

# PART 4

INTO  
UNIFORM AGAIN

# 16 NUDAW IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR — 1

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*National Negotiations — for War Bonuses and after;  
Substitute Labour: Reinstatement; . . . and many other services*

THE World War of 1939-45 differed in many respects from the war of 1914-18. In the latter, civilians in most belligerent countries were not directly involved, except in the immediate vicinity of the battlefield. As we saw in an earlier chapter, between 1914 and 1918 the AUCE recorded in its journal the death in action of hundreds of members, but none was killed on the home front. There had been air raids on Britain in the first war, but they were insignificant compared with the massive attack of the *Luftwaffe* from 1940 onwards. Our cities, particularly London, were prime targets for destruction from the air, culminating near the end of the war in the rocket campaign against the capital. Well over a hundred Union members lost their lives in their homes, at work or on the streets.

In the first war the mobilisation of human and material resources was gradual. Conscription was not introduced until the beginning of 1916, systematic food rationing until the last few months of the war. Britain was again at war from 3rd September, 1939. Conscription into the Forces was already in operation, the future call-up was regulated through a schedule of reserved occupations. The Government soon took power to transfer workers from civilian jobs to war industry, registration and rationing of food, after some initial blundering, began on 8th January, 1940. Firms were "concentrated" to rationalise the use of labour and machines. It was total war on a scale not reached between 1914-18.

There was a profound psychological difference between the two wars. Britain marched into Armageddon in 1914 almost in a mood of euphoria. Men could still see war as a setting for glory and adventure in which, as in the 1914 slogan "Business as usual", normal life continued at home and the Royal Navy

guaranteed our shores against invasion. There was a more dour mood in 1939. Most people knew, or felt instinctively, that they faced a long and dirty struggle and those who had any doubts had them dispelled after Dunkirk.

Another vital difference between the two wars was the role of the Trades Union and Co-operative Movements and the Labour Party. They had an important part to play between 1914-18 but they were not brought in strength onto the top levels of policy making and administration. In Churchill's first Cabinet of the Second World War Labour representatives played a leading role. C. R. Attlee was to become Deputy Prime Minister. Ernest Bevin, powerful Trade Union leader and general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, had the vital task of mobilising man and woman power and maintaining the support of Trades Unionists. A. V. Alexander (a member of NUDAW) was First Lord of the Admiralty, Herbert Morrison was Home Secretary and Minister of Security, Hugh Dalton was Minister for Economic Warfare. Arthur Greenwood served on the War Cabinet as Minister Without Portfolio, Sir Stafford Cripps was, first, Ambassador to Moscow and later Minister of War Production. Labour Members also served in several other positions.

All three working-class Movements had enormously increased in size since 1914. In that year there were 2,886,077 Trades Union members affiliated to the TUC, AUCE had 45,044 members, and the Co-operative Movement 3,054,297, with a trade of £87,964,229. By 1939 the number of affiliated Trades Unionists was 6,575,654, NUDAW had 194,000 members and the retail Co-operatives 8,643,233, with a trade of £272,293,748.

The enhanced importance of the Trades Union and Co-operative Movements was strongly reflected in the wartime experience of the distributive Unions. The General Secretary of NUDAW, J. Hallsworth, after thirteen years on the General Council of the TUC, had presided over the Congress at Bridlington in 1939 (reduced to two days because of the outbreak of war). Over the years he had served on a great variety of Governmental bodies and inquiries, and in particular he had become a notable figure in the work of the International Labour Office at Geneva (removed to Canada after war broke out). During the war he played a major part in many of the national committees set up

to control or advise on economic, labour and social problems. A similar role was played by G. Maurice Hann, General Secretary of the Shop Assistants'. Both Unions were also represented by officials or lay members on a great number of other bodies, national and regional, set up to deal with particular commodities or services.

In both wars Governments paid lip-service to the importance of distribution but in practice denuded the shops of labour to an extent equalled in few other industries. Hallsworth warned NUDAW's annual meeting of 1939 (held at Easter, before the outbreak of war) that the number of male members under 40 years of age was so large that in the event of a war they would probably be more heavily hit by the call-up than any other Union. His forecast was correct.

