and culturally distinct.[131] The CRCs' modes of organising were based on the assumption that each immigrant group formed a 'discrete community' that needed to be understood and governed accordingly, a form of governance that was modelled after the way Indian cultures had been divided and essentialized in the colonial context.[132] The collapse of the community relations project, in Natarajan's telling, resulted from attacks on both sides: the rise of radical black politics which rejected the CRCs' claim to speak on their behalf, and the assault of Thatcherite neoliberalism on the social-democratic promises of equality and security.[133] However, to place the blame entirely on top-down neoliberal restructuring is to ignore the role of deindustrialisation in breaking down the basic assumptions of social democracy.

There was discussion about the establishment of a Community Relations Council in Coventry as early as 1958, but the Coventry CRC does not appear to have been officially up and running until the mid-1960s.[134] By the late 1970s, it was overseeing a variety of well-supported projects, mostly funded by the central government's urban programme, including a hostel for girls of Asian origin which opened in 1976, to give them a place of shelter in the case of a family breakdown or dangerous homelife situation. The Coventry CRC's annual report emphasised that this service was particularly necessary for the Asian community because of generational conflict between parents and children over religion and culture. The hostel had space for 12 girls at a time, and was regularly full, and within a year it was already struggling with understaffing (the grant renewal only provided for a single Warden) and the Coventry CRC

[128] 'Flyer for Coventry Carnival Against Racism', undated (1979), MSS.21/1571/21, MRC.
[129] 'Another Racist Murder', Flyer Published by the Coventry Committee against Racism, May 1981, PA2600/3/12/7, CHC.
[130] Natarajan, *Organizing Community,* 4-5.
[131] Ibid, 2-3.
[132] Ibid, 47-80. See also Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*.
[133] Natarajan, *Organizing Community*, 185-89.
[134] Letter from R.B. Ritchie to Lord Mayor of Coventry re. establishment of a Community Relations Committee to deal with racial problems in the city, 2 September 1958, MSS.11/3/15/292, MRC. It is nearly impossible to track down the exact date of the founding of the Coventry CRC because their files are incomplete.

was pleading with City Council for additional support.[135] They also offered a variety of social programmes and a drop-in centre.[136] As racial attacks increased and the South Asian community bore the brunt of the job losses in the automotive industry, the Coventry CRC had little to offer, except more community panels and reports.[137] In the foreword to the Coventry CRC's 1981 report, the Lord Mayor wrote: 'we have problems enough and I am one of those people who believe that when we get rid of our economic problems, many of the social and racial problems will soon disappear. Unemployment and boredom create tension and unhappiness, and that often results in violence on the streets'.[138] But what could/would the CRC actually do to fix the economic problems? And when it came to violence on the streets, the CRC actually opposed some of the anti-racist rallies mentioned above, fearing that they would increase the level of tension in the city. As a result of this tone-deaf approach, the Joint Committee of Indian Organisations withdrew from the Community Relations Council in May 1979, stating that the CRC was 'totally out of touch' with the aspirations and requirements of the Asian community. According to an IWA report, 'this decision received the full support of both the Leamington Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee and the Trades Council.'[139]

These experiences of racism combined with a generational shift, which in turn was linked to deindustrialisation, and together these two factors began to fundamentally change the nature of political leadership in the South Asian community in Coventry. First generation South Asian immigrants, who had brought with themselves the politics of Indian/Sikh nationalism and traditional class-based leftism, were ceding ground to a second generation. This second generation, the children of the original migrants, were mostly born in the UK and developed a politics that was both more local and more radical.[140] Despite being born in Britain, this generation recognised through their experience with racism, with the education service, and with the inequities of the industrial labour market, that they were not treated as equal British citizens, and were not accepted as equals by other members of the working class.

Additionally, concepts of class solidarity had considerably less meaning in an increasingly post-industrial city. South Asian youth did not need a greater voice in the industrial trade union structure, which is essentially what the IWA offered, because industrial work was proving almost impossible to find. Racial inequalities in the education system were now a bigger brake on their economic success, and the IWA had little to say about these sorts of barriers. As a result, this second generation built Asian Youth Movements, which recognised that racism was structural, and linked to the nature of the British post-imperial state.[141] According to Bhupinder Bassi, a leader in the Birmingham youth movement, the 'IWA propaganda about us all being workers no longer fit (the present reality)'.[142] Coventry would become one of the centres of these Asian Youth Movements, with a series of Youth Forums and Anti-Fascist Anti-Racist Groups developing in the early 1980s, becoming the political voice of

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[135] 'Coventry Community Relations Council Annual Report 1976-77', page 2, MSS.21/1571/21, MRC.
[136] Coventry Community Relations Council, 'Annual Report 1981', MSS.76/3/130, MRC.
[137] Flyer, 'Public Meeting, 'Community Relations Councils now Rejected – the Way Forward for the Asian Community', 1 September 1979, PA2600/3/1/19, CHC.
[138] Coventry Community Relations Council, 'Annual Report 1981', page 1, MSS.76/3/130, MRC.
[139] Flyer, 'Public Meeting, 'Community Relations Councils now Rejected – the Way Forward for the Asian Community' 1 September 1979, PA2600/3/1/19, CHC.
[140] Anandi Ramamurthy, *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 2-3.
[141] Ibid, 2-3.
[142] Ibid, 158.

the community as the IWA went into precipitous decline.[143] Deindustrialisation was far from the only factor in this political transformation, but it amplified and exposed the racial inequalities of postwar Coventry, and exposed the inadequacies of the IWA's class-politics, thereby encouraging a rethinking of the way that South Asians understood themselves and their position in the city.

Women in Industry

One distinct feature of the industrial structure of Coventry was a high dependence on women's paid labour. The consistently tight labour market in the city, even during the 1930s, meant that there were few men available for entry-level clerical positions. Thus in 1931 the proportion of women in clerical posts in Coventry was some 50 per cent above the national average.[144] In 1951 women formed 37.9 per cent of the workforce compared with a national average of 30.8 per cent.[145] In addition, a higher proportion of female workers were employed full-time than in the UK as a whole.[146] The 'embourgeoisement' thesis assumed that prosperous cities like Coventry were full of 'traditional' families that could comfortably support themselves on a single male breadwinner salary, but this is yet further evidence that this was not the case. Nevertheless, the majority of the major industrial employers in Coventry explicitly paid women less than men for the same work. In 1972 Coventry Hood and Sidescreen, a key supplier of the automakers and one with a majority female workforce, paid women £2 a week less than unskilled males, regardless of their role or skill level.[147] Similar wage differentials existed at Chrysler.[148] These inequities grew with every subsequent wage negotiation, and the trade unions did not fight to change this system.

Jim Tomlinson has argued that one of the primary effects of deindustrialisation has been to devastate the male-dominated manufacturing sectors of the economy and open the door to a much different, more equal gender balance in the labour market.[149] But what about in Coventry? The academics Veronica Beechey and Tessa Perkins organised the 'Women's Part-time Employment Project' in Coventry in 1979 and found that the rise in unemployment was actually disproportionately affecting women. Part-time women in particular were considered disposable, because it was assumed that they did not have to support their families. Thus, when the auto companies downsized, men were moved from foremen roles to clerical roles and the woman in the clerical role was made redundant.[150] And of course, there were industrial enterprises in Coventry with predominately female staff, just like the textile mills in Oldham. For example, the job losses at GEC had a distinctively gendered impact. Unlike the auto manufacturers, who traditionally had a considerable female clerical staff but an almost

[143] Gill, 'The Indian Workers' Association Coventry', 567.
[144] Friedman, *Industry and Labour*, 202-4.
[145] Thoms & Donnelly, *The Coventry Motor Industry*, 1-2.
[146] 'Researching women's part-time work in Coventry manufacturing industry', A working paper delivered at the Equal Opportunities Commission by Veronica Beechey and Tessa Perkins, May 1981, MSS.373/32, MRC.
[147] 'Manual Workers C.S.E.U. Claim – Details of Domestic Settlements', Papers relating to the Industrial Situation in the Greater Manchester and Coventry areas, 1971-1972, MSS.408/2/26, MRC.
[148] Rootes/Chrysler/Talbot Joint Shop Stewards, Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, 1974-77, Pay Listings. MSS.315/A/1/1/4, MRC.
[149] Tomlinson, 'De-Industrialization Not Decline', 82.
[150] 'Researching women's part-time work in Coventry manufacturing industry', A working paper delivered at the Equal Opportunities Commission by Veronica Beechey and Tessa Perkins, page 22, May 1981, MSS.373/32, MRC.

exclusively male shop floor, GEC employed tens of thousands of women in all aspects of its business. According to the Coventry and District Engineering Employers' Association, GEC had 14,527 employees in the Coventry District in May 1972, of which 6,276 were women. The vast majority of GEC's female employers were manual blue-collar workers: 4,801 in total, making up 57 per cent of GEC's manual workforce. No other employer of over 1,000 Coventrians had a majority female manual labour force.[151] Thus, when GEC massively downsized its telecommunications business in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it would be women who were disproportionately affected.

In 2013, Coventry actually had one of the lowest female employment rates in the country. Among local authorities in the UK it was the third lowest, at 55.2 per cent, well below the national average of 67 per cent. Considering first, second, and fourth lowest rates were also found in diverse Midlands cities: Birmingham, Nottingham, and Leicester respectively, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) report speculated that these low employment rates 'may be linked to the diverse ethnic population within the area'.[152] However, the local authority with the fourth *highest* rate of female employment, Bedford, seems to cast doubt on to this theory. Bedford's racial demographics are very similar to Coventry: both communities were 74 per cent white and 15-16 per cent South Asian at the time of the 2011 census, yet Bedford's female employment rate is 75 per cent, significantly higher than Coventry's rate of 55 per cent. The collapse of the local industrial base clearly had a marked effect on women's employment in Coventry. Bedford is less than 50 miles from Coventry as the crow flies, but it is essentially a bedroom community for London, and thus has a very different economic situation. While Bedford has an advanced post-industrial economy that matches the rest of the south-east, Coventry's economic structure remains somewhat hollowed out. Thus, the deindustrialisation of Coventry closed the door to economic opportunity for many women, and even after several decades it has been hard to reopen the door.

Organisational Responses

What were the nature of organisational responses to Coventry's sudden economic collapse of the 1970s and 1980s, and what do those responses tell us about how deindustrialisation was reshaping the social and institutional structure of an industrial city like Coventry? For a union like the Transport and General Workers, with 80,000 members in the Coventry area, these massive job losses were a serious threat to their future role in the community. One of the challenges in organising an effective response to the massive economic challenges was the fragmented union structure in Coventry's industrial workplaces. Often the Association of Clerical, Technical & Supervisory Staffs (ACTSS), the Association of Scientific, Technical & Managerial Staffs (ASTMS), and the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW) represented different classes or departments of workers in the same factory or company, and rarely worked well with each other. After much back and forth, a series of meetings was held in Birmingham in early 1980 'to explore the possibility of a closer working

[151] 'Coventry and District Engineering Employers' Association Numbers Employed as at May 1972', Papers relating to the industrial situation in the Greater Manchester and Coventry areas, 1971-1972, MSS.408/2/26, MRC.
[152] Office for National Statistics, Report, *Women in the labour market: 2013*, 25 September 2013, Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/womeninthelabourmarket/2013-09-25.

relationship in a number of areas of common interest.'[153] In the spring and summer of 1980 there were efforts to begin a parallel pan-union mobilisation in Coventry. A public meeting was organised for late June, and in October senior union officials met 'to discuss and plan an effective campaign'.[154]

However, the outcome of these meetings was not a renewed determination to fight against plant closures, but rather an acceptance of deindustrialisation and a re-imagining of the union's role as a support agency for redundant workers. Of course, the trade unions had always worked to support redundant workers, but the scale of the challenge and union's attitude to the problem was unprecedented. If a trade union could not force government or business to keep a factory or employer open, it would traditionally only acquiesce to the closure if there was a clear commitment to provide jobs for the redundant workers.[155] In the postwar period of relatively full employment, this was not usually that hard: even as the workforces in traditional industries like coal and textiles were declining in total numbers, there were still usually enough jobs to go around for all those who wanted one, and governments were still reasonably good at attracting light industrial and engineering jobs to relatively distressed areas, as we have seen with the use of regional policy. But by 1980 there was no talk of finding new jobs for those cast adrift in Coventry's unprecedented economic collapse. The goal was simply to help them through the process of redundancy, point them in the direction of available government services, and push them towards retraining, all while ensuring they did not lose their connection to the trade union. The union's position as an institution in the Coventry civic community was under threat, and the primary goal was to protect that position.

In the autumn of 1980, Dennis Adler, District Organiser of the ACTSS, got fellow union leaders in Coventry on board with a scheme to partner with Henley College of Further Education to provide a variety of courses and access to educational facilities to the unemployed.[156] Surprisingly, the courses suggested by Henley College officials for the unemployed were not the usual 'practical' skills classes designed to lead to a specific alternative career, but instead were liberal arts classes in English, Sociology, Law, and History.[157] The unions and the college recognised that there was no easy route back to employment through reskilling: instead, industrial workers were being encouraged to complete general education O-level courses that would expand their horizons beyond industry. For a couple of generations, the majority of Coventrians, and especially men, had come to believe that they would get an industrial job upon leaving secondary school, and thus left general education immediately at the school leaving age.[158] Now that this employment route had suddenly closed, thousands of newly redundant workers were left without an easy escape from an empty room. Workers of colour were in an even worse position than white workers, not only because of discriminatory barriers in the British education system (as discussed above), but also because the qualifications

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[153] Letter from George Hope, AUEW-TASS Divisional Organiser, to ASTMS, APEX, and ACTSS officials, titled 'Joint Staff Union Meeting, Unemployment in Coventry', 1 April 1980, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[154] Letter from Dennis Adler, ACTSS District Organiser, to Senior Staff Representatives, Staff District Committee, 'Re. Unemployment in Coventry and District', 16 October 1980, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[155] Jim Phillips, 'Deindustrialisation and the Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields, 1947-1991', 99.
[156] Letter from Dennis Adler to G.T. Butler, Coventry CSEU District Committee, 'Education Facilities for Unemployed and Short Time Workers', 11 November 1980, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[157] 'Henley College of Further Education, Coventry: Mature Students Courses – course listing form' (attached to letter from Dennis Adler to G.T. Butler), 11 November 1980, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[158] Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor.*

they might have obtained in South Asia or the Caribbean were rarely accepted by British employers.[159]

In January 1981, the TGWU set up an 'advisory and information centre' in the city centre, the first of its kind. The goal was to help members better access a variety of trade union services, as well as to provide general information and support with personal challenges ranging from car accidents to taxes to divorce. However, the focus quickly became helping union members adjust to job loss, with most of its staff time taken up helping redundant workers with benefits claims.[160] The TGWU also arranged for the Co-Operative Bank to provide free personal investment and taxation advice to newly redundant Coventry workers so that they could make the most of their redundancy or early retirement payouts.[161]

On 9 March 1981, local social worker Doree O'Brian wrote to Dennis Adler at the ACTSS, providing a two page document entitled 'Where Do We Go from Here?', discussing how trade unions could support the unemployed and maintain their social and cultural role in the context of profound economic change.[162] O'Brian argued that trade unions could maintain and actually expand their role in the lives of members, 'the necessity for this lies in the speed and complexity of change facing all those who live in a post-industrial era. Plainly, people now need more from their unions in the way of advice, co-ordination, speed and planning.'[163] O'Brian's primary proposal was the establishment of 'Union Advice Centres', supported by a combination of EEC and UK government support and high union subscriptions. However, O'Brian warned that if not managed carefully and funded properly, the centres could segregate the unemployed and 'institutionalise worklessness'.[164] In response to this risk, Objective C of the centres would be to 'aim at securing for people the right to work or, in the absence of work, the right to all civilised and humane treatment that their society has the responsibility to provide.' However, despite this strong statement of intent, the document was fundamentally a plan for helping the redundant help themselves, through education, advice, and improved access to government services, and through that help maintaining the role and position of the trade unions in the 'post-industrial era'. As O'Brian concluded, 'if ordinary members' vitality (and numbers) are allowed to drain away at the present rate, there must be a correspondingly fast depletion of the trade union movement.'[165] Thus the crisis of manufacturing in Coventry came so quickly and with such force that the TGWU largely abandoned the fight against redundancies before the fight had even begun. Nevertheless, in the process it was forced undertake a radical rethinking of the TGWU's role in the lives of its members as it came to terms with the end of Coventry's industrial era.

The Church of England was also rethinking its role. Industrial missions had first been set up in Sheffield in the Second World War, and the Diocese of Coventry had established

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[159] Report, 'Y.T.S. or White T.S.: Racial Discrimination and Coventry's Youth Training Schemes', REITS, Racial Equality in Training Schemes, April 1985, MSS.542/4/2/2, MRC.
[160] Clipping, 'Helping Hand for Jobless', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 9 January 1981, retrieved from MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[161] The Co-Operative Bank, 'Personal Investment and Taxation Advice in Redundancy', undated (1980-81), MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[162] Personal Letter from D. O'Brian to Dennis Adler re social worker qualifications, 9 March 1981, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[163] 'Where Do We Go From Here?' document attached to letter from D. O'Brian to Dennis Adler re social worker qualifications, 9 March 1981, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[164] Ibid, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', page 1, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.
[165] Ibid, 'Where Do We Go From Here?', page 2, MSS.208/E/28, MRC.

missions in many of the city's largest industrial workplaces, including British Leyland.[166] However, deindustrialisation forced a change in focus for the industrial mission, away from campaigns for fair wages and efforts to build better relations between workers and management. Just as the vicars were losing their parishioners as Church of England attendance declined, the industrial chaplains were losing their flock as the factories closed. In response, the focus of industrial missions shifted from the shop floor to the job centre, with a focus on practical help for the unemployed. In Coventry this meant the creation of a support agency for the unemployed, with accommodation in the Cathedral Hall, supported by a grant of £42,000 from the Manpower Services Commission. Unemployed youth were encouraged to drop in to receive counselling on education, training, and welfare.[167] However, just as with the similar union drop-in centres, advice and moral support alone could not solve the structural problems facing the masses of unemployed Coventrians.