The war with Germany ended on 7th May, 1945, when, at the Rheims headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, German leaders signed the unconditional surrender of their forces on all fronts. The war with Japan was expected to continue, but ended suddenly in the flash and blast of the two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Mankind had entered a new era of destruction, too terrible for even the fanaticism and courage of the Japanese, who surrendered unconditionally on 15th August.

Throughout the war the number of members serving in the Forces was reported to each Executive Council meeting. The peak figure was 78,006 on September 8, 1945 (71,136 men, 6,870 women). This was probably the biggest proportion of any Trade Union and the total was 33,000 more than the entire membership of 1914. Up to the surrender of Japan those who lost their lives while in uniform numbered 1,529. But war still took its toll after hostilities had officially ended. Through accidents, from wounds suffered while the battles still raged, in the mopping up operations which continued in many parts of the world, lives were still being lost, and the total of fatalities reported to the monthly meeting of the Executive crept up until it reached 2,047 in October, 1946. It was a grievous loss, but at least it was much less in proportion to membership than the number who died between 1914-18. In addition, an earlier report stated that 140 members were killed in the aerial attacks on cities.

Members of the two distributive Unions, particularly those in retail Co-operative food shops, factories and warehouses of the two Co-operative Wholesale Societies, and in associated transport, bore a responsibility equal to that of workers in war industry. When rationing was introduced, Co-operative registrations in one typical period (mid-1942 to mid-1943) for sugar, butter and margarine, bacon and ham, cooking fats, preserves and cheese represented more than a quarter of the supply to the civilian market. For meat the proportion was 14.55 per cent and for eggs 17.93 per cent. At retail level entirely, and at wholesale level by far the greater part, of this enormous volume of essential food was handled by Union members, many of them living and working under constant threat of death or mutilation from the air, grappling with rationing documents and changing coupon values and frequently beginning the day's work by clearing up a bomb-damaged shop. By the end of the war 105,274 of NUDAW's 266,467 members were women (mostly elderly as younger women were drafted into war industry) plus, in the retail trade, branch managers, adolescents of both sexes and pensioners returned to service. They and their colleagues in other sections of distribution were the heroines and heroes of the nation's wartime larder, who ensured that the rations always came through. Trades Unionists and Co-operators should take more pride in the fact that two of the oldest democratic Movements in Britain thus made such a massive contribution to destroying the arch-enemy of democracy.

From the general we must now turn to the particular, to the Union's policy and problems during the war. One of the most significant developments was the beginning of national negotiations on wages and conditions for members in Co-operative service. This has long been a Union objective, but little progress had been made. We saw earlier that in 1925 NUDAW sought to introduce national negotiations, but the Co-operative side insisted that they must continue to be on a sectional, district or, in many cases, individual society basis. With the rise in the cost of living (the index rose by 10 points between 1st September and 30th September in 1939) NUDAW and other Unions concerned proposed a flat rate over-all increase as a first war bonus, with terms and conditions other than wages to be maintained

without alteration for the duration of the war. The Co-operatives agreed to negotiate on this basis, joint machinery was established, and, to quote NUDAW's annual report for 1939 "... for the first time in Co-operative history, negotiations for the whole of England, Wales and Northern Ireland were conducted and, in the space of six weeks, a settlement was reached". A large number of societies outside the Co-operative Union's Wages Board machinery agreed to be bound by the award, which thus covered the greater number of the Union's members in retail Co-operative service (J. Jagger, in an article in *New Dawn*, estimated the proportion as between 90 and 95 per cent).

The amounts of the first war bonus were: **MALES** — 21 and over, 4/-d; 18 and under 21, 2/6d; under 18, 1/6d. **FEMALES** — 21 and over, 2/6d; 18 and under 21, 2/-d; under 18, 1/6d. Similar amounts were obtained in the Wholesale Societies and in Scotland (which, for a time, was outside the national machinery, but joined in 1942). There were escape clauses in this and later bonus agreements for societies which claimed their trading position was so bad that they could not pay and, conversely, for the Union to claim more in particularly prosperous societies. These clauses, however, were little used. In some productive and specialist trades carried on by the Co-operative Movement, particularly in the CWS and SCWS, separate agreements had to be negotiated. But generally, throughout the war, the tendency was to follow the pattern of the retail bonuses. The first bonus was agreed by direct negotiation, but most of the others were on the award of an independent chairman of the National Conciliation Board, a procedure which both sides had agreed to accept when agreement could not otherwise be reached.