Another way that Coventry's civic leaders responded to the economic crisis was by considering radical restructuring of what it meant to be in work. As Sarah Stoller has shown, the concept of two people formally dividing the responsibilities and benefits of one full-time position came was largely foreign to British workplaces until the late 1970s, when it was brought over from the United States by the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM).[168] 'Job Sharing' was seen as a way of reconciling the aspirations of married women for self-realization with their heavy familial responsibilities. But in the context of the economic crisis post-1979, job sharing came to be seen as a solution to the sudden onset of mass unemployment in cities like Coventry. The Job Sharing Project, set up in 1977 to break down barriers for women, changed its name to 'New Ways to Work' in 1981 and increasingly fell in-line behind the Thatcher Government's efforts to build a more flexible workforce ready for a neoliberal economy.[169] The movement had some traction in both the public and private sectors, and by 1981, 2,000 administrative and secretarial staff of Barclays Bank, mostly women, were working alternate weeks.[170]

Coventry was an ideal location for this Thatcherite reimagining of the job-sharing scheme. A seminar chaired by the Bishop and opened by the Lord Mayor was held on 15 January 1982 to discuss 'the future of work in Coventry'. A recurring theme in deindustrialised communities is the continued prominence of religious leaders in debates about social problems, and Coventry, with its famous ruined and rebuilt cathedral, was no exception. The Bishop opened by stating that seminar had been organised because 'many of us within the Church have been concerned about the effects of recession on our communities and more especially upon the school leaver for whom the employment prospect is so bleak'. The seminar then proceeded to explore the ways job sharing could help reduce unemployment, with a presentation by a

[166] John Rogerson, *Industrial Mission in a Changing World: Papers from the Jubilee Conference of the Sheffield Industrial Mission* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).
[167] 'Unemployment Co-ordinating Group, Meeting Notes', 8 July 1981, Coventry Industrial Missions, Social issues and projects re unemployment, PA1523/109, CHC.
[168] Sarah Stoller, *Inventing the Working Parent: Work, Gender, and Feminism in Neoliberal Britain* (PhD Dissertation: UC Berkeley, 2020), 57-65.
[169] Ibid, 78-85.
[170] 'Job Sharing: Improving the Quality and Availability of Part-time Work', July 1981, page 7, Equal Opportunities Commission files, PA2314/1/3/7/7/1, CHC.

representative from 'New Ways to Work' and from several area employers who were experimenting with various job sharing schemes.[171]

This included L.P. Grice of GEC Telecommunications, who was blunt about the way his company had shed thousands of semi-skilled workers in the recession, which would not be coming back. Basically, there was not enough work to go around, particularly in a rapidly deindustrialising city like Coventry, and thus the available work had to be shared. While unions and organisations like the Unemployed Workers' Centre called for shorter working weeks and earlier retirements, Grice attacked these solutions as overly inflationary and expensive. Grice explained how easy it was to run such a program in the context of the city's high unemployment: 'in our Coventry works where we introduced the scheme in June 1981, we now have 40 young people working in pairs. There has been no difficulty whatsoever in recruiting people with the right abilities. Labour turnover from the group has so far been zero. So, too, is the level of absence.'[172] It is not clear if these workers were surviving on half-pay, or whether they were claiming benefits to make up for the missing half.

Unions, churches, and civic officials all had to come to terms with what had happened to Coventry, and they each did so in their own way, proposing their own mix of supports and solutions. However, one thing that they all had in common was the lack of challenge to the growing consensus: that the jobs were not coming back, and that workers needed to 'reskill' and become more 'flexible' if they wanted to succeed.

Coventry Workshop and the Turn to Adaptation

However, there were those who resisted the deindustrialisation of Coventry and called for a more radical response. As we have seen in Oldham, the Community Development Project (CDP) was an experimental national program, first announced under Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson and implemented by Edward Heath's Conservative Government, which represented Britain's first real attempt to grapple with the persistence of inner-city poverty in an otherwise prosperous postwar society.[173] Hillfields was naturally chosen as the site of the Coventry CDP in 1970. The CDP aimed to ameliorate poverty in localities by 'helping local residents help themselves' through the promotion of neighbourhood associations and housing improvement.[174] Unfortunately, the five-year project happened to coincide with the beginning of Coventry's rapid economic deterioration. By 1975 Hillfields was not simply an isolated blackspot in a sea of prosperity; it was now an emblem of Coventry's growing problems. In that context, the Coventry CDP's final report would join most of the other CDPs in veering sharply away from the original brief. Unlike in Oldham, where CDP officials remained committed to the underlying assumptions of the 'help people help themselves' program, the Coventry CDP turned by 1975 to a 'structural class analysis', arguing that the CDP was doomed, and that the capitalism naturally produced concentrated areas of poverty like Hillfields.[175]

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[171] 'Job Sharing: Improving the Quality and Availability of Part-time Work', July 1981, page 1, Equal Opportunities Commission files, PA2314/1/3/7/7/1, CHC.
[172] Ibid, page 13, PA2314/1/3/7/7/1, CHC.
[173] Martin Loney, *Community against Government: The British Community Development Project, 1968-78,* 8-18.
[174] Coventry Community Development Project, *CDP Final Report* (London: C.D.P., 1975), introduction.
[175] Mick Carpenter & Ben Kyneswood, 'From Self-help to Class Struggle: Revisiting Coventry Community Development Project's 1970s Journey of Discovery,' *Community Development Journal* 52, no. 2 (2017): 263.

However, the CDP workers believed they could still be of value in the Hillfields community. Thus, immediately following the closure of the CDP in 1975, two former CDP workers and their former director John Benington founded the Coventry Workshop, based out of a small row house just east of Hillfields. They were funded by the Cadbury and Gulbenkian Trusts, and from subscriptions to their newsletters.[176] Freed from the shackles of government control, the Workshop's founders believed that they could more effectively challenge Coventry's political and economic inequality and truly enfranchise and empower the impoverished residents of Hillfields. According to its founding Constitution, the Workshop's aim was 'to support workers, the unemployed, tenants and residents, and their organisations, in their efforts to gain control collectively over their lives, and to understand the forces which deny them this control'.[177]

The Workshop worked to bridge the gap between trade unions and tenants'/housing organisations, believing that a successful regenerative politics would need to fight concurrently on the planes of both production and consumption, drawing inspiration from co-operative socialism, European co-determination, Saul Alinsky's community organising in the USA, and the Lefebvrian 'right to the city'. The subscribers to the Workshop newsletters reflected the diversity of the coalition they intended to build. In March 1980, this list included ten branches of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, six branches of the Transport & General Workers Union, but also the Coventry Temporary Council Tenants Association.[178] It was successful in petitioning the Coventry Trades Council to set up a housing sub-committee for the first time in its history, and helped organise tours where the industrial trade union leadership toured the most 'disgusting, rat infested' council housing in the city.[179]

And the Workshop actively challenged Coventry's industrial and political leaders when they seemed to accept the inevitability of deindustrialisation. For example, they helped publish the writings of the Chrysler Joint AUEW and TGWU Shop Stewards Committee, like *Chrysler's Crises: The Workers' Answer*, which called for forced nationalisation and autarky.[180] As late as 1986, a year before the closure of the Workshop, it was branded an 'extreme left-wing organisation bent on the destruction of British industry' by GEC Telecom after the Workshop published a study warning that the company wanted to cut employment in Coventry further.[181]

However, over the twelve-year existence of the Coventry Workshop, these criticisms of industry were slowly replaced by a focus on helping the people of Coventry adapt to the post-industrial realities. This process, whereby community organisations set up to challenge and oppose economic restructuring shifted to a focus on adaptation and mediation over the course of the 1980s, is a recurring theme in the other cases of this dissertation. Through the early 1980s, the work of the Workshop became less about critiques of capitalism and more about promoting skills training and completing studies that informed the public about the extent of Coventry's economic problems. In particular, the Workshop promoted innovative ideas on how the city's manufacturing technology could be reused in new and useful ways. For example, the Workshop

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[176] Ibid, 262-3.
[177] Coventry Workshop Constitution, Undated (probably 1976), page 1, MSS.542/4/1/4, MRC.
[178] Coventry Workshop, Letter to Subscribers, 12 March 1980. MSS. 542/3/4/2, MRC.
[179] Hans Spiegel & Janice Perlman, "Docklands and Coventry: Two Citizen Action Groups in Britain's Economically Declining Areas," in *Paternalism, Conflict, and Coproduction: Learning from Citizen Action and Citizen Participation in Western Europe*, eds. Lawrence Susskind & Michael Elliott (New York: Plenum Press, 1983), 147.
[180] 'Coventry's Economy and How to Save It', Coventry Workshop Publication, 1985-86, MSS.542/4/5/17, MRC.
[181] 'GEC Hits Out at Union Report', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 20 June 1986, page 4.

helped the former employees of the Coventry plant of Lucas Aerospace 'produce feasibility studies on the hundreds of products they could make (using the aircraft factory equipment), including kidney machines and heat pumps'.[182] The Workshop also commissioned reports on work sharing and improving the flexibility of the workforce.[183]

The career of Coventry Workshop founder John Benington is very reflective of this process of adaptation. He would be hired as Director of Economic and Employment Development in Sheffield in the late 1980s when it was dubbed the 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire', and by 1990, was working at the UK Research and Development Unit, acting as an advisor to the Brownlow Community Trust in the Lagan Valley southwest of Belfast.[184] For the last twenty years he has headed up Warwick Business School's teaching and research on governance, leadership and public management, with a particular focus advising on how to navigate the regulations governing business start-ups.[185]

The Coventry Workshop rose to prominence in the middle of the city's crisis, promising to challenge existing power structures and construct a grassroots coalition that could rebuild the city from the ground up. Over time, though, the Workshop came to terms with the collapse of industry in Coventry, came to emphasise education and adaptation, and came to see business leaders as allies in the building a post-industrial Coventry. In this way, it would pave a path subsequently followed by a large segment of the British left, which would eventually lead to the creation of New Labour under Tony Blair.

Militant Tendency and the Defence of Class

The other leftist movement to rise in response to the dramatic decline of Coventry's economy in the 1970s was a more traditional form of political mobilisation: the revival of the local hard left. There had always been a Communist presence in the city's politics but, as we have seen, the auto workers of Coventry came quite late to a position of labour radicalism. Overall, the local Labour Party had largely been dominated by a fairly traditional centre-left outlook throughout the postwar period.

However, that began to change in the mid-to-late 1970s as the Trotskyist Militant Tendency established a foothold in the Hillfields neighbourhood, from which they rose to take over the Coventry South-East Constituency Labour Party (CLP) by 1979. Because of their secrecy, it is hard to trace the origins of Militant in Hillfields, but it is clear that, like those who founded Coventry Workshop, they saw the horrendous housing and unemployment problems in the neighbourhood as evidence of the failures of capitalism. However, where the Workshop looked to coalition building and community organisation as solutions, Militant looked to class struggle. They rose to prominence quickly. Dave Nellist, a prominent member of the Hillfields Militants, became chairman of the CLP and immediately challenged the direction of the Labour majority on Coventry City Council. The Labour group had been in moderate control up to this point, and the moderates largely felt that they had no choice but to pass on the Thatcher government's cuts to local government funding in the form of service reductions. The left,

[182] Clipping, 'Campaign for New Jobs is on Wrong Track', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 9 November 1982, retrieved from MSS.542/4/5/14, MRC.
[183] Coventry Workshop, Advisory Committee Membership, Undated (early 1980s), MSS. 542/3/2/15, MRC.
[184] 'Report of Workshop Held on Monday, 2 July 1990', Brownlow Community Trust files, D4099/4/5, PRONI
[185] 'Unreasonable People: John Benington', *Disrupts Magazine* (undated), https://disrupts.com/unreasonable-people-john-benington/.

egged on by Militant, felt that the Council should resist the cuts by any means necessary. Then, after the election of a number of new Militant candidates in the successful 1980 local elections, the left won control of most of the key positions in a 'dramatic' meeting of the Coventry District Labour Party on 22nd May 1980. Dave Nellist became the 'political education officer' for the council, and the new leadership committed itself to reversing £2.9 million in cuts made in the previous year.[186]

Dave Nellist would be elected as Member of Parliament (MP) for Coventry South-East in the 1983 election and become a leading figure in the national Militant movement. He was a 'workers' MP on a worker's wage' and gave the additional MP's salary beyond that of the average Coventry worker to Militant. Although articles in Militant claimed that he had 'done many good things for the Asian community in Hillfields', race (or gender) never appeared in his campaign literature. There does not appear to have been any effort to join forces with leftist political forces originating with the South Asian community, such as the Asian Youth Movements, and it does not appear that Militant grappled with the particular inequalities faced by Black and Asian people in Coventry.[187] Nellist's message was an incredibly traditional one: class struggle, workers' solidarity, and nationalisation of industry to protect jobs.[188]

As the Coventry Workshop was moving towards adaptation, Nellist and his Militant followers in Coventry remained steadfast. 'Coventry Needs Socialism' read the 28 May 1987 edition of Militant, followed by calls for class unity to defeat the Tories and overthrow the system that 'sacks Longbridge workers because they make too many cars'. Based on the election results, Nellist and the Militants self-evidently found a receptive audience for their politics. Nellist was re-elected with a significantly increased majority in 1987, on a much larger swing than the national average, despite an extremely vitriolic campaign against him in the local newspaper, an intense campaign by the Social Democratic candidate on the slogan 'A Vote for Labour is a Vote for Militant', and the national Labour Party campaign largely abandoning him as Neil Kinnock tried to distance himself from Militant.[189] Dave Nellist was expelled from the Labour Party in 1991, but almost won re-election in the 1992 election as an Independent Labour candidate. Subsequently he served on Coventry City Council representing the St. Michael's ward, which includes Hillfields, from 1998 until 2012 under the Socialist Alternative banner. Nellist was thus not a voice in the wilderness, but rather evidence of a real appetite for a radical interpretation of what had befallen Coventry, and an aggressive class-based political fight to save the city's industrial base and remake the staid local Labour Party into a truly socialist organisation.

What's Left

It is important to recognise that deindustrialisation does not mean always the total disappearance of manufacturing and industry. Things are still made in Coventry and the West Midlands, and many of the new private sector service industries that have risen to prominence in recent decades are directly connected to the making of things.

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[186] Clippings, various *Coventry Evening Telegraph* articles, 1979/80, MSS.278/6/7, MRC.
[187] Copy of *Militant*, 28 May 1987, Militant Tendency files, 'Election campaign '87: Key seats: Coventry S.E., 601/C/3/11/16, MRC.
[188] Michael Crick, *Militant, revised edition* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016), 204.
[189] Clippings, various *Coventry Evening Telegraph* articles, 1987, Militant Tendency files, Coventry S.E., 601/C/3/11/17, MRC.

More specifically, the West Midlands is still at the centre of the British automotive industry. However, the industry is a profoundly different industry than it was in the immediate postwar era, and the transformation from a large-scale blue-collar employer to a high technological niche industry has accelerated into the 21st century. In 2001 there were still approximately 16,300 assembly jobs in the West Midlands, about 20 per cent of the UK total.[190] Despite hundreds of millions of pounds of public support over the decades, the long term future of the Rootes/Chrysler/Peugeot-owned Ryton plant was never truly secure, and its workforce was slowly cut over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Ryton was finally closed in 2006, on short notice less than two weeks before Christmas.[191] Peugeot then moved production to Slovakia, where lower wages, very low corporation taxes, and government support have combined to turn the country into the biggest producer of cars per capita in the world.[192]

The workforce of the modern automobile industry looks different than it did a generation ago because the structure of the industry has changed. Part of this was caused by automation, where machines replace assembly workers, and linked to this has been the modularisation of assembly, where factories are reconfigured to be able to produce several different models on the same line.[193] These modular systems are extremely complex technically, and thus require a considerable workforce of trained technicians to build and maintain. In addition, as cars have become more electronically complex, the cost of the computers, sensors, and other equipment that run the car have grown considerably, and this has put enormous cost-saving pressure on those further down the supply chain.[194]

Coventry has retained the UK headquarters of Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), the maker of two of Britain's most iconic luxury car brands, now owned by Indian multinational Tata. Although production is centred in Birmingham and Merseyside, considerable design, engineering, and administrative work is done in Coventry, and JLR is remains a source of genuine pride for many Coventrians. In 2011 JLR employed nearly 2600 workers in Coventry, making it the largest private sector employer.[195] In addition, the London Elective Vehicle Company, formerly London Taxi Company (and Carbodies before that), continues to operate in Ansty, on the north-eastern edge of Coventry. It is now owned by Chinese automaker Geely, and has begun producing the first all-electric taxicab, which maintain the iconic design but will be compliant with new Transport for London zero-emissions rules. Coventry University and the University of Warwick, often referred to as Tony Blair's favourite university, are at the centre of this transformation.[196] Thus, a regional cluster remains, and provided that key technical and

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[190] David Bailey, 'Globalization and Restructuring in the Auto Industry: The Impact on the West Midlands Automobile Cluster', *Strategic Change* 16, no. 4 (2007): 137-144.

[191] Michael Harrison, 'Peugeot to close Ryton with 2,300 job losses', *The Independent*, 19 April 2006, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/peugeot-to-close-ryton-with-2300-job-losses-6103427.html.

[192] Petr Pavlinek, 'Whose Success? The State–Foreign Capital Nexus and the Development of the Automotive Industry in Slovakia', *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23, no. 4 (2016): 571-593.

[193] Stewart MacNeill, Alan Srbljanin & Gill Bentley, *Developments in the Automotive Industry 2000–2015* (Birmingham: Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, 2002).

[194] Bentley, 'Dealing with Strategic Change', 362.

[195] However, it ranked sixth when public sector employers were included: Coventry City Council, the two universities, the University Hospital and the Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust all ranked higher. Sarah Portlock, 'Coventry - is the UK's 'motor city' still driving forwards?', *BBC News*, 12 December 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-38212517.

[196] Blair visited the university during both the 1997 and 2001 election campaigns and brought Bill Clinton there during his final visit to the UK as American president. Blair referred to Warwick as 'a beacon among British Universities for its dynamism, quality and entrepreneurial zeal'. 'History of the University', *Warwick University*,

research roles continue to be based in the city, it is very possible that this cluster will continue to strengthen in the years ahead. The worldwide auto industry continues to consolidate – the year 2020 began with two giant conglomerates coming together into a multi-national behemoth in the merger of PSA and Fiat Chrysler – and this is making it harder for smaller concentrations of expertise and talent to survive and thrive.[197] But in addition to the 'entrepreneurial focus' of Warwick and Coventry Universities and the legacies of expertise in automotive design, Coventry may have one other persistent advantage as it attempts to retain its car industry.

Figure 7: JLR's Whitley Engineering Centre, Coventry (creative commons)

As discussed in the introduction, a deeply fraught politics of heritage has emerged in the wake of British industrial society.[198] In a recent article, Sam Wetherell and Laura Gutiérrez have argued that Britain has essentially become a 'history factory', having packaged and sold a sanitised version of its own past through tourism and the sheltering of oligarchs, all as a replacement for lost industries and imperial commerce.[199] This 'history factory' is often a literal factory. Often the manufacturing industries that have survived in 21st century Britain are those which trade on a particular image of Britain – such as the iconic London taxi cab. Other

21 January 2019, https://warwick.ac.uk/about/history/. Joe Plomin, Blair woos votes at Warwick University', *The Guardian*, 10 May 2001, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2001/may/10/highereducation.news.

[197] Arnoud Lagendijk, 'Towards an Integrated Automotive Industry in Europe: A 'Merging Filiere' Perspective,' *European Urban and Regional Studies* 4 (1997): 5–18.

[198] For an early cultural critique, see Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994). For a carefully constructed, thoughtful discussion of the politics of heritage in a South Wales community, see Bella Dicks, *Heritage, Place and Community* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).

[199] Sam Wetherell & Laura Gutiérrez, 'It Just Won't Die', *Jacobin Magazine*, 19 May 2018.

examples in the car industry are not hard to find. The Mini Hatch/Cooper, produced by BMW at Oxford, trades very heavily on a particular image of Britishness. The luxury cars produced by Jaguar Land Rover in Coventry trade on their quasi-imperial image as a symbol of the British elite, including associations with the Royal Family. Coventry is unlikely ever to become a centre of mass market production again and the broad-based industrial prosperity of the postwar era is unlikely to return either. But by trading on a caricatured idea of traditional Britishness, some elements of the Coventry's motor city heritage may yet be preserved.