There were eight more bonuses before 1945 (the fifth, in 1942, for females only), including a special advance in 1946 linked to the bonus. In total over the period of the war the increases amounted to: **MALES** — 21 and over, 24/6d; 18 and under 21, 18/-d; under 18, 13/-d. **FEMALES** — 21 and over, 23/6d; 18 and under 21, 17/6d; under 18, 13/-d. The 1946 "extra", awarded in April, added for males and females alike 4/-d at 21 and over, 3/-d at 18 and under 21, and 2/-d under 18. There was another increase in 1947, after which the bonuses were

consolidated in the new national agreements, which will be the subject of a later chapter. In overall total, from the outbreak of war to 1947, the bonuses amounted to: **MALES** — 21 and over, 32/6d; 18 and under 21, 24/-d; under 18, 17/-d. **FEMALES** 21 and over, 31/6d; 18 and under 21, 23/6d; under 18, 17/-d.

Broadly similar bonuses were negotiated with the Wholesale Societies during the war. But one section of Co-operative workers received no war bonus — CIS agents. The argument was that since they were paid on commission and had a proprietorial interest in their books, bonuses were inappropriate.

A keenly felt grievance of branch managers and manageresses was dealt with in 1942. They had a harrowing job, with untrained or half-trained staff, frequently changed, a constant shower of rationing and other documents (some carrying legal penalties for failure to carry out correctly their provisions). To meet their case, a scheme of plussages based on turnover was added to the amounts they received under bonus awards.

Managers of food shops, with wages related to sales, were also protected against any actual *reduction* in wages below the immediate pre-war level, which could have happened when branch sales fell because of rationing and the shortage of other foods.

For its private trade members the Union also secured wartime increases, varying over the great number of trades concerned, sometimes negotiated direct with employers' associations, frequently through Joint Industrial Councils, Trade Boards (which became Wages Councils during the war), Essential Work Orders or other special machinery. By 1943 the Union was associated with 38 negotiating bodies, in all of which increases had been secured.

It would, of course, be impossible that this complicated process of bargaining with the Co-operatives on so sensitive a subject as wages could continue over six years without differences arising between the two sides. One, oddly enough, was in the Union itself: some members simply did not like national negotiations. They argued that better results could be secured by district or individual society negotiations, and that removal of the vital question of wages from local decision weakened the interest of members in their branches. We shall return to this subject later.

The most intractable problem was one which was also evident in the first World War — equality of payment for women who substituted for men in the Forces or who had been directed to other war work. The first task was to enrol the new recruits as Trade Union members and that was successfully carried out, payment of entrance fee being suspended to encourage recruitment. But the question of female wage rates (other than the increases awarded on the bonus) had been left over from the first Co-operative War Bonus agreement. NUDAW took the initiative among the Unions concerned in proposing detailed rates and conditions for the substitute female workers who by 1940 were beginning to throng into the shops. Drawing on the experience of 1914-18 — when it proved impossible to secure the general operation of equal rates for both sexes — the Unions proposed plussages at various ages which would give the substitutes more than the current female rates but less than the full male scales. Separate negotiations were proposed for women in transport and some other services. The issue went to the National Conciliation Board and the award of the Chairman, John Forster, included a provision which became notorious as Clause 2(c) and which for the rest of the war was to tangle the subject in a knot of truly Gordian intricacy.

In effect, it provided (a) for a woman to qualify for the full male rate it had to be proved that she was carrying out “the full range of duties and responsibilities of the male worker for whom she is substituted”, (b) that these duties and responsibilities differed “in their nature, character and scope” from the work normally undertaken by female workers. For those who thus qualified a scale was to be negotiated, and this was eventually agreed by the Unions and the Co-operative National Wages Council as 80 per cent of the male rate plus war bonus for the first six months, thereafter the full rate, with the appropriate war bonuses in each case.

But... *how* did you prove, particularly in the artificial conditions of war-time retailing, that a woman was carrying out “the full range” (a phrase in itself almost impossible to define) of duties performed by the man she had temporarily replaced? There were complaints of societies operating shops with only one adult man but still refusing to pay more than the female rate to the women who had taken over. The central problem



was that each case had to be proved on an individual basis and if necessary carried right up to the National Conciliation Board. Officials of the Union admitted that in a great many cases it was almost impossible to prove in the terms of Clause 2(c) that a woman was carrying out exactly and in full detail the duties of a man, even though in fact and in essence that was precisely what she was doing. But the Union was bound by the agreement to abide by the awards of NCB chairmen, and could only strive to seek favourable interpretations of the clause. Branch officials were urged to supply precise details of cases which could be taken through the negotiating machinery. Very often this was beyond the powers of men already harrassed by the complications of wartime retailing, the black-out, air raids and possibly worry over sons or daughters in uniform.

The problem, however, should not be exaggerated. The general experience of the Union was that relations with Co-operative employers was infinitely better than during the first war. National action led much more rapidly to agreement than Sectional, District or individual society negotiations had ever done. Had the battle of the bonuses been fought piecemeal, members in some societies could have won bigger amounts but many would have had less and would have had to wait longer. In the article in *New Dawn* mentioned earlier, J. Jagger recalled that in the first war it was well into 1916 before they obtained a bonus equal to that offered within four months of the outbreak of Hitler's war. And in the earlier war there had to be strike after strike before the bonus reached the pay packets of many members.

To return to national negotiations. As the fortunes of war began to swing decisively in favour of the Allies, the argument took a new turn. Were national settlements to continue into the post-war years? The question was brought to a head by two developments. First, the Co-operative Movement was now in favour of national bargaining when the war was over. More immediately, a National Conciliation Board award arising from a provision in the original war bonuses agreement had sharpened the need for a policy decision by the Union.

Clause (5) of the agreement restricted, although it did not entirely debar, attempts to improve the basic sectional and other agreements and scales to which war bonuses were added. This

was a strongly felt grievance in some Divisions, particularly those which had been so ravaged by the depression of the twenties and thirties that the Union had been compelled to accept wages and conditions much inferior to those in other parts of the country. Early in 1945 two Divisions, Northern and Southern and Eastern, sought to remove some anomalies by invoking Clause (5).

In March the NCB chairman, Professor D. T. Jack, ruled against piecemeal variation of the agreement. He found, however, that there was general acceptance that national agreements on basic scales as well as war bonuses were desirable in principle and, he said, anomalies could be cleared up within their ambit. The Union argued that the time was not opportune for this change; Jack ruled to the contrary — that “. . . the parties shall at the earliest possible date open negotiations with the object of finding a basis for the construction of national agreements”.

A special meeting of the NUDAW Executive on 14th April, 1945, formally protested that this award went beyond the issues raised by the Union. As, however, NCB decisions were binding “. . . this Executive are prepared to implement the award for the opening of negotiations . . . for the construction of national agreements with the National [Co-operative] Wages Council, provided that the procedure to be followed . . . shall be based on the fundamental principles of absolute equality of representation . . .” (There was similar action by the Shop Assistants' Union)

This decision was reported to a joint conference of Executive and Divisional Councils on the same day. The conference was also informed that procedure for national negotiations had been agreed between the Co-operative side and the Unions concerned, providing for joint secretaries and equality of representation on the negotiating body.

The point had now been reached for the debate to move onto the national stage of NUDAW's annual delegate meeting, and it was already on the agenda for 1945. The issue was presented in the starkest possible terms in a Birmingham Co-operative Branch resolution which, perhaps sensing the way events were moving, declared that “. . . the best interests of the membership will be served by reverting to Divisional wage negotiations in the

post-war period". It was discussed in the longest debate of the ADM and, as the voting showed, it was far from a foregone conclusion that the result would be a victory for the Executive.

Moving the resolution, — Dunn said that the Co-operatives wanted national negotiations to prevent some societies giving more through Union pressures and "Surely, as far as we are concerned, is it not a rule that on wage questions we get what we can?" — Russell (Coventry) made the point that they could get 100 per cent branch attendance when negotiations were local, attendance began to fall off when they became sectional and "how many do you get when negotiations (for war bonuses) are national?" This was an argument frequently used, but which ignored the fact that the greater number of the younger active members were in uniform and could not attend meetings, while many of older age had been drafted into war industry. Other arguments voiced were that a change in wages bargaining would lead to breakaway Unions, that national agreements took too long to reach, that it was all a plot to weaken the Union, that national minima would become maxima.