Conclusion

The symbol of Coventry University (CU), formed out of Lanchester Polytechnic in 1992 and expanded over the former industrial land east of the city centre over the last 25 years, is the phoenix.[200] CU is the fastest growing university in the UK and its establishment been an unmitigated success for the economy of the city and the vibrancy of its inner areas.[201] From one perspective, Coventry has indeed risen from the ashes yet again, pulling off the trick of keeping up with the times which so impressed J. B. Priestley in the 1930s. The new white-collar auto jobs, the glittering towers near the railway station, the entrepreneurial focus of the two universities, and the UK Capital of Culture award for 2021 all suggest that Coventry is on the move once again. Compared with some of the other cases studying in this project, like Oldham and Motherwell, Coventry is comparably much better off. But beneath the glitter, the aftereffects of Coventry's postwar crisis remain: the shockingly low female employment rate, the racial segregation and poverty of the north & east of the city, and the continued strength of Trotskyism in certain segments of the city's left.

Coventry's postwar prosperity came to a dramatic and sudden end, and the human consequences of this sudden collapse were profound. As we have seen, there was little-to-no government support for the tens of thousands of Coventrians made unemployed in the crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. In many cases, the trade unions and even the Church of England became the primary employment support agencies. The Wilson and Callaghan governments did attempt to support the British auto industry, through the nationalisation of British Leyland and through a bailout of Chrysler and support for the takeover by Peugeot, but these efforts largely ceased with the election of the Thatcher government. The British auto industry was forced to sink or swim in a hyper-competitive global market, even though its structure had been reshaped in an effort to achieve the social democratic goals of postwar governments.

The collapse of the auto industry in Coventry hurt women and ethnic minorities the most. It exposed the extent to which they had never truly been equal citizens in a postwar British society that was supposedly based on social democratic equality. The speed and depth of the collapse, and the way it exposed the false promises and false assumptions of the postwar consensus, opened the door to innovative ideological interpretations and radical solutions, which have shaped the direction of British politics in the decades since. Studying the deindustrialisation of Coventry is thus another conduit into an exploration of the fundamental political, economic, and social transformations of modern Britain.

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[200] Coventry University, 'History', *About Us*, undated, retrieved January 2020 from: https://www.coventry.ac.uk/the-university/about-coventry-university/history/.

[201] 'Ucas Figures Reveal Winners and Losers in Battle for Students', *Times Higher Education*, 26 January 2017, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/ucas-figures-reveal-winners-and-losers-battle-students#survey-answer.

Chapter 4:
Doomed from the Start? – Class and Nation in the Fight to Save the Ravenscraig Steel Mill

In recent years, no heavy industry in Britain has been the subject of such consternation, petitioning, and public debate as the steel industry. There has been constant churn in the ownership structure of the industry, with the arrival of Corus, Tata, Liberty Group, and recently the return of a historic name, British Steel (Limited). One of the remaining integrated works, at Port Talbot in South Wales, has been perpetually threatened with closure by its owners, Tata Steel Europe.[1] British Steel Limited was declared insolvent in the spring of 2019 after failed negotiations between the UK government and owners Greybull Capital.[2] In March 2020, British Steel Limited was officially taken over by the Jingye Group, a Chinese company, who has promised to retain and modernise the steelworks at Scunthorpe.[3]

Although it is unclear what the future holds for the British steel industry, it is not currently well-equipped to compete in a highly saturated, heavily globalised international market. The remaining British operations are under-capitalised and geographically fragmented. Although there is significant government and public concern about the social impact of the potential closure of mills at Port Talbot or Scunthorpe, significant government aid does not appear forthcoming. The steel industry is a large employer and provides the economic foundation for a number of communities across Great Britain, but in the 21st century context, it is broadly understood as a creature of the market. It must compete or die. The owners of British Steel Limited and Tata Steel Europe are beholden to their shareholders and creditors, not to the government or to the communities that rely on their employment.

However, this has not always been the case. The majority of the steel industry was in government ownership in the early 1950s and again from 1967 to 1988. Even during the period of private ownership in the 1950s and 1960s, the industry was not subject solely to the whims of the market. It was also subject to government imposed maximum prices, the government regularly intervened to consolidate the ownership structure, and most importantly, it was used by the government as a tool of regional policy. As has been discussed in earlier chapters, postwar governments had made a commitment to try to ensure full employment, and even if this commitment was often found to be hollow, the steel industry would be managed to ensure that it helped to maintain and/or boost employment in economically depressed areas. Nowhere could this policy be seen more clearly than in the construction of Britain's newest and most modern steelworks, the Ravenscraig steel mill, which was opened in 1962 just to the east of Motherwell, in Lanarkshire. Ravenscraig remained open for thirty years before closing in 1992, leaving an enormous hole, both figuratively and literally, in the social and economic life of the Scottish central belt. Its short life tells us much about the nature of postwar Britain, and about the relationship between deindustrialisation and neoliberalism.

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[1] 'Tata Steel: Job Fears at Port Talbot over Furnace Plan', *BBC News*, 19 July 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-53465239.

[2] Andrea Leadson, 'Cause for Optimism on the Future of British Steel', *HM Government: Business and Industry*, 27 August 2019, retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/cause-for-optimism-on-the-future-of-british-steel; 'British Steel Insolvency Endangers 5,000 jobs', *BBC News*, 22 May 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/business-48365241.

[3] 'British Steel: Takeover by Chinese Firm Completed', *BBC News*, 9 March 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51795414.

Ravenscraig was a creature of postwar social democracy, with all its contradictions and deficiencies. Within years of its completion, Ravenscraig became a physical symbol of those contradictions, one that was impossible to ignore, and one that helped to spur an ideological reckoning over the nature of the mixed economy. Once that ideological shift had occurred, and the mill had been handed over fully to the whims of the market, Ravenscraig's fate was all but sealed. Nevertheless, the final decade of struggle to save Ravenscraig revealed both the enormity and the incompleteness of this ideological shift, and the continued power of co-ordinated social movements to challenge the structures of power in British society. In addition to being a creature of social democracy, Ravenscraig was also a creature of the Union. It was the single most dramatic symbol of the transformation of the Union from an imperial to a post-imperial 'social union'. Its collapse is thus symbolic of a fracturing of that social union, and it has opened the way for a distinctly Scottish political reaction.

This chapter will travel chronologically, beginning with an explanation of how Ravenscraig, the most modern steel mill in the world, came to be built in the middle of the Scottish central belt. This is a story of postwar social democracy, managed capitalism, regional policy, and the peculiar nature of Scotland's place within the Union. Then, the chapter will explore how the contradictions between Ravenscraig's role as a market-oriented steel mill and its role as part of regional development policy grew ever wider. This widening gap led to growing concern about the mill's future and increasing the determination of industrial leaders to force its closure. Next, it will explore the fraught final years of the mill's existence, as the determination of those industrial leaders ran up against a powerful opposition that drew support from across Scotland, including from a large segment of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party. The emotional force and relative success of the 'Save our Steel' campaign reflects the considerable afterlife of support for a social democratic managed economy, including in some surprising places. Finally, it will grapple with the social and cultural aftermath of the closure, discussing the politics of redevelopment, and explore the relationship between deindustrialisation and nationalism in 21st century Scotland.

Steelopolis and the Construction of Ravenscraig

The Scottish Steel Industry grew out of small scale iron smelting works in the late 18th century, primarily in the Coatbridge area, which is only about eight miles to the north of Motherwell. Motherwell remained a small community, with a population of only 1,400 as late as 1841, and it was bypassed by the early stages of industrialisation in Lanarkshire. This all changed in 1872 with the opening of Dalzell Steel and Iron Works by David Colville just to the east of the town centre. By the turn of the century, Motherwell had been transformed into 'Steelopolis', a bustling industrial centre of 37,000, with its steel helping to build the battleships, railways, and machine goods that made Glasgow 'the second city' of the British Empire.[4]

As in the coal and textile industries, the slow, decentralised process of industrialisation through the 19th century meant that the British steel industry of 1945 was highly fragmented and in need of consolidation. That said, its weakness should not be overemphasised. As David Edgerton has recently reminded us, Britain remained an industrial powerhouse in the immediate

[4] Robert Duncan, *Steelopolis: The Making of Motherwell, c. 1750-1939* (Motherwell: Motherwell District Council, 1991).

postwar era, not least in iron and steel.[5] Britain was the second largest exporter of steel in the world, with a collection of mills spread across the country, from Lanarkshire in Scotland to Corby and Dudley in the English Midlands, and in both the north and south of Wales.[6] The Scottish steel industry, centred on Lanarkshire, was a critical part of that empire. Thus, it was not surprising that the new postwar Labour government had explicitly promised to nationalise the iron and steel industry as part of their manifesto commitment to ensure that Britain's industries served 'in the service of the nation'.[7]

However, unlike with the transport and fuel industries, the Labour government was slow to act on this commitment, as senior government figures wrestled with the problem of compensation for the private owners, and with how the highly complex industry should be structured after nationalisation. Initial proposals were drawn up in early 1947, calling for a relatively limited reorganisation, with a central board appointed by the minster, but with each company 'retaining its identity (and) a considerable degree of freedom in day-to-day management matters'.[8] However, resistance came not only from the industrial leaders in the Iron and Steel Federation, but also from within the cabinet, with Deputy Prime Minister Herbert Morrison preferring to find a corporatist compromise with the Federation.[9] However, under pressure from Aneurin Bevan and the left-wing of the Labour Party, the proponents of nationalisation overcame resistance from the cabinet, industry, the Tory opposition, and the House of Lords. The Iron and Steel Corporation of Great Britain was thus formed in the autumn of 1950.[10] The Iron and Steel Corporation, following the guidelines of the 1946 Steel Development Plan, prepared to build up the industry, expanding or replacing the largest integrated works, with the goal of increasing production to 16 million tonnes annually.

However, the Iron and Steel Corporation did not last, and the Conservative government elected in 1951 quickly returned all but one of the steel companies to private ownership, just as organisationally fragmented as ever. But this Tory privatisation did not mean a return to the free market. The Iron and Steel Board was created to manage the industry, providing subsides for modernisation projects and setting maximum prices on finished steel to ensure that British businesses could buy steel at a lower cost than their foreign competitors. The expansion plans introduced under nationalisation were retained.[11] 'Gentlemen's agreements' with the European Coal & Steel Community and with the US ensured that little foreign steel entered the British market during the 1950s, meaning that the British steel companies had a fairly stable market they could rely upon. Most of the steel company owners assumed that the industry would be re-nationalised once Labour returned to power, so they tended to plan only for the short term.[12]

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[5] David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation.*
[6] Geoffrey Owen, *From Empire to Europe: The Decline and Revival of British Industry since the Second World War* (London: Harper Collins, 2000), 130-35.
[7] Labour Party, 'Industry in the Service of the Nation', *1945 Labour Party Election Manifesto, Let Us Face the Future*, Retrieved September 2019 from http://labourmanifesto.com/1945/1945-labour-manifesto.shtml.
[8] Cabinet Memorandum, 'Proposed Scheme for Public Ownership of Sections of the Iron and Steel Industry. Memorandum by the Minister of Supply', 14 April 1947, CAB/129/18/CP/123, TNA.
[9] Ruggero Ranieri, 'Partners and Enemies: The Government's Decision to Nationalise Steel, 1944-48', in *The Political Economy of Nationalisation in Britain, 1920-1950*, eds. Robert Millward & John Singleton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), i, 275-6, 280-2.
[10] David Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival: The 1980s Campaign to Save Ravenscraig Steelworks', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 25, no. 1 (2005): 42.
[11] Alasdair Blair, 'The British Iron and Steel Industry since 1945,' *Journal of European Economic History* 26 (1997): 573.
[12] Ibid, 575.

All of this meant that British steel producers had little incentive to modernise. Thus, when those gentlemen's agreements began to be abandoned in the late 1960s and 70s, the industry would be unprepared for the foreign competition. In addition, the expected growth in domestic steel demand did not materialise, leading to a decline in utilisation from 98 per cent in 1955 to 79 per cent in 1966.[13] The postwar British steel industry was managed, but it was not well managed.

One of the 80 steel companies that had briefly become part of the Iron and Steel Confederation was David Colville & Sons, which continued to operate Dalzell steelworks just east of Motherwell, in addition to a number of smaller further processing operations in neighbouring communities in the northern part of Lanarkshire. The Colvilles were content to continue operating their facilities, with some modernisation support from the UK Government.[14] Why then did Ravenscraig ever get built in the first place? To understand its construction, we must consider Scotland's place in the postwar UK.

Postwar unemployment in Scotland, although low by historical standards, remained significantly higher than in most of England. In February 1959, the Scottish unemployment rate was 5.4 per cent, approximately double the UK-wide rate of 2.8 per cent.[15] In the fifteen years following the Second World War, a period that saw Great Britain[16] as a whole make an impressive economic rebound, Scotland seemed to stagnate, causing a degree of consternation among Scottish civic leadership that made even the 'declinism' of the metropolitan English elites pale in comparison.[17] Between 1950 and 1957, employment in Great Britain increased by 1.25 million. Of those 1.25 million new jobs, 46,000 were in Scotland, barely a third of what the number would have been if it had kept pace on a per-capita basis.[18] Scotland also stagnated demographically, with the population edging up by only 1.6 per cent in the 1950s, the second slowest growth rate since the beginning of the census, and only one quarter the rate in England. This was despite the fact that Scotland's natural growth rate was about twice that of England. Approximately 250,000 more people left Scotland in the 1950s than entered.[19] As with debates in England and the UK as a whole, fingers were pointed at a variety of factors: a weak, febrile elite, lack of vision from the business community, underinvestment, poor industrial relations, and an incoherent trade policy.[20] However, added to this was a deep concern about the industrial structure of the country. Even more so than the north of England, the Scottish

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[13] Anthony Cockerill & Aubrey Silberston, *The Steel Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 54. 'Utilisation' in this context refers to the amount of steel being produced compared with the nameplate capacity of British steel mills. Because of the cost structure of steel production (including very high overheads), steel mills operating well below 100 per cent utilisation are rarely able to maintain profitability.

[14] 'Steel: Leave Well Alone', British Iron & Steel Federation booklet, undated (mid 1960s), Andrew McCance files, UGD104/22/6, University of Glasgow Archives.

[15] 'Representations to Secretary of State for Scotland & President of Board of Trade, London', 17 March 1959, page 2, Burgh of Motherwell and Wishaw ephemera files, no file number, North Lanarkshire Heritage Centre (hereafter NLHC).

[16] I use Great Britain here because Scotland was not the other nation to miss out on the growth of the postwar era – Northern Ireland was mired in an even more debilitating economic stagnation.

[17] Jim Tomlinson, 'Thrice Denied: 'Declinism' as a Recurrent Theme in British History in the Long Twentieth Century', *Twentieth Century British History* 20 (2009): 227–251.

[18] 'Representations to Secretary of State for Scotland & President of Board of Trade, London', 17 March 1959, page 3, NLHC.

[19] Thomas Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700–2007* (London: Penguin, 2007).

[20] Jim Phillips, *The Industrial Politics of Devolution: Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Thomas Devine, *Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

industrial base was outdated, fragmented, and structurally incomplete. Scotland was not succeeding in attracting the light industrial and engineering jobs that were becoming so important to the economy in the English midlands and south, and much like Northern Ireland, it was overly reliant on 'first industrial revolution' industries like jute, shipbuilding, and coal mining.[21]

But how could this be fixed? Fundamentally, the state needed to intervene. This view was as prevalent in the Unionist Party, as Scottish Conservatives were called as late as 1960s, as it was in the Labour Party. Whereas Labour in Scotland lacked a distinctive Scottish identity and largely replicated the divisions between the socialist and social democratic wings found in the UK-wide party, the Unionist Party was heavily invested in a mixed economy with a distinctive Scottish dimension. With a Conservative government in London from 1951 onwards, and the Unionists winning a majority of both Scottish votes and seats in the 1955 election, the last time this has ever happened, the time was nigh for the implementation of their vision.

From the early 1950s onwards, a national 'Scottish lobby', including business, trade unions, the Church of Scotland, and members of both major parties, began applying constant pressure for public investment to alleviate Scotland's particularly acute economic problems.[22] Under the administrative devolution which began in the late 19th century, much of the responsibility for public investment and industrial policy in Scotland lay with the Scottish Office, and this 'lobby' became very effective at building connections and influencing the policy direction of the Scottish Office, headquartered in the great and imposing St. Andrews House overlooking Edinburgh.[23]

With the Scottish steel industry under-capitalised and slowly falling behind that of the rest of the UK, the Scottish lobby argued that a new integrated mill was essential to the refortification of the Scottish industrial base, and they successfully persuaded the officials at the Scottish Office of this view. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Scottish Office, Jack Nixon Browne, proclaimed, 'this is just what Scotland needs, we must not lose it'.[24] The question then became where to put the new mill. The Scottish Trade Unions Congress wanted the mill placed at Grangemouth, a port and refinery town located on the Firth of Forth, where the mill could benefit from direct seaborne transport to international markets. However, the Scottish Secretary wanted it at Colvilles, believing that the company was better placed to manage the new mill. Andrew McCance, the head of Colvilles, warned the government that a new strip mill would lose £5 million a year. However, the decision was taken that the cost was worth it to deal with persistently high unemployment in Scotland, and so Harold Macmillan offered Colvilles a £50 million loan for a strip mill. But at the same time, the Macmillan

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[21] Peter Payne, 'The End of Steel Making in Scotland, c.1967-1993', *Scottish Economic & Social History* 15, no. 1 (2010): 66-70; Jim Tomlinson, 'Imagining the Economic Nation: The Scottish Case,' *Political Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2014): 170-77; Jim Tomlinson & Christopher Whatley (eds.), *Jute No More: Transforming Dundee* (Dundee: Dundee University Press, 2011).

[22] Arthur Midwinter, Michael Keating & James Mitchell, *Politics and Public Policy in Scotland* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 84-85.

[23] Wales did not receive administrative devolution until the creation of the Welsh Office in 1964, and of course Northern Ireland had its own Parliament until 1972, which the UK Government largely left to manage its own affairs, so Scotland was unique in having a government department headed by a cabinet minister that could advocate on its behalf.

[24] Ian Levitt (ed.), *The Scottish Office: Depression and Reconstruction, 1919-1959* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1992), 206, 209 & 223-9.

government was also helping to finance the construction of another integrated strip mill at Llanwern on the outskirts of Newport in South Wales. This was despite the fact that government reports showed there would never be enough demand for both of them.[25] In addition, neither was as big as originally envisioned, and thus they would be unable to compete with the massive centralised works built in West Germany and Japan in the coming decades.

When Ravenscraig opened in 1962, it was one of the most modern steel mills in the world, capable of producing steel of the very highest quality.[26] There was great hope, not just in Motherwell but across the Scottish central belt, that the mill's opening would herald the beginning of a new age of industrial prosperity.[27] A *Motherwell Times* headline screamed 'Ravenscraig: The Answer to All'.[28] And Ravenscraig was part of a larger regional industrial strategy for Scotland, which included modernisation of the mills that would process Ravenscraig steel, like the cold rolling mill at Gartcosh, near Coatbridge, and the siting of new industries in the Scottish central belt that would consume the steel produced at Ravenscraig. As openly admitted by Bailie Edward Lawson of the Town Council of Motherwell and Wishaw in a March 1959 meeting with government ministers, 'the industries do not exist in Scotland to take up even a reasonable proportion of the contemplated output of the new mill.'[29] So other factories would be needed, and the Distribution of Industry (Industrial Finance) Act of 1958 even further expanded the Board of Trade's ability to entice industry to areas of need.