The case for national negotiations was presented by W. A. Burrows. He contended that the tendency in industry generally was towards national negotiations, a process which had been accelerated by the war. The Union was already involved nationally for many members through JICs, Wages Councils and other bodies. Under the old system there were more than 300 agreements in the Co-operative Movement, and, leaving out individual society agreements, there were very wide variations in the rates for similar jobs. "Our rates are as varied as the colours of the rainbow". As a result of national negotiations few societies were not paying the full war bonuses. Many members in small country societies were receiving a bonus they would not otherwise have obtained. The average time for negotiating national war bonuses had been 13 weeks [figures given in another context showed that from 1936 to 1939 the average time taken to reach decisions was almost six months]. As to maintaining the interest of members, other times required other ways and methods valid many years ago were no longer so in the present. Certainly members must be consulted on wages, and it would be done through Divisional Councils and specially called conferences.

At the end of the day the direct negative of the Birmingham resolution was defeated by 106,041 votes to 61,209. National negotiations were on; not with unanimity of votes but at least by a respectable majority. We shall read of the post-war sequel in Chapter 19. But at this stage we must pass on to other aspects of the Union's wartime experience.

#### REINSTATEMENT

To the soldier awaiting rescue on the beaches of Dunkirk, to a comrade finding his way through the jungle after the rout in Burma, to the Merchant or Royal Navy seaman in the Murmansk or Atlantic convoys the subject of reinstatement in peacetime employment must often have seemed an academic issue. Survival with the odds against them required all their immediate attention. *But* the second world war, much more than the first, was fought by civilians. Civilians, men and women, in uniform, civilians at home under the nightly threat from the skies, civilians who, as workers and consumers, were tightly controlled from the early days of the war, civilians whose determination to win was inspired less by military ambition than by the desire to get it over with, destroy the evil which threatened the world and return to their peacetime jobs and lives.

Reinstatement was a vital interest to them. For NUDAW members, still mainly employees of the Co-operative Movement, this interest was covered early in the war by two agreements with the Co-operative National Wages Council and the Unions concerned — the Substitute Labour Agreement of April 22nd, 1940 (embodied in the Conciliation Board award, which also contained the contentious Clause 2(c) on women's wages) and the Transferred Labour Agreement of August in the same year. Much later, in 1944, Parliament passed the Reinstatement to Civil Employment Act, which laid it down that there must be at least 26 or 52 weeks (according to length of former employment) return to peacetime employment.

Both the Co-operative agreements went further than the Act. In addition to men and women in the Forces or Civil Defence, they covered enrolled conscientious objectors and workers of both sexes who were transferred to war work or left for this purpose with the prior consent of their societies. There was no limit to the period for which workers must be

reinstated. War service, whether in uniform or at home, was to be without adverse effect upon position or prospects of promotion and at the rate of pay prevailing at the time of return to work. Another clause provided that changes in the sex and skill composition of staffs necessitated by wartime labour shortage should be temporary and as soon as practicable after the war there should be a return to the *status quo*. The Transferred Labour Agreement, covering employees compulsorily directed to work of national importance, was broadly similar in its provisions.

As the war neared its end the Executives of NUDAW and the Shop Assistants' Union increasingly urged branches to concentrate on the operation of the two agreements. It was the policy of both Unions that joint committees should be set up to ensure a smooth return to pre-war jobs, or, in the case of disabled members, to occupations they were able to perform. In many societies these committees were formed. But the Co-operative National Wages Council, while reiterating its intention to carry out the two agreements, was not prepared to endorse local committees. Instead, a procedure agreement was accepted by the Council and the Unions, covering intervention by the Council or Wages Boards in certain cases, while, in effect, leaving the Unions free to persuade as many societies as they could to set up joint committees.

The other side of reinstatement was, of course, redundancy for many of the employees who had taken the place of men and women in the Forces or on war work. They were full members of the Union, and in many cases had kept alive branches that were almost denuded of their basic membership. In guidance given to branches towards the end of 1945, NUDAW's Executive Council suggested a policy for the orderly run-down of temporary staffs.

Four weeks was proposed as a reasonable period of notice. Where the demobilisation dates of men and women in the Forces were known the "temporaries" should be notified that their services would not be required after a given date. Through reinstatement committees where they existed, or by direct negotiation in other cases, branches should seek to establish priorities for dismissal. Thus, pensioners who had returned to service would go first, part-time employees next, then married

women with husbands in civilian employment; and so on, married men with families being last to go.

Considering the enormous number of men and women involved demobilisation and reinstatement worked smoothly. No legislation or agreement can be free of borderline interpretations and there were disputed cases, for which there was provision in the Act and in the Co-operative agreements.

#### SERVICE ON MANY FRONTS

It was a long war, more than a year and a half longer than that of 1914-18. It was total war, in which most aspects of working, domestic and personal life were controlled in varying degree. For NUDAW, it brought many other responsibilities than those already described, and only a few can be mentioned here, mostly campaigns in which NUDAW and the Shop Assistants' Union acted jointly.

In the early days of the War the Union sought to secure allowances that would make up the Forces pay of members to or close to the figure of normal wages. Many Co-operatives and private firms accepted this obligation but it did not become general. There was more success in persuading societies and the Wholesales to pay employees' superannuation contributions. There was much slower progress in the introduction of new superannuation schemes, many societies holding back until they knew Government policy on the proposals for social security in the Beveridge Report. In 1941, however, a new CWS scheme was introduced which went most of the way to meeting the objections to some aspects of the earlier scheme.

When the Battle of Britain began in 1940 fire watching became part of the working routine, at first on a voluntary basis, later compulsory under the 1941 Fire Prevention (Business Premises) Order. Agreements on pay and conditions for this extra duty were negotiated. There was also an agreement covering absence through injuries caused while working during an air raid "Alert", the Co-operative Wages Council agreeing that for eight weeks payments due under the Personal Injuries (Civilians) Scheme should be made up to normal wages.

Working time lost in air raids, particularly in London and other cities subject to frequent attack, was the subject of another agreement with the National Wages Council. The Legal Department was kept at full stretch, particularly with cases under the

Factories and Workmen's Compensation Acts — with every machine that would turn going full out on production for the Services, for the much reduced home market and for export there was an inevitable increase in accidents.

Members of the Union, male and female, were compulsorily transferred into all branches of war industry. A former grocer could find himself in a shipyard, or a milliner in a tank factory. Inter-Union arrangements had to be made for the mutual observance of membership cards; the basic provision being that the member's "original Union" should be responsible for all services and benefits, but would not be concerned with trade negotiations on wages and conditions. NUDAW had several of these agreements with other Unions.

During the war the Union contributed to the various funds raised to help allied nations — £1,000 to Russia, plus £4,253 raised through branch activities; £1,000 to China. Earlier in the war there had been £1,000 to Finland, then struggling against the might of the Soviet Union. Through one of those ironies so common in history, Finland was soon to be ranked among our enemies. At home, the Union, as part of a TUC scheme, contributed four mobile canteens for the use of the Forces.

The 1941 annual report welcomed the establishment of Joint Industrial Councils for the Distributive Trades (described as "The outstanding feature of the year"). It had long been a Union objective to seek some form of legal regulation of wages in the jungle of distribution, even though among some distributive workers this could weaken the argument that a strong Trade Union was equally necessary. The 1941 report recorded that the Union was represented on the workers' side of the JICs for Retail Food; Wholesale Grocery and Provisions; Retail Drapery, Outfitting and Footwear; Retail Furnishing and Allied Trades; Hairdressing; Stationery and Tobacconists; Wholesale Meat; Retail Meat: Offal Section.

Finally — a tribute to the NCOs of NUDAW — the branch secretaries and officials. They could scarcely get to know the names and faces of many of their members before they were off to the Forces or war industry. In some branches it was the other way round — the members scarcely knew who their secretary was from one month to another. It was not uncommon for a branch to have two or three secretaries in a single year. It took

dedication to take on the job and NUDAW was fortunate in having so many members willing to give up their leisure to serve the Union.