These included most notably the Rootes (later Chrysler/Peugeot) car factory in Linwood, Renfrewshire, and the British Motor Corporation truck and tractor factory in Bathgate, West Lothian. Both of these factories were built by private companies enticed by enormous government support through the Special Development Area schemes. From a market perspective, these factories would prove to be poor investments.[30] Linwood in particular suffered from extremely poor labour relations, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, these new factories further broke up the spatial concentration of the British auto industry in the English midlands, leading to higher transport costs, distribution problems, and fewer economies of scale.[31] Private companies had thus been driven to invest in unproductive factories in order to fulfill the goals of postwar regional policy and help with the economic uplift of depressed parts of Scotland. And at the centre of this whole scheme was Ravenscraig, the symbol of the Scottish lobby's success and the linchpin of a modern industrial Scotland. The problems with this approach would be almost immediately apparent and would threaten the stability of the entire postwar consensus in the decades to come.

Thus the very existence of the Ravenscraig steel mill was the product of the peculiar nature of postwar British social democracy, and in particular the form of corporatist

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[25] Peter Payne, *Colvilles and the Scottish Steel Industry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 384.
[26] Ibid, 390.
[27] See for example, 'Mighty £66 million Ravenscraig: Prosperity Hopes Rest with Strip Mill', *Hamilton Advertiser*, 1 February 1963; 'Prosperity Depends on Fortunes of Steel Industry', *The Scotsman*, 26 February 1963, Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[28] 'Ravenscraig – The Answer to All', *Motherwell Times*, 8 February 1963, Retrieved from Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[29] Burgh of Motherwell and Wishaw, 'Representations to Secretary of State for Scotland & President of Board of Trade, London', 17 March 1959, Page 9, NLHC. For a further discussion of the political and social considerations that went into the placement of the Ravenscraig mill, see also James Mitchell, *The Scottish Question* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 57-58.
[30] Healey & Clark, 'Industrial Decline and Government Response', 303-318.
[31] Tyler, 'The Impact of Regional Policy on a Prosperous Region', 151-162.

interventionism practiced by the postwar Scottish Unionists.[32] Ravenscraig was built because of a widely held political commitment to the stability of the Union, and to a regional policy that included at its core the alleviation of localised deprivation through the targeted location (or relocation) of industry. But Britain retained a market economy, open to trade with the world. The gentlemen's agreements which had restricted the flow of foreign steel into the British market were slowly abandoned over the course of the 1960s, and the postwar steel boom came to an end. In the face of these considerable changes in local market conditions, the British steel industry lacked even the supply management system and basic protections that were imposed across the Channel with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. Ravenscraig's future would fundamentally be tied to the free market, and because of the political and social calculations which went into its construction, it would be perpetually disadvantaged in its ability to compete in that market. This fundamental tension, between Ravenscraig as a piece of social democratic welfare policy, and Ravenscraig as a business competing to sell goods, would be at the core of the struggle over its closure.

Ravenscraig Under Threat

By 1967, Colvilles was technically bankrupt because of the debts incurred in the construction of Ravenscraig. However, this quickly became irrelevant, as the Labour government of Harold Wilson moved to re-nationalise the industry later that same year.[33] Despite the incredible resistance to nationalisation put up by Andrew McCance of Colvilles, and by other steelmakers, it would later become apparent that private shareholders were overcompensated by more than £300 million. Once again, this second attempt at nationalisation was not a truly wholesale conversion of the industry into a public asset: the corporate leadership was largely left in charge, and the nationalisation focussed on the fourteen largest integrated works, leaving the smaller, more profitable specialised companies in private hands.[34] This decision would prove a problem for integration and profitability in the medium term.

In 1972, the re-nationalised British Steel Corporation (BSC) put forward an ambitious ten-year development strategy. It called for modernisation, with the conversion of all remaining open hearths to the vastly more efficient basic oxygen steel-making method, and a rise in overall production to 36-38 million tonnes, an increase of nearly 50 per cent.[35] Ravenscraig had a significant role to play in this program: the plan was for Ravenscraig to raise production at its basic oxygen plant to 3.2 million tonnes, an electric arc plant was to be added, and a deepwater ore terminal would be built at Hunterston in Ayrshire.[36] However, the program was put forward just as two significant convulsions coursed through the global steel industry: the oil crisis and subsequent industrial recession, and the incredible rise of competition from Japan and South Korea. By 1973, Britain had lost the majority of its Commonwealth markets, and the majority of its steel exports went to the continent, which also were suffering from overcapacity. The UK

[32] See James Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion*; Barry Moore & John Rhodes, 'Evaluating the Effects of British Regional Economic Policy', *The Economic Journal* 83 (1973): 87-110; Midwinter, Keating & Mitchell, *Politics and Public Policy in Scotland.*

[33] 'Background Note on Colvilles Ltd. and the Scottish Steel Industry for the Secretary of State's meeting with the STUC due to be held in late September 1966', 22 September 1966, Scottish Ministry of Power files, SEP4/2918, National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS).

[34] Keith Ovenden, *The Politics of Steel* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 191.

[35] Alasdair Blair, 'The British Iron and Steel Industry since 1945', 577.

[36] Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival', 45.

was now a member of the European Economic Community (EEC), and thus could not protect its industry from European competition. At the same time, the UK Government balked at the £3 billion cost of the modernisation strategy: the Conservative government of Ted Heath was attempting to move away from the postwar interventionist economic model and did not want to take on further industrial policy obligations.[37] So the British steel industry actually went in the opposite direction. The electric arc plant at Ravenscraig was deferred until demand improved, and employment in the Scottish steel industry declined from 25,750 in September 1974 to 18,860 in July 1979.[38] Very few of these redundancies were at Ravenscraig – instead they were primarily at further processing plants like the Gartcosh cold rolling mill and the Clydesbridge plate mill.[39] The running down of these plants further isolated Ravenscraig and made the existence of a large strip mill in the middle of the Scottish central belt even less financially viable in the medium-to-long term, should the UK government ever decide to fully abandon postwar Scottish industrial policy.

The Scottish steel industry was not alone in feeling the pinch in the 1970s, but it was quickly becoming apparent that it faced particularly severe market challenges, largely as a result of the calculations that had gone into the siting of Ravenscraig. BSC was reorganised into geographic divisions in 1976, and two years later, the Scottish division was losing £52 per tonne of steel, compared to £31.30 on Teesside and £27.40 in Wales.[40] When compared with South Wales, Scottish steel had a 'transport cost penalty' of £5 a tonne when delivering steel to the South East of England, and £7 when delivering to the Midlands. This disadvantage was substantial, as labour costs would need to be at least 20 per cent lower in Scotland than in South Wales just to make up the difference.[41] If the steel industry was to be operated according to market demands, it was likely that Ravenscraig would be in serious trouble.

I have argued throughout this dissertation that the collapse of both the structural pillars and the cultural assumptions of the social democratic welfare state began well before the election of the Thatcher government in 1979. However, 1979 marked a fundamental shift in the management of nationalised industries such as coal and steel, and not simply for the fact that it brought a new government to Westminster. In 1978 the EEC adopted the Davignon Plan to save the European steel industry, which called for bloc-wide import controls and an end to government subsides. Its directives came into force in 1980, just as British heavy industry faced an unprecedented crisis.[42] Margaret Thatcher's ambivalence for the EEC has been well documented,[43] but these regulations fit with her aims and provided a useful excuse for the negative consequences that would ensue. In the end, Britain was actually one of the few

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[37] Seldon & Ball (eds.), *The Heath Government 1970-74.*
[38] Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival, 46.
[39] 'Estimating the Effect of Steel Closures, Table 1: Employment in Scottish Steel: Motherwell District', Motherwell District Council report, 1992, Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[40] Peter Payne, 'The Decline of the Scottish Heavy Industries', in *The Economic Development of Modern Scotland,* ed. Richard Saville (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1985), 100.
[41] 'Options for Steel in Scotland: Report 1 of Arthur D. Little, Executive Summary', page 35, 24 January 1991, TD1219/1, Glasgow City Archives (hereafter GCA).
[42] Jim Tomlinson, 'De-industrialization: Strengths and Weaknesses as a Key Concept for Understanding Post-war British History', *Urban History* 47 (2020): 199-219.
[43] For a discussion of Margaret Thatcher's complex relations with the EEC, see Stephen Wall, *A Stranger in Europe: Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) or John Young, *Britain and European Unity, 1945-1999* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

countries to truly adhere to the rules of the Davignon Plan.[44] As a result, the EEC actually acted as an incredibly important partner in the Thatcherite effort to make the steel industry adhere to market demands. The process of economic liberalisation in the Scottish steel industry was thus driven by a number of forces, not all of which aminated from Westminster.[45]

Between 1979 and 1982 employment at Ravenscraig was cut from 6,400 to 4,400, and Clydebridge's plate mill marked for closure. In November 1980, the smaller Lanarkshire steelworks, which was located just to the south of Ravenscraig and which produced rolled steel sections and colliery arches, was closed, with the loss of 390 jobs. The works, which dated back to 1889, had become considerably outdated and there had been a series of redundancies over the preceding decades as the open-hearth furnaces were closed and the shifts were reduced from fifteen a week to ten and eventually to just five.[46]

Even more significantly, the single biggest consumer of steel in Scotland, the Rootes/Chrysler auto plant in Linwood, closed in 1980.[47] The collapse of much of the postwar industrial structure of Scotland would have a profound knock-on effect on Ravenscraig, as the market rationale for the plant had always been first and foremost as a local supplier. It was in this context that the Standing Committee for the Defence of the Scottish Steel Industry was formed, bringing together politicians, trade unions, and civic organisations.[48] The Committee was largely a high political entity, with a traditional Labour Party flavour. The Chairman was Bill Miller, a Strathclyde Regional Councillor and former chair of the Glasgow Labour Party.[49] This was not a truly grassroots campaign. However, the goal was to awaken the Scottish public to the new and stark reality: Ravenscraig, the crown jewel of the Scottish industrial base, was in peril like never before.

Although it was not yet a part of her government's policy, in private Thatcher was clear: she wanted the steel industry to eventually be privatised. As Thatcher writes in her autobiography, 'BSC exemplified not only the disadvantages of state ownership and intervention, but also the way that British trade unionism dragged down our industrial performance'.[50] And she went on to note that BSC was much less efficient than its European competitors, suggesting that this was inherent to the state ownership system, rather than a feature of the compromises that had shaped the structure of the British industry. But clearly this road to privatisation would be a long one: nobody in their right mind would have bought shares in BSC in the early years of the Thatcher premiership. In 1980-81, the company lost £1 billion on a turnover of £3 billion, possibly the worst record of any company in the world. In the short term, Thatcher accepted that the state would need to continue to provide considerable funding to the steel industry; however, this funding would be tied to an aggressive modernisation effort focussed on restoring profitability. Thatcher appointed Ian Macgregor as the new Chairman of

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[44] Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival', 48.
[45] For further discussion of the role of the EEC/EU in driving economic liberalisation in this period, see Christoph Hermann, 'Neoliberalism in the European Union', *Studies in Political Economy* 79, no. 1 (2007): 61-90.
[46] Ian MacGregor & Rodney Tyler, *The Enemies Within: The Story of the Miners' Strike, 1984-5* (London: Collins, 1986); Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival', 48.
[47] Ministerial Note: 'Closure of Talbot, Linwood: Effect on Scottish Suppliers and Possible Employment Loss', 16 February 1981, SEP4/4005, NRS. Christopher Law, 'The Geography of Industrial Rationalisation: the British Motor Car Assembly Industry, 1972-1982', *Geography* 70, no. 1 (1985), 1-12.
[48] Scottish Steel Campaign ephemera collection, various dates, Strathclyde Regional Council (Scottish Steel Campaign) files, TD1219, GCA.
[49] Press Release, 'People Power Can Help Ravenscraig Campaign', 12 July 1990, TD1219, GCA.
[50] Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 1993), 108-114.

BSC: Macgregor had spent most of his career in American business and had a low opinion of British trade unions and industrial culture.[51] Macgregor was tasked with bringing the postwar era industrial policy to an end in steel: as Thatcher wrote: 'in future, pay (and funding) had to depend on the state of the employing industry. (…) But it was always going to be more difficult to induce such realism where the state was the owner, banker, and at times tempted to be the manager as well'.[52] A new vision of industrial policy was being formulated. And with tens of thousands of job losses in the offing, would Ravenscraig itself be at risk?

The Thatcher government did not cause the deindustrialisation of Britain, and this dissertation has broadly attempted to emphasise the constellation of local, national, and international economic and political factors that shaped the process of industrial decline in the UK. However, the particular nature of the steel industry – its fragmentation, its unprofitability, and its powerful trade unions – made it a particular target for the Thatcher regime, and a useful symbol that could be held up to make a broader ideological critique. The peculiar, compromised nature of postwar industrial policy made it especially vulnerable to such a critique. If BSC had been conceived and defended primarily as a vehicle for welfare and local economic stability, it would have been harder for the Thatcherites to attack it. But both Labour and Conservatives had largely accepted that BSC was first and foremost a business that needed to sell product and compete for markets. And with Ravenscraig in particular manifestly failing to accomplish this, it was hard to see how it would fit within the new Thatcherite vision of the British steel industry.

As this point, however, the Scottish Conservative Party continued to be dominated by moderates, or 'wets' in the eyes of the Prime Minister, who continued to believe in the government's role in supporting Scottish industry. It was reported that the Scottish Secretary, George Younger, threatened to resign if Ravenscraig was closed, and he had powerful friends in the cabinet, including the Home Secretary Willie Whitelaw and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Geoffrey Howe.[53] During the deep recession of the early 1980s, unemployment in North Lanarkshire had already risen to 20 per cent – male unemployment was 23 per cent – and would inevitably rise to truly horrifying levels should Ravenscraig be closed.[54] Thus, Ravenscraig would remain open. But Ian McGregor remained determined that further consolidation had to take place for BSC to be a profitable private enterprise. And neither the government nor BSC were willing to fund much needed improvements and repairs to the blast furnaces; funding instead went to English and Welsh mills that were seen as more financially viable.[55] So the fight was simply postponed.

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[51] Kevin Morley, *Striking Similarities: Parallels of Industrial Conflict* (Kibworth: Book Guild, 2017). See also Macgregor's own writing, which focuses on his time as head of the National Coal Board, in MacGregor & Tyler, *The Enemies Within.*

[52] Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 114.

[53] James Mitchell, *Conservatives and the Union: A Study of Conservative Party Attitudes Towards Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 99; Arnold Kemp, *The Hollow Drum: Scotland since the War* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1993), 184, 316.

[54] 'Unemployment in Scotland, Summary Number 1', 8 December 1983, Strathclyde Regional Council Steel Industry Files, SR3/60/1/85, GCA.

[55] Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival', 50.

Campaigns and Divisions

In March 1984, a series of regional strikes against threatened pit closures grew into a national miners' strike. Although the strike divided some coalfield areas, the Scottish coalfield, under the leadership of National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) Area President Mick MaGahey, was united in defence of the industry. McGahey was regarded as a leading militant, and by 1984 he was also Arthur Scargill's second in command and an executive in the Communist Party of Great Britain. McGahey and Scargill recognised that the strike would only be successful if it retained the solidarity of the rest of the trade union movement, and if it resurrected the famous 'Triple Alliance' of miners, railway workers, and dockers & seamen. However, Ravenscraig had remained operational during the 1972 and 1974 strikes, steel mill shutdowns were costly, and workers believed that even a short shutdown would give the government an excuse to close the mill permanently.

But to remain operational, Ravenscraig needed coking coal. The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) tried to broker a compromise whereby two trainloads of coal would be delivered a day, but McGahey eventually forced the STUC to cut that to one trainload.[56] With the mill struggling to remain operational, BSC followed the direction of the Thatcher government in using un-unionized road haulers to deliver stockpiled and imported coal to the mill. The road-haulers were given a £50 incentive per trip. In response, the NUM set up picket lines at Ravenscraig, and some of the most violent clashes of the strike in Scotland occurred outside the plant.[57] After the failure of the strike, Arthur Scargill remained bitter over what he felt had been the steelworkers' betrayal at the miners' time of need.[58] And so the Thatcher government had successfully broken working class solidarity in Scotland and left the workers of Ravenscraig without many friends in the trade union movement. In a rapidly deindustrialising society, the leaders of each industrial union were desperate to protect their workers and the viability of their industry, even if it meant working against those in other industries. In this way the loss of government support for full employment was fundamentally reshaping the way in which the steelworkers saw themselves and their position in the trade union movement.

Then in late 1985, soon after the miners' strike ended, it was announced that the Gartcosh rolling mill would close, with the loss of a further 800 jobs.[59] Under pressure from the Scottish Office, British Steel officials announced – in the same briefings that revealed the Gartcosh closure – that Ravenscraig was guaranteed to remain open for at least 3 additional years. In a meeting with the STUC in January 1986, the new Scottish Secretary Malcolm Rifkind claimed 'that the BSC position was made quite clear – that there was no connection between Ravenscraig and Gartcosh which would lead to Ravenscraig's closure'.[60] It was hoped that this combination of good and bad news would calm those who feared for Ravenscraig's future and prevent a united resistance to the Gartcosh closure. However, despite public assurances that Gartcosh's closure would not adversely affect the economic viability of Ravenscraig, a letter from BSC to Motherwell District Council in early 1986 demanding that the

[56] MacGregor & Tyler, *The Enemies Within*; Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival', 50.
[57] Keith Aitken, *The Bairns o'Adam: The Story of the STUC* (Edinburgh: Polygon Press, 1997), 270-293.
[58] Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival', 50. See also Jim Phillips, *Collieries, Communities and the Miners' Strike in Scotland, 1984–85* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 83-109.
[59] Clipping, *Glasgow Herald*, 7 August 1985, Retrieved from Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[60] 'Note of Meeting Between Secretary of State and Representatives of the STUC', 23 January 1986, SEP4/5463, NRS.

council continue to allow the dumping of pickling acid from Gartcosh at the Dalzell site emphasised that, if Gartcosh's operations were inhibited, it would have a knock-on effect on Ravenscraig.[61] If Gartcosh closed, Ravenscraig's steel would likely have to be shipped to Wales for rolling, which would make the economic justification for the mill even weaker.

The Standing Committee for the Defence of the Scottish Steel Industry thus launched the 'Save our Steel' (SOS) campaign to save Gartcosh. The campaign had a £1500 budget for advertising, largely funded by the STUC, with the goal of reaching three quarters of a million people using local newspaper adverts and the printing of 20,000 broadsheets. The focus was placed on non-Labour constituencies, with broadsheets being handed out in the relatively marginal Conservative constituencies of Renfrew West & Inverclyde and Strathkelvin & Bearsden, as well as Ayr, the seat of the Scottish Secretary George Younger, and Stirling, the seat of prominent young Thatcherite Michael Forsyth.[62] The SOS campaign recognised that it could only be successful if it had the support of the Scottish middle classes, as well as those who lived far from Ravenscraig and would probably not feel any direct economic impact from its closure. It needed to play up the idea that Ravenscraig was a symbol of Scottish industry and ingenuity, and that its closure would cut the heart out of not just the Scottish economy but Scottish society as a whole.

However, there was a tension in the campaign. The leaders of the Standing Committee, dominated as it was by the Labour Party, wanted a campaign that would engage broadly with the Scottish populace, but would also be a Britain-wide campaign organised along the lines of class, industry, and trade union solidarity. The goal was to avoid a situation of 'divide and rule' similar to what had been seen during the miners' strike, where deindustrialisation and government cuts forced steelworkers in different parts of the UK to turn against each other and fight over what remained. The Save Our Steel campaign message was fundamentally a call for the retention of the industrial moral economy, not just in Scotland but across the UK. Proponents of this moral economy argued that entities like Ravenscraig existed not only to make money, but also to support communities, and that each closure should only take place with the consent of those directly affected.[63]

However, the Scottish National Party (SNP) was putting forward a very different argument. The SNP repeatedly argued that, as an England-dominated company, British Steel Corporation could never be trusted to act in the best interests of the Scottish steel industry. If they refused to keep Ravenscraig open, the SNP argued, they should be forced to sell it to another company who would, or the government should take control of it as an independent entity, thereby creating a truly Scottish steel company. This Scottish steel company's primary purpose would be to supply the Scottish market, which would be protected from outside competition, thus ensuring that Ravenscraig could rely on that market. The trade unions and Labour-dominated local councils which led the Save our Steel campaign refused to accept these proposals, and restricted SNP participation in the campaign.[64] This division weakened the campaign and was the source of considerable animosity between Scottish Labour and the SNP that has never fully healed. However, it was not simply the SNP who wanted Ravenscraig and

[61] Clipping, *Motherwell Times*, 30 January 1986, Retrieved from Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[62] Clipping, *Motherwell Times*, 6 December 1985, Retrieved from Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[63] Jim Phillips, 'The Closure of Michael Colliery in 1967 and the Politics of Deindustrialisation in Scotland', 570-71.
[64] 'SNP starts its campaign for Steel Industry', *The Scotsman*, 16 January 1992; 'Unions hit SNP Plan', *Motherwell Times,* undated (1990), Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.

the other Scottish plants to be hived off from the rest of British Steel. Jim Bannerman, Chair of the Scottish Social and Liberal Democrats, wrote in the *Evening Times* in January 1990 that 'an independent Scottish steel company is the answer, supported by Scottish finance'.[65]

However, there was one particularly serious problem with this almost autarkic vision, which was that internal Scottish demand for steel was well below the production capacity of a large integrated mill such as Ravenscraig. With the closure of Linwood and downsizing of Bathgate, Scotland only made up 4.5 per cent of British market for steel, and a report commissioned by Motherwell Council argued that 'only the North Sea-related market for seamless pipe is significant in a UK context and close to the economic size of a plant'.[66] In addition, with the loss of Clydesbridge and Gartcosh, Ravenscraig would have to have to sell its steel to a final producer outside of Scotland regardless, making a fully independent, fully integrated Scottish steel industry impossible.

The social democratic postwar consensus that had enabled the construction of Ravenscraig was clearly in tatters, and mill's very existence was now threatened. The Save our Steel campaign wanted to save Ravenscraig by calling upon the remnants of public support for that consensus. But it could never definitively decide whether it wanted to campaign on the basis of class or nation.

The Struggle Renewed

Although the Save our Steel campaign failed in its efforts to save Gartcosh, the broader fight to save the Scottish steel industry would continue. Most assumed that Ravenscraig was next to be closed. The newest chairman of British Steel, Robert Scholey, was on the record supporting the closure of the steelworks. The company was due to be privatised as early as 1988 and Scholey wanted Ravenscraig off the books. However, in 1987, the Thatcher government would face an election, and her Scottish ministers feared an electoral disaster should the mill be allowed to close. The campaigning by the STUC and the Standing Committee, and their warnings about the future of Ravenscraig, were having a considerable impact. In a confidential note, a Scottish Office official wrote the following about the need to counter the messaging of the Save Our Steel campaign:

> The Scottish Office must get across quickly that we do believe that there is a credible future for Ravenscraig after 1998, while recognising the uncertainties, and that we intend to fight for it. The impression that we are doing nothing except to accept BSC's case lock, stock and barrel is proving very damaging against the background of continuous, non-partisan, well-informed briefing by the unions. Could this be put together urgently and the press briefed.'[67]

[65] Clipping, *Evening Times (Glasgow)*, January 1990, Retrieved from Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC. See also Press Release: 'Liberal Democrats Call for All-Party Co-operation for Independent Scottish Steel Company', 17 May 1990, TD1219, GCA.
[66] 'Options for Steel in Scotland: Report 1 of Arthur D. Little', Executive Summary, page 33, 24 January 1991, TD1219/1, GCA.
[67] 'Peter Ritchie, PS, note re Ravenscraig and Gartcosh', 17 September 1985, Scottish Office files, SOE14/245, NRS.

In addition, the enormous cuts to the workforce had paid off, at least in terms of profitability and competitiveness: in 1986-87 BSC made a profit of £177 million on sales of £3.5 billion, with a workforce of 55,000, down from 200,000 a decade earlier.[68] It was hard to justify further cuts in this situation. As so, after a tense series of negotiations within the government, a promise was made to ensure that Ravenscraig remained open for at least seven years.[69]

But by 1990, only three years later, Ravenscraig again appeared to be on the chopping block. BSC was now in private hands, rechristened British Steel plc, and the government claimed that it had little-to-no role in the management of the company. Furthermore, the management of Ravenscraig seemed determined to make it unprofitable and thereby justify its closure. Both blast furnaces were completely shut down over for three weeks over Christmas/New Years 1989-90, a highly unusual action for a steel mill to take. According to the STUC, who protested to the Scottish Office about the shutdown, it 'could seriously affect Ravenscraig's ability to keep costs down and compete in the internal and overseas markets'.[70]

The 19 December 1990 edition of the *Financial Times* ran a story that further played into the steelworkers' fears. Robert Scholey had apparently disparaged the defenders of the Scottish steel industry as the 'Ravenscraig claque', 'who see every blip in the progress of British Steel's plant at Ravenscraig as its death knell and seek ever more reassurances on its future'. However, the remainder of the article seemed to confirm that Ravenscraig was indeed in trouble, emphasising the locational problems with the plant and the lack of a Scottish market for its production. It noted that British Steel was investing £75 million at the continuous casting plant at Port Talbot, which would potentially make Ravenscraig's superfluous. According to reporter James Buxton, 'close followers of the steel industry believe that British Steel is carrying out a long-term retreat from Scotland'.[71]

The Standing Committee for the Defence of the Scottish Steel Industry was thus reactivated and sent into battle. The Committee remained largely a creature of the Labour power structure in Strathclyde, led by political figures and trade unionists, and its primary sources of funding were the Regional Council and the STUC.[72] However, it was hoped that funding could be drawn from a much wider base, and the 'Scottish Steel Campaign Trust', jointly managed by the Strathclyde RC and Motherwell District Council, solicited donations from the individuals and from local governments and public entities across Scotland. Bill Miller was quoted in the July 1990 press release calling for donations:

> Any contribution, however small, is most welcome. It all adds up to swell the funds available and demonstrate the level of support in Scotland for the campaign. The trust fund has provided invaluable support for activities such as lobbying visits by workforce representatives to Parliament, commissioning research underpinning the case for Scottish steel and underwriting press

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[68] Blair, 'The British Iron and Steel Industry since 1945,' 580. See also 'Letter from Ian Lang to Councillor John Thomson re Ravenscraig', 6 November 1987, SOE14/245, NRS.
[69] Alan Crow, 'Ravenscraig: Rifkind Tells Workers: You're Here to Stay', *Motherwell Times*, undated (1986-87), Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC.
[70] 'Scottish Steel in the 1990s – report tabled for December 20th meeting of the Economic Committee'. 6 December 1989, STUC Minutes, 89/255: Steel industry, page 424, Glasgow Caledonian University Archives.
[71] Clipping, James Buxton, 'Fuel for the Fears of doom at Ravenscraig works', *Financial Times*, 19 December 1989, retrieved from Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[72] 'Core Group of the Standing Committee for the Defence of the Scottish Steel Industry: Note of meeting held in Strathclyde House', 9 July 1990, TD1219, GCA.

> campaigns. (…) We want to make our current campaign the most professional and sophisticated possible. By supporting us at this crucial stage, the people of Scotland can make our efforts all the more effective.[73]

The Committee employed a mixture of tactics: they lobbied sympathetic government ministers, they got 40,000 Scots to sign a petition delivered to 10 Downing Street in May 1990,[74] and they held the 'A Day for Scotland, A Night for Ravenscraig' fundraising concert in June 1990. 1,200 tickets were made available: 600 were sold at £5 each to raise money for the Scottish Steel Campaign Trust, while 600 were given away to Ravenscraig workers and their families. [75] Then, a larger 'Day for Scotland' event was held in Stirling in July 1990. The choice of Stirling, a Conservative leaning town outside the central belt and with great historical significance in Scottish history, was deliberate.[76] The goal of the committee was not simply to unite the community, but also to rally the entire Scottish population around defending Ravenscraig as the last remaining piece of the great industrial edifice that had once defined the nation.

However, much of the campaign would essentially be fought on the terms of the Thatcherites. The STUC laid out the campaign targets: first they would pressure British Steel management at a local level, then they would target its customers and suppliers, next they would lobby the government (starting with the Scottish Office), the fourth target would be British Rail, Clyde Port and the SSEB (South of Scotland Electricity Board), and finally they would lobby BSC's major shareholders.[77] With the exception of government, the case being made to all of these groups was wrapped in the logic of market: Ravenscraig could indeed be profitable, and its closure would damage the profitability of a series of related industries. One of the campaign's most high-profile tactics was to try to get the left-wing economist, Kenneth Alexander, elected to the board of directors, so he could argue for the sale of Ravenscraig to another steel company that would commit to keeping it open.[78] Representations were made to the Office of Fair Trading and to the European Commission arguing that BSC had to accept any offers that were made to purchase the mill before it was closed. Strathclyde RC agreed to allocate £35,000 to these specific efforts alone.[79] Another tactic was to commission reports into the viability of the mill. This had already been tried a few years previously. Motherwell District Council, with the support of the Standing Committee, commissioned a report in 1987 by the consulting firm Arthur Young into the future of the Scottish steel industry. In doing so they were attempting to respond to the Conservative government on its own ideological terms by arguing for the retention of Ravenscraig on the basis of future profitability rather than on the basis of the social

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[73] Press Release: 'People Power Can Help Ravenscraig Campaign', 12 July 1990, TD1219, GCA.
[74] Jim Davis, 'The March: Maggie Gets Our Message to Save the Craig', *Motherwell Times*, 14 June 1990, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC.
[75] 'Night for Ravenscraig Sports Centre Benefit', *Motherwell Times*, June 1990, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC.
[76] 'Day for Scotland', included in miscellaneous documents section, STUC August 1990 minutes, Glasgow Caledonian University Archives.
[77] 'Scottish Steel in the 1990s – report tabled for December 20th meeting of the Economic Committee', January 1990, STUC Minutes, Glasgow Caledonian University Archives.
[78] Sallingbury Casey Ltd., 'Report to the Scottish Steel Campaign Trust: Sir Kenneth Alexander's Campaign for the Board of British Steel PLC', July 1990, TD1219, GCA.
[79] 'Economic and Industrial Development: Item #5, Scottish Steel Industry', Strathclyde Regional Council meeting minutes, 28 November 1990, (no reference number), GCA.

and economic needs of the local community. Unfortunately, however, the report, 'Study of the Impact of Privatisation of British Steel Corporation on the Future of Ravenscraig and Dalzell Steelworks', found that pulling out of Scotland and concentrating production at existing locations in England and Wales would indeed improve British Steel profitability as state funding was progressively withdrawn.[80]

In 1990 another report was commissioned from the Arthur D. Little consulting firm to 'determine whether there are any realistic opportunities in the 1990s for steel investment in Scotland'.[81] A dozen different options were considered, including an entirely new state-of-the-art integrated mill on a greenfield site, or new targeted plants focussing on wire rod or oil tubes.[82] All but two options were rejected. The report assumed that global steel demand would remain flat well into the future.[83] This assumption proved correct in the short term, as much of the world sunk into recession in the early 1990s, but world steel consumption has exploded since the year 2000, and is currently about 250 per cent of the 1990 figure, driven primarily by explosive growth in China.[84] As late as 1990, Britain was a net exporter of steel and was responsible for 2.31 per cent of global production. In 2017, Britain was responsible for 0.45 per cent of global production and was a net importer of 3.1 million tonnes of steel, the most of any country in Europe.[85] It is debatable whether the British steel industry could have ever captured a portion of these Asian markets. However, the assumption of all analysts at this time was of managed decline: Britain would need less steel in the future, so the steel industry would have to get smaller. This was an assumption that would shape the decisions over the future of the Scottish steel industry, yet in the end it would turn out to be wrong.

The final report, 'Options for Steel in Scotland', was released in March 1991, and argued that Ravenscraig could indeed be made 'competitive', but only with cost reductions of about £10 per tonne or 7 per cent of total costs, to be achieved by a reduction in the number of distinct product lines, the cutting of employment by about 550, and the implementation of 'more flexible working structures'.[86] However, the report emphasised that the long-term future profitability of the mill would only be achievable with substantial capital investments, including £16-22 million invested within five years for improvements to the blast furnaces and coke ovens, and at least £100 million for a major rebuilding of the coke ovens within a decade, primarily to ensure that they met environmental standards.[87] The report also highlighted the incredible difficulty in finding a buyer for the additional stab steel that would be produced by an updated Ravenscraig, as the closure of Gartcosh meant that there was no market for the slab in Scotland, and international markets were already highly competitive and largely saturated.[88] Finally, the

[80] 'Study of the Impact of Privatisation of British Steel Corporation on the Future of Ravenscraig and Dalzell Steelworks', report produced by Arthur D. Little, commissioned by Motherwell District Council, 1987, TD1219, GCA.
[81] 'Options for Steel in Scotland: Report 1 of Arthur D. Little, Executive Summary', page 2, 24 January 1991, TD1219/1, GCA.
[82] Ibid, page 7, TD1219/1, GCA.
[83] Ibid, page 19, TD1219/1, GCA.
[84] World Steel Association, *World Steel in Figures 2018* (Brussels: World Steel Association, 2018), page 7, retrieved from https://www.worldsteel.org/media-centre/press-releases/2018/world-steel-in-figures-2018.html
[85] Ibid, page 9.
[86] 'Options for Steel in Scotland: Report 2 of Arthur D. Little', page 14, 26 March 1991, TD1219/1, GCA.
[87] Ibid, pages 17-18, TD1219/1, GCA.
[88] Ibid, pages 20-29, TD1219/1, GCA.

report concluded that it was unlikely a foreign buyer would buy Ravenscraig.[89] In the end, these reports painted a bleak picture of Ravenscraig's future, shorn of government subsidies and forced to survive in a highly competitive international steel market. But of course, Ravenscraig had not been built with that sort of market in mind.

In addition to the effort to make the case for Ravenscraig's profitability, there was also the concurrent struggle to maintain the united front of steel workers across Britain. On 18 December 1989, the STUC General Secretary Campbell Christie met with officials from the TUC (England) and Wales TUC to ensure that they were supportive of the fight to save Ravenscraig. Christie received the support of the English and Welsh leadership, and they pledged to wage a united campaign to keep British Steel as a single, British-owned company, and to ensure that all five major integrated steelmaking complexes were retained.[90] Christie claimed that the 'English and Welsh trade unionists are not prepared to allow British Steel to divide and rule'. However, it seemed very much that British Steel was succeeding in doing exactly that. The STUC's General Council meeting on 10 January 1990 was focussed on making the case to government and the company that investment in the new single plate mill should be made in Lanarkshire, rather than Teesside or South Wales.[91] And of course the local unions and politicians in English and Welsh steel towns were working equally hard to obtain the investment.

However, in the end these broad-based efforts proved insufficient. On 9 January 1992, British Steel announced that it would be closing Ravenscraig entirely within 8 months. Scholey was determined to strike immediately and was not willing to wait until the seven year commitment expired in 1994. It is clear that the Scottish Conservatives were petrified of how the closure would be received. There are hundreds of pages of reports and briefing notes on how government ministers should 'explain' the closure to the Scottish public.[92] Those papers point out that Standing Committee's campaign had indeed turned Ravenscraig into a symbol of national industrial pride, and that its closure would thus be resented across class and regional boundaries.[93]

Scottish Office officials wrote to the Board of Trade asking them to pressure Scholey to keep to the 1994 promise, but they were met with firm rejection. In numerous recently released documents, non-Scottish ministers expressed frustration with the resistance put up by their Scottish counterparts. Scottish Conservatives, from Scottish Secretary Malcolm Rifkind to the chief executive of the party in Scotland, John MacKay, went to great lengths to show their determination to keep Ravenscraig open, with MacKay even attending several meetings of the Save our Steel campaign. Many in the campaign never trusted these professions of virtue, believing that the Tories were simply worried about the closure's impact on their re-election and were not lifting a finger behind the scenes. It is hard to judge motives from the public statements and government documents in the Scottish Office, but it is indeed clear that Rifkind and his junior ministers did fight hard for the mill.[94]

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[89] Ibid, page 25, TD1219/1, GCA.

[90] 'Press Statement', 19 December 1989, STUC January 1990 Minutes, Glasgow Caledonian University Archives. Interestingly, re-nationalisation was not among the union leaders' demands.

[91] 'January 10th General Council meeting – item 89/296', STUC February-March 1990 minutes, Glasgow Caledonian University Archives.

[92] See for example Ministerial Note, 'Ravenscraig, Early Day Motion 471', January 1992, SOE14/279, NRS

[93] See also Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, 262.

[94] See the various letters back and forth between the Scottish Office and Board of Trade, etc., January 1992, SOE14/279, NRS.

Rifkind in particular was considered a 'wet' in the party and his actions in the lead-up to the closure of Ravenscraig suggest that he had not totally abandoned that more paternalistic strand of postwar Scottish Conservativism, which took account of the 'moral economy' and the need to soften the blow of rapid economic change. Nevertheless, as Scottish Secretary he derided the 'dependency culture' of Scotland and implemented some of the most infamous pieces of Thatcherite policy in Scotland, including the privatisation of electricity and the poll tax.[95] And fundamentally, he used the Thatcherite conception of the steel industry as a purely market oriented entity to cover for his failure to stop the closure. The line 'the assets belong to British Steel plc and the Government recognises that it is ultimately for the company to decide how to dispose of them' would be used again and again in press releases and briefing notes.[96]

The End of Ravenscraig & Its Significance

Ravenscraig was threatened with closure for its entire existence. Employment at Ravenscraig, and in the Scottish steel industry that was built around it, slowly declined in the late 1960s and 1970s as BSC faced growing outside competition and struggled to effectively reorganise its assets after renationalisation. However, Ravenscraig remained open because it was a critical piece of Scottish industrial and regional policy. Once the Thatcher government had decided that it would apply market discipline to BSC, and then privatise the company, Ravenscraig was in grave danger.[97] Ravenscraig was the most poorly located of all the major mills, and with the leadership of the newly privatised British Steel believing that the company was producing too much steel for a market that was unlikely to grow, it was logical to close the mill. This is in spite of the fact that the workers adapted magnificently to the discipline of the market: it met record production targets through the 1980s, and it stayed open during the miners' strike, despite breaking the bonds of trade union solidarity.[98] The available evidence is clear: those in the Save our Steel campaign who suspected the worst – who suspected that the executives were scheming to close the mill – were absolutely correct. Ian MacGregor and Robert Scholey fought very hard behind the scenes to close the plant, and it was probably always a matter of time before they got their way.