This chapter has been almost entirely about the Union's members as wage earners during the second World War, whether they were in uniform or carrying out their normal jobs. In the next chapter we shall look at the *political and other wider* aspects of the Union's role. But before moving on one decision that reflects honour on NUDAW must be mentioned. Immediately prior to the war the Executive Council decided that the services of the full-time staff should be at the disposal of members affected by the Military Service Act, and this should be available to those who held conscientious objection to joining the Forces. When war broke out, the Executive further decided that members imprisoned as COs should be excused contributions (as was the case with those in the Forces). Some COs were dismissed and in at least one case a wife was banned because of her husband's conscientious objection to war. NUDAW fought these cases with the same vigour that was devoted to defending the rights of all other members. A similar policy was followed by the Shop Assistants' Union. In neither case was the policy universally popular, particularly in the darker days of the war. Nevertheless, it was maintained, a true expression of the *humanistic and libertarian traditions* that run strongly through the history of both Unions.



# 17 NUDAW IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR — 2

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## *Preparing for Invasion: Politics and Policies: The Victory Election*

FOR Britain 1940 was the worst year of the war. In April Hitler's forces overran Norway and Denmark. In May they poured into Holland, Luxembourg and Belgium and rapidly swept onward into France. The British Army was driven towards the coast and seemed doomed to surrender or decimation. It was saved by the miracle of Dunkirk, lifted from the beaches by an armada comprising anything that would float, from pleasure boats to warships. On 22nd June the French Government concluded an armistice with Germany.

By the Autumn all Western Europe with the exception of Switzerland was under the jackboot or, as in Spain and Portugal, was ruled by Governments that were nominally neutral but in philosophy and to some degree in practice were allies of Hitler and Mussolini. To the North East of the continent Sweden was to remain an apprehensive neutral for the duration of the war. Finland was soon to come within the German orbit. Poland had been dismembered between Germany and Russia. To the South East the Balkans were dominated by German power. From the far north of Europe to the Western coasts of France and the Low Countries every fjord and harbour, every aerodrome and landing strip, all the skill and technology of the most industrialised of the continents, were at the disposal of the Nazis for invasion or for submarine blockade of our food and raw materials. It seemed inevitable that for the first time since 1066 Britain would be invaded by an army who came not to raid but to conquer and possess.

One spectacular victory and one silent victory saved us from joining the rest of Europe in servitude to the Nazis. In the Battle of Britain Fighter Command of the Royal Air Force broke the efforts of the *Luftwaffe* to control the skies over the

Channel and the invasion coast. All the world watched that battle far up in the skies. Few people in those days thought of the other powerful deterrent to invasion that lay in wait northward of the Channel. Among those haunted by that silent presence, however, were the professionals of the German Admiralty, who knew that they could not prevent the Royal Navy, at whatever cost in ships and casualties, from destroying the larger part of an invasion armada while it attempted to ferry the *Wehrmacht* across the Channel. More than one hundred years earlier, when Napoleon was expected to invade, the British Admiral St. Vincent declared "I do not say that the French cannot come. I only say that they cannot come by sea". In the *Kriegsmarine* they probably remembered that saying when they cautiously advised their impatient master of the dangers of attempting a sea-borne crossing against a powerful and determined battle fleet.

But this knowledge lay in the future. During that hot summer of 1940 we could only cheer the bravery and skill of the RAF and hope for the best while preparing for the worst. The Battle of Britain was succeeded in August by battle against civilian morale. The Battle of Britain could be watched from the ground. The battle of the cities could only be heard and endured. Few cities, London in particular, escaped nights that were hideous with the drone of the bombers, the crash of anti-aircraft fire and the rumble and flames of falling buildings.

The coast from Berwick-on-Tweed to Portland had been declared an invasion area, with large scale evacuation, compulsory and voluntary, of civilians. The trade of many Co-operative societies withered away, causing redundancy among staffs, most of them Union members. To continue its role of consumer supply, the CWS had divided the country into areas with detailed plans for continuing supplies to or from any area that might be invaded. Some of its departments had already been moved out of London, although in the event most supplies to the Metropolitan and Southern societies continued to be handled from the capital throughout war. In *New Dawn* of 20th July, 1940, A. W. Burrows reported that the Unions had reached an agreement with the Co-operative National Wages Council for evacuated or redundant labour to be absorbed by societies in safer areas.

The first wartime annual delegate meeting of NUDAW was held at Blackpool on May 5th, 6th and 7th, 1940. The "phoney war" mood that had prevailed since 1939 had been given a sharp jolt by the Nazi successes in Norway and Denmark. But the worst was yet to come. Only three days after the meeting ended Hitler launched his attack in the West. Before the ADM met again the British people — and not least Trades Union members responsible for supplying the home market — had survived one of the most critical years in our long history.