However, politics and political pressure still mattered, and Ravenscraig remaining open over the thirteen year period between 1979 and 1992 must be seen as an incredible if temporary victory for the public campaign. This public campaign was fighting not just to save the mill, but also in defence of a particular conception of the state's role in the Scottish economy, a fight fought with the significant if at-times-wavering support of much of the leadership of the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party and the Scottish Office.

Of course, had there been consensus in the Major government, they certainly could have intervened to keep Ravenscraig open. In the exact same year, the Algoma steel mill in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, also privately owned, and also disadvantaged due to location and underinvestment, was given a $90 million (CAD) loan guarantee by the centre-left provincial

[95] Andrew Marr, *The Battle for Scotland* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 172-78.
[96] Note re Ravenscraig from T. Sutton, Private Secretary, 3 January 1992, SOE14/279, NRS.
[97] Privatisation alone is not that important. As mentioned earlier, the British steel industry was in private hands under the Macmillan government, yet it was not subject to true market discipline during that period.
[98] Stewart, 'Fighting for Survival', 54.

government and ownership was passed into the hands of the workers.[99] But to do the same in Ravenscraig would have required costly subsidies that the English Tories refused to endorse, and would have meant going back on the promises made to Scholey at the time of privatisation. Additionally, it would have gone against EEC directives and potentially caused conflict with the French and Germans, at a time when Britain's relationship with the continent was highly fraught.[100] As it was, the majority of the English ministers in the cabinet had accepted Scholey's logic, and had no interest in letting the Scots get in the way of taking the privatisation of the steel industry to its logical conclusion. The Scottish ministers had to hope that, at the time of the upcoming general election, the Scottish public would believe them when they said that they had done all they could.

Regeneration Plans

The social impact of Ravenscraig's closure was deep and long-lasting. In the autumn of 1992, before the actual closure of Ravenscraig, unemployment had already begun to rise in Motherwell, reversing six years of decline.[101] Notably, this decline in unemployment had been much more rapid among women than men, with female unemployment dropping by half between 1987 and 92, while male unemployment dropped by only 21.9 per cent. 72 per cent of the unemployed had no formal qualifications whatsoever.[102] Clearly, working class men who had once relied on entry-level industrial jobs faced a particularly bleak future. And the geographic variation in the figures within Motherwell District was truly enormous. According to the official figures from the Employment Service, the unemployment rate ranged from 18.5 per cent in Craigneuk, directly south of Ravenscraig, to only 5.8 per cent in Ladywell, a middle class district to the west of the town centre.[103] However, a skills audit conducted by Motherwell Council in December 1991 found that the situation was considerably worse in the hardest hit areas. Of 1,628 economically active people in Craigneuk, 602, or 37 per cent, were found to be available for work, including 39.4 per cent of economically active men and 34.7 per cent of women. Forty percent of those unemployed had been out of work for more than five years.[104] These astronomical figures did not take health limitations into account, so they may exaggerate the true level of unemployment somewhat. However, as seen in the Oldham case, people who were otherwise employable often ended up on sickness benefits due to restrictions in jobseekers benefits and a desire on the part of the Conservative government to artificially reduce the unemployment figures.[105] It also did not take family caring commitments into account, and thus was probably an over-count of female unemployment in particular.

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[99] Christopher Lawson, 'Labour Unions, Community Mobilization, and the Fight against Deindustrialisation in Scotland and Ontario (1970s-1990s)', paper presented at the annual meeting of Canadian Historical Association. Regina, Sask., May 2018.

[100] This was in the middle of the political debate over the Delors Commission (see The Sun's famous 1 November 1990 headline: 'Up Yours Delors') and Britain's increasing difficulties remaining tied to the Exchange Rate Mechanism. Young, *Britain and European Unity, 1945-1999.*

[101] Motherwell District Council, Report by Director of Planning, section entitled 'Unemployment and Redundancies, Summary of Findings', April 1993, Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.

[102] Ibid, 'Unemployment Trends', Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.

[103] Ibid, NLHC.

[104] Ibid, 'Unemployment and Redundancies, Skills Audit', Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.

[105] 'The Real Level of Unemployment in Oldham': Report of the Chief Executive's Policy Unit, June 1997, page 6, L4776, OLSA.

Hidden in these figures, however, was the fact that women made up a fairly significant majority of all gainfully employed residents of Craigneuk: there were 556 Craigneuk women in paid employment compared to 470 men.[106] At 54 per cent female, the body of employed people in Craigneuk was quite distinct from that of the UK as a whole, which, despite a considerable narrowing of the gap over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, was still approximately 60 per cent male.[107] Motherwell had been a community built around a male-dominated industrial employer. It had traditionally had had lower than average rates of female employment. At least in theory, towns like Motherwell had epitomised the 'male breadwinner model'. But now women carried both burdens, forming the majority of the labour market and continuing to carry the majority of child-rearing responsibility, even in households where the men had been unemployed for a long time.[108]

How then was life going to improve for the residents of Craigneuk, and Motherwell more generally? Even before the closure was finalised, the speculation about the future of the Ravenscraig site began. Local and regional newspapers reported on the possible arrival of new industries, housing complexes, leisure centres, and university campuses.[109] At more than 500 hectares, the site of the mill became one of the largest brownfield sites in Europe. One of the few successes of the Save Our Steel campaign and the internal pressure placed by the Scottish Office was the formation of the 'Secretary of State's Lanarkshire Working Group', set up in 1991 to support the transition to a post-steel economy. The 'Lanarkshire Working Group' had originally been tasked with coming up with a contingency plan in the case of an early closure of Ravenscraig. With that fear now a reality, the Scottish Office quickly jumped on the working group's original recommendations – an immediate £40 million boost to local infrastructure spending over the next two years, a £50 million enterprise zone scheme, and priority allocation of up to £120 million of European funds – as ready-made proof that the Tories took the plight of the Motherwell area seriously.[110] The infrastructure spending was quickly agreed by the Treasury, and it was funnelled through the Lanarkshire Development Agency (LDA).[111]

The LDA and the Lanarkshire Working Group were both organisations with a surprisingly (politically) diverse leadership team, including a number of local Labour councillors and business leaders.[112] The head of the LDA, the local solicitor Ian Livingstone, was a Conservative, but was seen as someone who could work across party divisions in the local area.[113] The enterprise zone, a favourite tool of the Thatcher/Major governments,[114] was strongly supported by the Scottish Office and by Scottish Secretary Ian Lang in particular, but it

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[106] Motherwell District Council, Report by Director of Planning, section entitled 'Unemployment and Redundancies, Skills Audit', April 1993, Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[107] Office for National Statistics, Report, *Women in the labour market: 2013*, 25 September 2013, Retrieved from https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/womeninthelabourmarket/2013-09-25.
[108] See Arthur McIvor, *Working Lives: Work in Britain since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[109] Ken Smith, 'Ravenscraig site could see campus and a loch', *Glasgow Herald*, 2 February 1994; 'Unveiled: £500m Plan for 'Craig', *Hamilton Advertiser*, 20 November 1997, Retrieved from Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[110] 'Ravenscraig, Early Day Motion 471, Background Note', January 1992, SOE14/279, NRS.
[111] Letter from N. S. Munro to Secretary of State re Ravenscraig, 6 January 1992, SOE14/279, NRS.
[112] 'Lanarkshire Enterprise Limited, Appendix 1: The Steering Group', 1990, SEP8/3/15, NRS.
[113] Clipping, 'Man with a Mission for Lanarkshire', *Glasgow Herald*, 22 November 1990, retrieved from Scottish Office files, SEP8/3/15, NRS.
[114] Sam Wetherell, *Pilot Zones: The New Urban Environment of Twentieth Century Britain* (PhD Dissertation: University of California, Berkeley, 2016), 15-41.

was actually resisted by the Treasury, who felt that economic conditions in the Motherwell area did not warrant its creation.[115] This is still further evidence of the lengths that the Scottish Tories were willing to go, even in the face of opposition from their English brethren, to intervene to prevent an economic and social disaster in Motherwell.[116] In the end, the enterprise zone was set up in Lanarkshire in 1993, and remained in existence until 2003. According to a 2004 consultancy report, the enterprise zone resulted in the creation of 8,253 net additional jobs, at a cost to the state of £121 million, or £14,609 per job. This was considered an above average cost-benefit breakdown.[117] However, it is hard to be certain how many of those jobs were in the local Motherwell area, and to what extent (if at all) these new jobs employed former steelworkers.

But what about the actual site of the mill? The LDA was put in charge of the redevelopment, and formed a steering group with local government, quangos such as Scottish Enterprise, and British Steel plc to draw up a 'development strategy' for the steel mill lands.[118] With the steering group in place, the LDA quickly began producing glossy books, such as 'Ravenscraig: Forging a New Future', which promoted the closure as an opportunity for a 'new beginning' for the Motherwell area.[119]

The 'Ravenscraig: Forging a New Future' booklet noted that about three fourths of the Ravenscraig site was contaminated in some way. There were widely held fears in the community about the health risks posed by this contamination, which the LDA was determined to overcome those fears.[120] The report suggested that the best solution would be 'to encapsulate the material (contaminated soil) in a sealed landfill in one specific location on the site, engineered to the highest environmental standards to prevent any environmentally harmful release'.[121] However, despite repeated government assurances that the site would be properly decontaminated, many local residents remained unconvinced. Antonio Ioris visited Motherwell in 2010-11 to study the ecological politics of the Ravenscraig redevelopment, and he found various forms of passive resistance to the regeneration plans, mostly tied to fears over the environment and the assumption that the scheme would ignore their needs and desires. One interviewee at the King Lud pub, a mainstay of social life in the Wishaw/Craigneuk area, said the following: 'I have a big concern about the contamination of the land, oil, rubbish, the contaminated ground. This is now a very undesirable area to live, most people are on benefit until they die, lots of drinking and depression. Very bad, aye, aye. There are no prospects for us here'.[122] The government may have wanted to draw a line under the industrial era in Motherwell, but the local residents continued to live with the environmental aftermath of that

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[115] Letter from N. S. Munro to Secretary of State re Ravenscraig, 6 January 1992, SOE14/279, NRS.
[116] And to prevent a political disaster for themselves at the next election.
[117] Roger Tym and Partners, *Final Evaluation of the Lanarkshire Enterprise Zone* (Glasgow: Roger Tym and Partners, 2004), vi.
[118] Lanarkshire Development Agency: 'Ravenscraig, Forging a New Future: A Report on the Regeneration of Ravenscraig', (undated, 1993), page 4, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC. Thus, this was also not a Conservative-only effort. The LDA was a mixed organisation and both Motherwell District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council – both with Labour majorities – were represented on the steering committee.
[119] Ibid, page 1, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC.
[120] See for example 'Deadly Legacy: British Steel is accused of asbestos cover-up at Ravenscraig', *Evening Times*, 16 April 1992, Retrieved from Ravenscraig Ephemera Collection, NLHC.
[121] Ibid, page 9, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC.
[122] Antonio Ioris, 'The Urban Political Ecology of Postindustrial Scottish Towns: Examining Greengairs and Ravenscraig', *Urban Studies* 51 (2014): 1576-1592.

era. A form of environmental injustice is thus perpetuated on the working-class communities who had already suffered the consequences of deindustrialisation.[123]

The regeneration project called for 'an Urban Village', a new railway station on a branch line, a retail component, a university college 'should this prove feasible', and an aggressive landscaping project to turn the derelict land into a 'high quality parkland setting', including the setting of a man-made loch.[124] The 'Urban Village' was sold with flowery language: it is a 'new concept – a concept that makes people a priority. It promotes mixed use developments that can provide a more civilised and sustainable environment for people to live and work in'.[125] A modern car-friendly retail centre was planned, with the hope that it would attract shoppers from across the region, reducing the 'leak' of retail spending to Glasgow and other major centres.[126] After laying out the broad parameters of the redevelopment project, the Lanarkshire Development Agency then accepted forty-three bids from consultant firms, including firms based in the US and Germany, to complete a detailed study of how it could be carried out.[127]

After many years of discussion and controversy, the regeneration project for the site finally began in 2006. The first phase, completed in 2011, included a new regional sports centre, the new Motherwell further education college (merged into New College Lanarkshire in 2013) and 800 houses on the north and north-east side of the site. The railway station plan was quietly abandoned. The retail plans proved the most controversial and were eventually scaled back because of resistance from established shopping areas in Motherwell and Wishaw, who feared that it would be their business that would 'leak'. According to recent media reports, the second phase has finally been approved, with more middle class housing and office space to be built starting in 2020.[128]

Regeneration and 'New Scotland'

What is this regeneration really about? Will it really help the residents who lost their jobs in the closure of Ravenscraig? Antonio Ioris has referred to this as a 'technocratic restoration strategy', where the site is being redeveloped according to market logics, based on

[123] The environmental legacies of deindustrialisation and their distinct classed and racialised effects have been the subject of considerable study on both sides of the Atlantic in recent years. See for example Jonathan Warren, *Industrial Teesside, Lives and Legacies: A Post-Industrial Geography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[124] Lanarkshire Development Agency: 'Ravenscraig, Forging a New Future: A Report on the Regeneration of Ravenscraig', (undated, 1993), page 13, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC. For a discussion of this sort of project in other parts of the UK, see Peter Neal, *Urban Villages and the Making of Communities* (London: Spon Press, 2003); for a discussion of the Merry Hill urban village, built on the site of a former steel mill in the Black Country, see Sam Wetherell, *Pilot Zones: The New Urban Environment of Twentieth Century Britain*, 115.

[125] Lanarkshire Development Agency: 'Ravenscraig, Forging a New Future: A Report on the Regeneration of Ravenscraig', (undated, 1993), page 14, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC.

[126] Ibid, page 16, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC.

[127] Clipping, *Evening Times (Glasgow)*, 10 May 1993, Ravenscraig ephemera collection, NLHC.

[128] 'Ravenscraig masterplan approved by North Lanarkshire Council', *BBC News*, 24 June 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-48752074; 'New Ravenscraig masterplan approved by North Lanarkshire Council', *Motherwell Times*, 24 June 2019, https://www.motherwelltimes.co.uk/news/environment/new-ravenscraig-masterplan-approved-north-lanarkshire-council-2033643.

real estate proximity to Glasgow.[129] Instead of real improvements for the people of the Motherwell area, what is being created are pockets of new middle class housing surrounded by deprivation. In this process, the memory and social impacts of deindustrialisation are to be hidden away.

The Scottish National Party (SNP), in government in Scotland since 2007, likes to talk of a 'New Scotland', united in its opposition to the Conservative government at Westminster. This 'New Scotland' is open to the world, pro-European, environmentally friendly, well-educated, and economically competitive, while retaining elements of the social democratic welfare abandoned by the Tories and New Labour.[130] Much of this vision is laudable, and there are a number of tangible ways in which Scotland's political economy has diverged from that of the rest of the UK in recent years. However, this concept of a 'New Scotland' masks the persistence of deep class divisions in Scotland and the profound and lasting legacies of deindustrialisation on communities like Motherwell. The story of opposition to the poll tax, to the run-down of the mining industry, and to the closure of Ravenscraig, have been reimagined by the proponents of this 'New Scotland' to present an image of national unity against an English outsider, when in reality Scotland was divided by class on all three issues.[131] Leading historian Tom Devine has pushed this 'New Scotland' narrative in both his academic and opinion writing, arguing that deindustrialisation was 'almost an historic inevitability' and celebrating the 'brain-intensive industry' that has allowed for the creation of a 'meritocratic' post-industrial Scottish society.[132] But by most measurements, income inequality is higher in Scotland than in the UK as a whole.[133] Despite the rhetorical appeal of 'New Scotland', deindustrialisation has profoundly shaped the social, cultural, and ecological structure of Scotland, leaving a physical and metaphorical scar on the landscape of communities like Motherwell.

Andy Clark and Ewan Gibbs have studied the ongoing cultural conflict over a number of murals and statutes dedicated to the end of the coal and steel industries put up across North Lanarkshire in recent years.[134] As many scholars of such post-industrial memorials have pointed out, these installations tend to present a potted history of the industrial age, depicting industry as 'extinct or as increasingly obsolete' and suggesting that the working class culture that came with it has disappeared as well.[135] As Cathy Stanton found in her study of public

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[129] Ioris, 'The Urban Political Ecology of Postindustrial Scottish Towns', 1586.
[130] Andy Clark & Ewan Gibbs, 'Voices of Social Dislocation, Lost Work and Economic Restructuring: Narratives from Marginalised Localities in the 'New Scotland'', *Memory Studies* 13 (2017): 39-59.
[131] For the memorialisation of the miners' strike in contemporary Scotland, see Jim Phillips, 'Contested Memories: the Scottish Parliament and the 1984–5 Miners' Strike', *Scottish Affairs* 24 (2015): 187–206. And for the poll tax campaign, see Ewan Gibbs, 'Civic Scotland vs Communities on Clydeside: Poll Tax Non-payment c.1987–1990', *Scottish Labour History* 49 (2014): 86–106.
[132] Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700–2007*; Thomas Devine, 'Why I Now Say Yes to Independence for Scotland', *Conversation* [Blog], 20 August 2014, http://theconversation.com/tom-devine-why-i-now-say-yes-to-independence-for-scotland-30733.
[133] Alex Law & Gary Mooney, ''We've Never Had It So Good': The 'Problem' of the Working Class in Devolved Scotland', *Critical Social Policy* 26 (2006): 523–542.
[134] Clark & Gibbs, 'Voices of Social Dislocation, Lost Work and Economic Restructuring', 53-56.
[135] John Kirk, Sylvie Contrepois & Steve Jefferys, 'Approaching Regional and Identity Change in Europe', in *Changing Work and Community Identities in European Regions: Perspectives on the Past and Present*, eds. Kirk, Contrpois & Jefferys (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 9. See also the critical study of Jackie Clarke, 'Closing Moulinex: Thoughts on the Visibility and Invisibility of Industrial Labour in Contemporary France', *Modern and Contemporary France* 11 (2011): 107–125.

history memorials in Lowell, Massachusetts, the goal of heritage monuments is often 'to praise *and* to bury' the industrial age.[136] 'The Steelman', standing by itself on the side of the New Craig Road, is just the latest example of these memorials, having been commissioned by a committee of former Ravenscraig steel workers and unveiled in 2015.[137] Unlike the earlier art installations in Shotts and Harthill, 'The Steelman' was largely funded through donations, and it is particularly focussed on memorialising those who died on the job in the steel industry over the decades.[138] It avoids, however, any mention of the legacy of deindustrialisation, or the meaning that the site has for those who remained working there until it abruptly closed in 1992. Nevertheless, there was real, serious public engagement completed in advance of all of these projects, including engagement with former workers, and it is clear that many in the community are quite positive about the art installations and have no desire to re-litigate the debates of the past.[139] There is no simple way to memorialise the industrial age, especially when it came to such an abrupt and scarring end.

Figure 8: 'The Steelman' – statue memorialising Scottish steel workers, Ravenscraig site (photo taken by author, 2017)

[136] Emphasis in the original. Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), xii.
[137] Jean West, 'Man of Steel: Kelpies artist Andy Scott sculpts new landmark to evoke Ravenscraig's lost era', *Daily Record,* 6 June 2015, https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/man-steel-kelpies-artist-andy-5833724.
[138] 'Kelpies creator unveils Ravenscraig sculpture', *The Scotsman,* 18 June 2015, https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle-2-15039/kelpies-creator-unveils-ravenscraig-sculpture-1-3806535.
[139] Jean West, 'Man of Steel', *Daily Record,* 6 June 2015; Clark & Gibbs, 'Voices of Social Dislocation, Lost Work and Economic Restructuring', 9.

If the legacy of deindustrialisation is to be put in a 'heritage' box and otherwise ignored, what then is the place of Motherwell in this 'New Scotland'? This is where we return to Ioris' concept of a 'technocratic restoration strategy'. One of the most noteworthy features of the town as a visitor is its excellent transport links, located as it is on the West Coast Main Line from London Euston to Glasgow Central. Thus, despite a population of 32,000, it is served by direct trains to England, two trains per hour to Edinburgh and extremely regular services to Glasgow, with an average travel time to Glasgow Central of about 25 minutes.[140] Recent years have seen service improvements, including the electrification of the entirety of the Motherwell–Cumbernauld suburban line and a more regular half-hourly service to Edinburgh Waverly. Rejuvenation through the provision of improved transport links to more prosperous centres is a popular solution in much of the Western world, and it is having an impact on many post-industrial British communities. From the Metrolink service in Oldham to the Glider bus rapid transit service implemented in 2018 in Belfast, improved transport connections have been sold to disadvantaged communities as a hand up to a brighter future. Indeed, in 2015, it was estimated that approximately 60,000 people left North Lanarkshire for work every day, primarily to the vast Glasgow urban area or to booming Edinburgh.[141] A Bank of Scotland study found that Motherwell was the 'most affordable' town for Edinburgh commuters, with a commute time under an hour and an average house price of approximately half that found in the Scottish capital.[142] In the industrial age, towns like Oldham and Motherwell were once destinations for thousands of workers coming from the surrounding area. With industrial employment having vanished, these communities have now become places of departure, rather than of arrival, as local residents travel increasingly long distances to find work.

However, not only is commuting expensive for someone on a minimum wage job, selling Motherwell as a commuter town for Glasgow and Edinburgh will simply drive up rents and housing prices, making it more difficult for working class people to enjoy the benefits of that short commute. As we have seen in many other post-industrial towns, the 'success stories' of a transition to a post-industrial economy often mask a process of gentrification, whereby the community that actually experienced the deindustrialisation is driven out at the same time that their working class culture is commodified to add to the cultural appeal of the area.[143] There is also no recognition in this model of the impact that closure has on the community, which was built around a single employer but now relies on commuter connections to provide jobs for local residents.

I visited the Ravenscraig site on 25 August 2017, a cool, dreary Scottish 'summer' day. Because the proposed railway station on the redevelopment site has now been indefinitely postponed, I arrived via Shieldmuir station, which serves Craigneuk and Muirhouse, to the south of Ravenscraig. Shieldmuir was opened in 1990 to help 'regenerate' these communities

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[140] It should be noted that a flexible season (annual) ticket from Motherwell to Glasgow costs £1,144 (as of 18 May 2019), a potentially prohibitive cost for someone without stable or full-time employment. Public transport is only a way out of poverty when the cost of said transport is not exploitative in and of itself.

[141] Alison Campsie, 'Commuting in Scotland: who is on the move and where to?' *The Scotsman*, 9 December 2015, https://www.scotsman.com/regions/commuting-scotland-who-move-and-where-1487509.

[142] 'Motherwell, Greenock and Arbroath are 'most affordable commuter towns', *BBC News*, 26 September 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-37466125.

[143] Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment*. See also Paul Watt, 'The Only Class in Town? Gentrification and the Middle Class Colonization of the City and the Urban Imagination', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 1 (2009): 106–121; Sherry Lee Linkon, *The Half-Life of* Deindustrialisation; Phil Ramsey, ''A Pleasingly Blank Canvas''.

following the run-down of Ravenscraig, and the station is well used and does provide a regular ScotRail service, allowing travel to Glasgow Central in 28 to 30 minutes. However, the community of Craigneuk has not benefitted from this 'regeneration', and its continued deprivation is self-evident to anyone walking north from Shieldmuir station to Ravenscraig. In 2020, the western segments of Craigneuk were ranked the 49th and 55th most deprived in Scotland out of approximately 7,000 reporting areas, putting them among the most deprived 1 per cent.[144] The *Daily Record* reported in 2013 that men in Craigneuk had an average life expectancy of 65.2 years, a decade below the Scottish average, meaning that the average male Craigneuk resident would never actually receive a state pension, now that the qualifying age is being raised to 68.[145] In addition, 13 per cent of the population was on Jobseeker's Allowance, nearly double the Scottish average.

Figure 9: Faded government sign advertising the Ravenscraig redevelopment (photo taken by author, 2017)

Turning off the Motherwell-Wishaw road and on to the New Craig Road to the site of the former mill, one is struck by two things almost immediately. First, you pass a number of faded signs celebrating the development project, including a large undated 'Building a New Future: Ravenscraig' sign and another from the 'Strathclyde European Partnership', which states that 'this Project was part financed by the European Union: European Regional Development Fund & Western Scotland 1997-99 Programme'. Second, you soon find yourself walking along

[144] Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020, Official Dataset Retrieved from http://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/

[145] Graham Miller, 'North Korea has higher life expectancy for men than Craigneuk', *Daily Record,* 24 April 2013, https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/north-korea-higher-life-expectancy-2537992; 'Check your State Pension age', *HM Government*: *Plan Your Retirement Income: Step by Step,* Retrieved September 2019 from https://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age.

the side of a dual carriageway, which is almost entirely empty of automobiles. After you pass the further education college, the landscape opens up and you find yourself in midst of a large windswept, treeless plain. Dalzell steelworks remains on the western side of the site, and to the east of the road the regional sports facility seems well patronised, though it is essentially impossible to visit without a car. Across the road from the sports centre is 'The Steelman' sculpture, one of the few physical reminders of the industrial history of this place. Beyond the sports centre and sculpture, the site remained undeveloped in August 2017, except for the housing estate on the far northern side, which essentially functions as a southern extension of Carfin, the next town to the north.

The still largely undeveloped site can be seen as a physical symbol of the broken promises of redevelopment and improvement that came following the closure of Ravenscraig. The communities that border the site remain some of the most deprived in Scotland. The Ravenscraig redevelopment project is designed to integrate these deprived communities more firmly into the prosperous 'New Scotland' envisioned by the SNP, but twenty-five years after the glossy brochures, the redevelopment is still more vision than reality. And, as mentioned above, when the redevelopment is finished, it may actually leave the former steelworkers and their families even more disadvantaged and socially isolated than ever.

Figure 10: Largely undeveloped Ravenscraig site, Dalzell Steelworks in distance (photo taken by author, 2017)

The Political Impact and Rise of Nationalism

In the short term, the Conservatives were not punished for their failure to keep Ravenscraig open.[146] Despite some horrible polling in the lead up to the 1992 election, the Tories defied expectations. All nine Tory incumbents were re-elected, and the Scottish Conservatives actually increased their share of the vote. Tory support even edged up slightly in the two Motherwell seats. The expected surge of the SNP largely failed to materialise. Although the SNP achieved their greatest vote share since 1983, they remained stuck on three seats, all of which were in the North-East of Scotland. The SNP came second in both of the Motherwell borough seats, but Labour retained massive majorities of 18,910 in Motherwell North and 14,013 in Motherwell South. This was, however, a stay of execution for the Scottish Conservatives, who would be completely wiped out in the 1997 Labour landslide.[147]

Eventually the SNP would reap the political bounty that was sown with the closure of Ravenscraig. The SNP's first great breakthrough had come in 1967 in the neighbouring Lanarkshire constituency of Hamilton. British politicians took notice, with Conservative leader Ted Heath reportedly telling Richard Crossman that 'he believed that Scottish nationalism was the most powerful new force in British politics'.[148] Since the Second World War and especially with the decolonization of the empire, the Union had been justified primarily as a 'social union', where the pooling of resources ensured better quality public services and provided additional resources to meet Scotland's unique challenges. The trappings of this social union were ever visible – in the State Pension, in the National Health Service, in the 'plate-glass universities' like Sterling and Strathclyde, but also in industries like Ravenscraig and Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, and in the government commitment to support them.[149] As UK governments increasingly seemed to abandon their commitment to the social union, and as the pillars of British social democracy began to look very unstable with the rapid rise of unemployment in the 1970s, the people of Scotland began to question their position in the Union.[150]

The nationalist movement latched on to this loss of faith in the promise of social union in two ways. First, nationalists argued that, if Scotland could not rely on the support of the entire UK in its times of need, it should retain its own resources and protect its economy from English intrusion and competition. This was an argument made most forcefully with the use of 'It's Scotland's Oil' as the SNP slogan in the February 1974 election campaign,[151] but it would appear again in similar form when the SNP argued that the Scottish steel industry should be spilt off from that of the rest of the UK and operated in the interests of Scotland alone. And second, the SNP captured the disillusionment left by the closure of Ravenscraig by putting forward a vision of an independent Scotland that would retain a commitment to social democratic

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[146] John Bochel & David Denver, 'The 1992 General Election in Scotland', *Scottish Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1992): 14-26.
[147] Ewen Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle: Scotland since 1880* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 320-48.
[148] Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Volume II* (London: Cape, 1977), 550-51.
[149] One can see this particular formulation most strikingly in the rhetoric of the No side in the 2014 referendum, especially by the Labour side. Gordon Brown's famous speech in the lead-up to the vote is a good example.
[150] For a detailed discussion of the relationship between the 'moral economy' and the rise of distinctive Scottish politics, see Jim Phillips, Valerie Wright & Jim Tomlinson, 'Deindustrialization, the Linwood Car Plant and Scotland's Political Divergence from England, 399–423.
[151] James Mitchell, 'Scotland in the Union 1945-95,' in *Scotland in the Twentieth Century,* eds. Thomas Devine and Richard Finlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 97.

values.[152] The SNP had not emphasised this commitment to social democracy in the period before the late 1970s, when they were traditionally seen as 'Tartan Tories' rather than left-of-centre. But with the UK as a whole making a seemingly complete turn towards a neoliberal political economy, the SNP was able to skillfully argue that independence was the only way to reverse a turn that had done particularly deep damage to Scotland. They were then able to point to the failure of unionist politicians to protect Ravenscraig as the ultimate piece of evidence in defence of this argument.[153] In this effort, the defection of life-long Labour member and Save Our Steel campaign veteran Tommy Brennan, the former works convenor at Ravenscraig, to the SNP and to the cause of Scottish independence was a symbolic breakthrough.[154] In the 2014 Scottish Independence referendum, North Lanarkshire voted for independence by a margin of 51.1 per cent to 48.9 per cent, making it one of only four local authorities in Scotland to do so. More specifically, the Motherwell and Wishaw counting 'zone' also voted for independence, and also with 51.1 per cent in favour.[155]

The legacy of Ravenscraig lives on in Scottish politics. Not only has it encouraged the rise of this new social democratic nationalism, but it has also forced governments to backtrack somewhat on the transition to a post-interventionist political economy. In 2015, the Clydebridge plant in South Lanarkshire, and the Dalzell facility next door to Ravenscraig, were closed by Tata, temporarily bringing steelmaking to an end in Scotland. However, at this moment, the SNP-led Scottish government took a decision that would seem surprisingly reminiscent of the targeted interventions of the Scottish Conservatives and Unionists in the 1950s and 1960s. It worked aggressively to find a new buyer for the two plants, eventually providing incentives for Liberty House Group, an industrial and trading conglomerate founded by British-Indian business tycoon Sanjeev Gupta.[156] The reopened Dalzell plant struggled at first, but as of 2018 the managing director of the plant claimed that 'we've begun to make real inroads into this market' as the only remaining fully UK-owned large producer of plate steel.[157] With the growing demand for renewable energy, Liberty's focus on winning part of the steel wind tower market seems a wise strategy with the potential to set Dalzell on a relatively secure footing, in what is otherwise an extremely difficult period for the remaining pieces of the British

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[152] James Mitchell, 'From Breakthrough to Mainstream: The Politics of Potential and Blackmail,' in *Modern SNP: From Protest to Power*, ed. Gerry Hassen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 35.

[153] Andrew Perchard and Christopher Harvie have both written about the way Ravenscraig has become a 'site of memory' that works to symbolise the broken promises of the unionist social contract and play into the arguments of the nationalists. Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics, 1707 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2004), Andrew Perchard, 'Labour's Love Lost? The problems for the Scottish Labour Party', *History Workshop* (feature) 16 April 2015, https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/labours-love-lost-the-problems-for-the-scottish-labour-party/; Andrew Perchard, 'The Crisis of Labour: Class Politics in Scotland After the Independence Referendum', *Working-Class Perspectives* [Blog], 20 October 2014, https://workingclassstudies.wordpress.com/2014/10/20/the-crisis-of-labour-class-politics-in-scotland-post-independence-referendum/. See also Andrew Perchard, ''Broken Men' and 'Thatcher's Children'

[154] Perchard, 'Labour's Love Lost?'

[155] 'Referendum result for North Lanarkshire', North Lanarkshire Council, September 2014, Retrieved from https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=30888.

[156] 'Coyle, Dalzell Steelworks reopens after being Mothballed in 2015', *STV News*, 28 September 2016, http://stv.tv/news/west-central/1368264-dalzell-steelworks-reopens-after-being-mothballed-in-2015/.

[157] 'Dalzell steel plant in fight back', *The Scotsman,* 8 August 2018, https://www.scotsman.com/business/companies/dalzell-steel-plant-in-fight-back-1-4780812.

steel industry.[158] However, employment at the plant, which was hovering around 155 workers in 2019, is a tiny fraction of the numbers that used to work in iron and steel in North Lanarkshire as little as 30 years ago.[159] In spite of their commitment to social democracy, the SNP's vision for a 'New Scotland' would not seem to have much room for a vestige of the 'Old Scotland' like Dalzell. Nevertheless, the symbolic place of the North Lanarkshire steel industry in the mythology of Scottish nationalism has forced the SNP to go to considerable lengths to demonstrate its commitment to its preservation.[160]

Conclusion

Ravenscraig was only operational for 30 years, but its rise and fall tells us a great deal about the contradictory nature of the postwar consensus, the rise of neoliberal economics, and the enduring appeal of social democratic principles in contemporary Scottish society. Opened primarily to deal with chronic unemployment in the Scottish central belt, Ravenscraig helped drag the British steel industry into perpetual losses, and the incoherence of the industry's management meant that by the late 1970s it was facing economic ruin. This gave the Thatcherites the justification for a massive restructuring programme, which, if allowed to run its natural course, was certain to lead to the closure of Ravenscraig. In this effort they had the ideological cover of the shifting high political consensus on economic interventionism,[161] and support from some potentially surprisingly allies, including the EEC.

However, the moral economy lived on in Scotland, even within elements of the Scottish Conservative Party, and a powerful public campaign ensured that Ravenscraig remained open at least a decade longer than it would otherwise have done so. In the end, though, this campaign was powerless in the face of a privatised company determined to shed any remaining moral obligations, and the campaign could not hide the fact that the UK-wide coalition of the working class had been fundamentally damaged by the rigours of deindustrialisation and austerity. What did remain, however, was a widely (though not universally) shared commitment to return to a uniquely Scottish moral economy, and a rejection of the excesses of neoliberalism, most powerful symbolised by the early death of the Ravenscraig steelworks.

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[158] 'Dalzell and Clydebridge steel plants to make metal for wind turbine towers', *BBC News*, 16 June 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-36548597; For the latest struggles of the British steel industry, see 'Steel industry needs help in days not weeks, Kinnock says', *BBC News*, 21 June 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-53119158

[159] Ross Thompson, 'Dalzell owners remain optimistic about steelworks' future despite cutting jobs', *Daily Record*, 19 June 2019, https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/dalzell-owners-remain-optimistic-steelworks-16536448.

[160] Clark & Gibbs, 'Voices of Social Dislocation, Lost Work and Economic Restructuring', 14.

[161] Monica Prasad, *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Conclusion

When Velda Casey arrived in Oldham in the cold, foggy winter of 1962, Britain was still an industrial country. Approximately 36 per cent British workers were employed in a manufacturing industry, and the UK remained one of the world's leading producers of coal, steel, textiles, automobiles, and ocean-going vessels.[1] However, each of these industries faced considerable and growing challenges, including increased competition from across the world, fragmented industrial structures, and the impact of government regional policy. In the case of the cotton and linen textile industries of Lancashire and Northern Ireland, the industry was already in serious decline. In Coventry's automobile industry, the boom times were still on, but beneath the calm surface of the city's continued growth, problems were festering, problems which would be exposed in dramatic fashion as the high tide of postwar prosperity receded. Over the course of the next thirty years, Britain would deindustrialise faster than almost any other country on earth. Whole industries largely disappeared from the British economic structure or were reduced to a shadow of their former selves. This was a complex process tied to global economic changes, and it was not caused by any one government or set of policies. However, it was also a process that affected and interacted with contemporaneous political and social changes – such as the rise of Thatcherism, second-wave feminism, and the Troubles in Northern Ireland – in multi-faceted and sometimes counter-intuitive ways. It would leave lasting impacts on the lives of individuals, families, and communities across all parts of the United Kingdom.

Just as the industrialisation of Britain was tied to empire, and to the exploitation of the peoples, lands, and resources of the world beyond these isles in the North Atlantic, the deindustrialisation of Britain was also a global and (post-)imperial story. Like many other Commonwealth citizens who travelled to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, Velda Casey intended to return home in five years with the money she had saved. Working in an Oldham cotton mill was a way of leapfrogging out of poverty and into a better social position on her home island of Barbados. Casey, like the vast majority of her fellow Barbadians, were the descendants of slaves, forcibly taken across the Atlantic to produce the sugar that would feed Britain's industrial revolution, and that legacy of slavery and exploitation had resulted in poverty and limited opportunity on many Caribbean islands.[2] While Casey came to the former colonial metropole to overcome the colonial legacies of poverty, the Kashmiris who were settling in Oldham around the same time came for a related, but distinct reason. Their farmlands and villages had been destroyed by a post-colonial development project, the Mangla Dam, over which they had no say.

Migration to British industrial towns like Oldham and Coventry was thus part of the story of the end of empire. But the legacies of empire would also shape the experiences of Commonwealth citizens once they had settled in Britain. British social democracy was shaped by empire and by ideas of welfare and development which originated in the late colonial project, but in the domestic context social democracy was structured on assumptions about the structure of British society that largely excluded Commonwealth citizens.[3] The government's subsequent

[1] Office for National Statistics, *2011 Census Analysis, 170 Years of Industry*, 05 June 2013, data tables.
[2] See Alvin Thompson & Woodville Marshall, *In the Shadow of the Plantation: Caribbean History and Legacy* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2002); Brereton & Yelvington (eds.), *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition.*
[3] Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

efforts to manage racial diversity in deindustrialising communities – including the key role of the Community Relations Councils and Community Development Projects – also built upon strategies that had been developed in a colonial context.[4] And finally, the loss of imperial markets, the end of imperial military requirements, and the remaking of the global division of labour were key factors in the speed and shape of deindustrialisation in industries like shipbuilding and textiles. Thus, Commonwealth citizens who came to Britain to escape the effects of imperial exploitation found themselves caught up in Britain's post-imperial economic transformation, while receiving minimal and often counter-productive support from local and national governments. In the face of these challenges, new politics and new forms of community organisation would develop, and these would play a considerable role in the political and social transformations that Britain has undergone in the last forty years.

Millions of women worked in British industry. This is hardly a perceptive observation, but it is a fact that was long overlooked by scholars of deindustrialisation in Britain. This is now changing, but it remains important to identify how deindustrialisation impacted working women and how the process of deindustrialisation was gendered, particularly in the cotton and linen textile industries. And just as women would often be among the first to lose their jobs in the context of industrial decline, they would also lead the social and economic reimagining process as communities confronted a post-industrial reality. Local organisations like the Shankill Women's Centre are very much part of the story of deindustrialisation, and of the continuing struggle to ensure that women actually benefit from opportunities open to them in the post-industrial economy, especially the millions of women carrying the double burden of paid work and unpaid familial labour.

This dissertation has thus sought to provide a comprehensive, inclusive study of deindustrialisation's impacts on the communities of the UK. It has applied insights drawn from the study of deindustrialisation in North America and Europe to the British case, while recognising both the specificity of Britain's story and the regional and national diversity within that story. It has sought to capture the real scars that industrial closures have left on people's lives, without playing into a simplistic 'decline and fall' narrative based on misplaced nostalgia.

The Continued Relevance of Deindustrialisation in Strange & Scary Times

I have completed this dissertation in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has caused political, social, and economic upheaval across the globe. Even though it is very recent history, the process and legacies of late 20th century deindustrialisation can seem quite distant from this changed world in which we are living. However, to overcome the long-term economic trauma that will almost certainly follow this pandemic, an understanding of the recent past will be essential. In the space that remains, I wish to speak about three specific contemporary debates that an understanding of deindustrialisation can help to clarify.

This dissertation has grappled with the relationship between deindustrialisation and the rise of neoliberalism, demonstrating the existence of a bi-directional cause and effect relationship between the two phenomena. Neoliberal economic policy certainly accelerated the process of industrial decline: for example, we have seen how the decisions of the Thatcher and Major governments with regard to the steel industry differed from those of the Canadian federal and Ontario provincial governments, with grave consequences for the future of the Ravenscraig

[4] Natarajan, *Organizing Community*, 4-5.

steel mill. However, the flow of causation often went the other way. The competitive challenges faced by industries such as steel opened the door to Thatcherite critiques of postwar industrial policy and provided a justification for privatisation and deregulation. As alluded to above, the failure of the social democratic welfare state to deliver on its promises of full employment, and its failure to fully include women and Commonwealth citizens in those promises, often forced marginalised Britons to embrace distinct forms of individualism and entrepreneurialism. These are cultural traits which would come to be associated with Thatcherite neoliberalism. However, as other scholars have noted, we should be careful to recognise that this individualism was not inherently neoliberal. In fact, it often aligned with progressive, feminist, and anti-racist critiques of the status quo.[5] Nevertheless, as we have seen in the example of the Oldham Asian Business Association, the Thatcher government was able to hold up these entrepreneurial efforts as proof of both the success and 'common sense' nature of its economic and social restructuring.[6] And what are we to make of deindustrialisation's impact on Margaret Thatcher's self-proclaimed greatest achievement, New Labour? In many ways, government-supported entrepreneurialism, support for adaptation, and efforts to make the post-industrial reality manageable all seem like direct antecedents to the political project of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Thus, the study of deindustrialisation and the complex set of responses to it can help explain not only the rise of diverse forms of individualism and entrepreneurialism and their relationship to the 'neoliberal turn' of the late 20th century, but also the political debates that have followed in its wake.

The future of neoliberalism as a political project seems increasingly unclear, particularly in the face of the enormous economic damage being caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Governments around the world have borrowed and spent considerable sums to preserve jobs that would otherwise have been lost. In the UK, a Conservative government now in its fourth term in office has promised not to return to the deep austerity that characterised its response to the 2008 financial crisis.[7] It has even, for all practical purposes, nationalised the railways.[8] Nevertheless, the pandemic looks likely to exacerbate inequalities of class, race, and gender. Because of their concentration in low wage, casualised service sector employment, women and racialised communities are considerably more likely to have lost their jobs in the pandemic, and those who have retained their jobs are more likely to work in 'essential service'

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[5] Emily Robinson et al, 'Telling Stories about Post-war Britain'; Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me Me?: The Search for Community in Post-war England*; Sarah Stoller, *Inventing the Working Parent.*

[6] For some thoughts on how important to the neoliberal project it has been to make neoliberal economics seem 'natural' or 'common-sense', see Stuart Hall & Alan O'Shea, 'Common-Sense Neoliberalism', *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture*, Issue 55 (Winter 2013): 8-24. This article is an expanded version of the authors' contribution to the Kilburn Manifesto, which attempts to unpick the cultural and political threads of neoliberalism and propose an alternative: Michael Rustin, Doreen Massey & Stuart Hall (eds.), *After Neoliberalism?: The Kilburn Manifesto* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2015). For a discussion of the explicit use of the idea of 'common-sense' in the context of neoliberal reforms in Canada, see Roger Keil, ''Common-Sense' Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada', *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 578-601.

[7] Francis Elliott & Steven Swinford, 'Coronavirus: No Austerity for Workers as We Recover, Says Johnson,' *The Times*, 27 June 2020, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-no-austerity-for-workers-as-we-recover-says-johnson-dncdcj88x.

[8] Oliver Gill, 'The Railways Have Been Nationalised – And There's No Turning Back', *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 March 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2020/03/23/railways-have-nationalised-no-turning-back/.

roles that place them at a higher risk of exposure to the Covid-19 virus.[9] Covid-19 has exposed and amplified the ongoing pandemic of racism, sexism and income inequality in our societies.

How can these persistent and growing inequalities be challenged? Academics like David Harvey and campaign movements like Occupy Wall Street have revived Henri Lefebvre's concept of 'The Right to the City', arguing that the fight against neoliberalism must take place on the plane of consumption, rather than production, with an emphasis on housing, services, and socio-economic rights.[10] But does this not play into the 'invisibility' of industrial labour about which Jackie Clarke has written?[11] On the other hand, the Green New Deal attempts to integrate a new vision for industrial employment within a broader movement for a sustainable, socially just society.[12] The legacies of deindustrialisation may yet play an important role in shaping the progressive politics of the 21st century.

Whether it be the luxury flats in Titanic Quarter, Belfast,[13] or the remaking of the Lachine Canal in Montreal,[14] the intimate relationship between deindustrialisation and gentrification is evident in cities across the global north.[15] After once heralding the 'rise of the creative class', Richard Florida's most recent book, *The New Urban Crisis*, acknowledges that the result of their 'rise' has been astronomical inequality, deteriorating public services, and whole cities turned into 'gated communities' for the global elite.[16] This dissertation demonstrates that this 'New Urban Crisis' is intimately connected to the original 'Urban Crisis' of the 1960s and 70s, and can only be countered when the long-term legacies of deindustrialisation are recognised and addressed.[17]

I wrote the first half of this dissertation in the San Francisco Bay Area, where much of our modern information technology has been invented and designed. On several occasions during my time in California, I spoke with workers in the technology sector who excitedly

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[9] Alisha Haridasani Gupta, 'Why Some Women Call This Recession a 'Shecession'', *New York Times,* 9 May 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/09/us/unemployment-coronavirus-women.html; Canadian Women's Chamber of Commerce, *Falling Through the Cracks: COVID-19 Survey of Underrepresented Founders,* May 2020, Retrieved 14 July 2020 from https://canwcc.ca/covid-survey/; Public Health England, Report, *Disparities in the Risk and Outcomes of COVID-19*, 2 June 2020, Retrieved 14 July 2020 from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes.

[10] Harvey, *Rebel Cities;* Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age.* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012). For the original argument, see Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la Ville* (Paris: Anthropos, 1968).

[11] Clarke, 'Closing Moulinex'.

[12] Naomi Klein, *On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019).

[13] Phil Ramsey, ''A Pleasingly Blank Canvas': Pete Hodson, 'Titanic Struggle: Memory, Heritage and Shipyard Deindustrialization in Belfast'. See also this thoughtful analysis of class and income division in modern Belfast: Andreas Cebulla & Jim Smyth, 'Disadvantage and New Prosperity in Restructured Belfast', *Capital & Class* 60 (1996): 39-60.

[14] Steven High & Fred Burrill, 'Industrial Heritage as Agent of Gentrification?' *National Council for Public History, History @ Work* [Blog], 19 February 2018, http://ncph.org/history-at-work/industrial-heritage-as-agent-of-gentrification/.

[15] For more discussion of the relationship between deindustrialisation and gentrification, and the impact of state-sponsored redevelopment projects on working class people, see Kirsteen Paton, *Gentrification: A Working-class Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2014); Tracy Neumann, *Remaking the Rust Belt: The Postindustrial Transformation of North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

[16] The original: Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). Florida's revised perspective: Richard Florida, *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class - and What We Can Do about It* (New York: Basic Books, 2017)

[17] For a discussion of the 'original' urban crisis, see Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis.*

explained that automation and 'machine learning' could eventually eliminate whole segments of the tertiary workforce, including paralegals and administrative assistants.[18] There is also an ongoing transformation of retail, one of the largest sectors of employment in most countries in the global north.[19] Growing up in northern Ontario, one of my mother's first jobs was in the credit division of Sears, the absolute epitome of the middle-class[20] 20th century North American department store, and the source of stable employment and benefits for generations of women, especially Black women.[21] Sears is now bankrupt and only a handful of stores remain open.

What will work look like by the middle of this century, and how will the changing nature of employment reshape our societies? These questions are the subject of a thought-provoking and critically important debate that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Some, like one-time US Presidential candidate Andrew Yang, warn of an age of mass unemployment caused by automation and propose a 'universal basic income' (UBI) to protect those who would otherwise fall through the cracks.[22] In a recent essay in the *New Left Review*, Aaron Benanav argues that the world actually faces a much longer-term problem of under-employment, one that is several decades in the making and which is tied to the historic structural economic changes that sit at the centre of this dissertation.[23] According to Benanav, what is required is a sharing out of the 'necessary or reproductive labours' broadly across the population, so that every person has the opportunity to prosper in what will hopefully be a post-scarcity world.[24]

As an historian, I am not well-qualified to predict the future. History does not repeat itself, and the present round of automation and related economic transformation will have very different impacts than the process of deindustrialisation studied in this dissertation. However, my dissertation emphasises that, unless there is a political response that challenges neoliberal assumptions, such structural changes are most harshly felt by those in a marginal position within society and those without the financial or educational resources to 'adapt'. Just as deindustrialisation left behind racial and class segregation, a 'new urban crisis', and the incredible concentration of both power and inequality in 'global cities' like New York and

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[18] See Neil Sahota, 'Will A.I. Put Lawyers Out of Business?', *Forbes Magazine,* 9 February 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/cognitiveworld/2019/02/09/will-a-i-put-lawyers-out-of-business/#3cdfbc2331f0

[19] Denise Lee Yohn, 'The Pandemic Is Rewriting the Rules of Retail', *Harvard Business Review*, 6 July 2020, https://hbr.org/2020/07/the-pandemic-is-rewriting-the-rules-of-retail; Philip Bump, 'Sears Is Going Broke Because the Middle Class Is, Too', *The Atlantic*, 3 February 2014, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/02/sears-going-broke-because-middle-class-too/357671/.

[20] I am using 'middle-class' in the North American sense here.

[21] Marissa Evans, 'What We Lose When Retail Stores Disappear', *Zora Magazine*, 7 July 2020, https://zora.medium.com/what-we-lose-when-retail-stores-disappear-124318f0a148.

[22] Andrew Yang, *The War on Normal People: The Truth About America's Disappearing Jobs and Why Universal Basic Income Is Our Future* (New York: Hachette Books, 2018). See also Andy Stern, *Raising the Floor: How a Universal Basic Income Can Renew Our Economy and Rebuild the American Dream* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016); Nick Srnicek & Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work* (New York: Verso Books, 2015); Erik Brynjolfsson & Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014); Martin Ford, *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

[23] Aaron Benanav, 'Automation and the Future of Work – I', *New Left Review* 119 (September-October 2019): 16-30.

[24] Benanav, 'Automation and the Future of Work – II', *New Left Review* 120 (November-December 2019): 135-142.

London,[25] the ongoing and accelerating remaking of the economy has the potential to further widen income gaps and spur a new era of environmentally damaging suburban flight.[26]

Finally, the study of deindustrialisation has an important role to play in helping us to better understand and respond to the political and culturally fraught concept of 'community'. In the immediate postwar era, the English 'community studies' project sought to identify spatially defined communities with a singular, discrete cultural identity.[27] This project, driven by idealised notions both of class and of English cultural heritage, foundered in the face of the realities of small town and neighbourhood life, and the complexity of personal identities.[28] However, despite this failure, in recent decades there has been an ambiguous and incomplete rehabilitation of the idea of community among some social scientists of working class and small-town Britain. There is a widespread feeling that something was lost in the decades of deindustrialisation and Thatcherism, and that even if communities do not exist anymore, they certainly did at some point in the past. Cultural historian Robert Colls' article 'When We Lived in Communities' in the 2004 volume *Cities of Ideas* is a good example of such sentiments. He notes the problems with community studies and their assumptions about the existence of self-contained working class communities, agreeing with the analysis of Joanna Bourke, who "criticises the concept (...) for the way it implied that people were generally similar in the way they lived".[29] However, by the end of the chapter he has circled back to his memories of growing up on a working class street in South Shields. He insists that there was a *real* community in that neighbourhood, a feeling of solidarity built on working class institutions and the 'web of community knowledge' held together by the local housewives.[30]

'Community' is also a touchstone of contemporary political thinking across the global north and across the political spectrum. Tony Blair argued that a 'return to community' was necessary to counteract growing fragmentation at all levels of British life, which in turn was leading to crime, long-term unemployment, and anti-social behaviour.[31] In the United States, observers as diverse as the Harvard academic Robert Putnam and the conservative Republican US Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse have written about how the supposed decline of community life and face-to-face connection has damaged American society and threatens its democracy.[32] This 'decline of community' thesis has powerful emotional force, and there is undoubtedly some

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[25] Saskia Sassen, 'The Global City: Introducing a Concept,' *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11, no. 2 (2005): 27-43.

[26] Ian Bogost, 'Revenge of the Suburbs', *The Atlantic*, 19 June 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2020/06/pandemic-suburbs-are-best/613300/.

[27] Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 137-63.

[28] For a taste of the debate which accompanied the decline of the community studies project, see Margaret Stacey, 'The Myth of Community Studies', *The British Journal of Sociology* 20 (1969): 134-147; Ray Pahl, 'Are all Communities Communities in the Mind?', *The Sociological Review* 53 (2005): 621-640; Janius Banaji, 'The Crisis of British Anthropology', *New Left Review I,* no. 64 (1970): 71-85; David Goddard, 'Limits of British Anthropology', *New Left Review I*, no. 64 (1969): 79-89.

[29] Robert Colls, 'When We Lived in Communities', in *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain, 1800-2000*, eds. David Reeder et al (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004), 289-90.

[30] Ibid, 302-06.

[31] See Sarah Hale, *Blair's Community: Communitarian Thought and New Labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

[32] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000); Benjamin Sasse, *Them: Why We Hate Each Other - And How to Heal* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2019).

sliver of truth to it, but as Jon Lawrence's recent monograph shows, there is a much more complex story to be told. Community has not disappeared, but it is more diffuse, less geographically centred, and more voluntary.[33] In addition, the 'face-to-face' working class communities of the mid-20th century that so many are quick to valorise depended on the unpaid labour of women, were often racially exclusionary, and would be difficult to recreate in a post-industrial context.

In this dissertation, I have studied a wide array of local organisations that claimed to speak on behalf of 'community' of various sorts. In Belfast, we encountered 'community organisations' that aimed to provide a non-sectarian voice for all people residing in a particular neighbourhood or estate. In Oldham, we encountered 'community organisations' created to provide a safe space and voice for Commonwealth citizens and minority groups largely cut out of the political process. In part, the use of 'community' by these organisations was a response to top-down government and social scientific efforts at 'community development' and 'community organising'.[34] However, as I have argued repeatedly in this dissertation, these local organisations need to be seen also as a response to deindustrialisation and to the failure of the social democratic welfare state to deliver on its promises to all Britons. In some ways this 'turn to community' was thus a result of the failure of national institutions, just as Steven High and others found in the USA.[35] Nevertheless, I would argue that the concept of 'community' was also appealing to these organisations because it reflected their recognition that, for neighbourhoods and districts to overcome the trauma of deindustrialisation, inequalities would need to be broken down and the skills and talents of every single resident used to the full extent. In this way 'community' obtained an inclusive and politically powerful meaning, one that may be worth embracing again in this fraught contemporary moment.

As we have seen, these notions of 'real' community have always been based upon understandings of class. But what does it mean to be working class in deindustrialised Britain? Despite its profound influence on British history, it can sometimes be difficult to speak of class in a coherent and inclusive way in contemporary British society. On both sides of the Atlantic, the racialisation of the 'white working class' is often used to advance reactionary or exclusionary ideas of citizenship, belonging, and identity.[36] The working class of Britain was never wholly white or male, but it has become significantly more diverse since the Second World War, partly as a result of the migration of Commonwealth citizens discussed in this dissertation. As mentioned above, the imagined working class communities valorised by Robert Colls and many others were either explicitly or implicitly white, and even if these communities actually existed in the immediate postwar period, they certainly are not representative of the working class experience in 21st century Britain. Did deindustrialisation therefore make class an unusable or unnecessary category of analysis? Not at all. The majority of Britons still identify as 'working class', and deindustrialisation has arguable increased the salience of class as a dividing line in many aspects of British society, particularly as casualization, benefit sanctions,

[33] Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me Me?: The Search for Community in Post-war England.*
[34] Radhika Natarajan, *Organizing Community*; Akwugo Emejulu, *Community Development as Micropolitics: Comparing Theories, Policies and Politics in America and Britain* (London: Policy Press, 2016).
[35] Steven High*, Industrial Sunset*, 131-165.
[36] See for example Aurelien Mondon & Aaron Winter, 'Whiteness, Populism and the Racialisation of the Working Class in the United Kingdom and the United States', *Identities* 26 (2019): 510-528.

and the decline of the trade unions have exposed millions of workers to zero-hour contracts and inescapable precarity.[37]

This relationship between deindustrialisation and the remaking of both 'community' and 'class' is a complex one that requires further study and consideration. This dissertation marks only a preliminary attempt to grapple with this history, and arguably ends with as many questions as answers. At the very least though, I hope that it has succeeded in identifying the centrality of deindustrialisation in the political, social, and cultural transformation of Britain from the mid 20th century to the present day.

[37] Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso Books, 2012).

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