We saw in Chapter 15 that before the war began there was division and confusion in the Union (as in the Labour Movement generally) over the action necessary to halt the advance of Hitler, Mussolini and their Japanese allies. These differences continued in a different form to be reflected in the annual meetings between 1940 and 1945. Communist, ILP and Pacifist members and some who belonged to none of these groups but wanted a more Leftward Labour policy continued to put forward their varying interpretations of events. There could be no doubting that the generality of the Union's members, the Executive Council, the MPs and the full-time staff realised that the war was being fought for the survival of democracy, free institutions and in particular free Trades Unions and Co-operatives. If Hitler won, they would disappear, as they had already gone wherever Nazi rule was imposed. But NUDAW was very much an open democracy. The voice of dissent had the right to be heard at the annual Parliament.

Communist members could act in concert without infringing Union rules, but one resolution of the 1940 ADM, carried by 81,445 votes to 52,264, attacked the use of the Union for Communist propaganda. A stop-the-war resolution at the same meeting reflected an ILP and Pacifist viewpoint. It called on the TUC and the Labour Party "... to cease helping and supporting the present Government and to use all their energy to bring about cessation of hostilities". It was only narrowly defeated (For 58,358, Against 62,908). A resolution opposing the electoral truce was carried, as was one opposing conscription. There was also a demand for better pay and allowances for the Forces (in one form or another this demand was repeated at all war time annual meetings). In 1941 a call for a "People's Socialist Government", conscription of wealth and "a vigorous

Socialist peace offensive" was rejected. Not that delegates were necessarily opposed to these objectives. But the proposal was seen as an indirect attempt to belittle the Labour Party's participation in Churchill's wartime coalition. Resolutions demanding a declaration of war aims and Union support for the People's Vigilance Committee set up by the Communist Party, were also defeated.

The 1942 meeting carried a protest against a Government ban on the publication of the *Daily Worker* but rejected a demand that the Government should "... invite representatives of all nations to a conference to discuss an immediate armistice". It adopted a resolution calling upon the TUC and the Labour Party to campaign for "elected councils" through which members of the Forces could express their "economic and political demands". A further call for the establishment of a "workers' Socialist Government" was rejected. In 1943 an attempt was made to obtain Union support for a Communist Party application to affiliate to the Labour Party — defeated at the ADM by 102,122 votes to 66,173. (A similar resolution in 1946 was lost by a much bigger majority — 144,798 to 31,700). The Beveridge report was welcomed in 1943, a resolution critical of the report rejected, the meeting demanded action to deal with the housing problem, and deprecated the support given by some Labour leaders to Lord Vansittart's campaign for punishing the whole German people for the crimes of Nazism. Finally, it sent a message of congratulation to General Eisenhower and all ranks of the Allied armies on "... the magnificent victory in Tunisia over the forces of Fascism and Nazism".

In 1944, with victory in sight, the emphasis was on winning the peace. A resolution calling on the United Nations to "... take such steps when victory is won as will ensure that Germany will never again be enabled to throw the world into war" was amended to cover both Germany or "... any other imperialist power". The decisions of the Teheran Conference (of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin), the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and the Soviet-Czech Treaty were cited as examples of the agreements required to ensure peace. A demand that the electoral truce be ended was defeated by 66,545 votes to 58,293.

The 1945 ADM was held on May 2nd, 3rd and 4th. Again it

met in Blackpool. The 1940 wartime meeting had been held there in a year when national survival seemed doubtful and victory impossible. But once again Britain had saved herself by her exertions and Europe by her example. The meeting was held during the week of German surrender on all fronts. This historic event was celebrated by a declaration in which the ADM paid "heartfelt tribute of gratitude and admiration to the Armed Forces and Mercantile Marine of the United Nations whose valour and sacrifice have brought the struggle against the barbaric forces of the Nazis and Fascists in sight of its successful conclusion. It declares its whole hearted support to the policy of the TUC that there should not be a peace settlement which will perpetuate the hatred and antagonisms which have torn the world asunder, but by a firm resolve to lay down such political and economic conditions as will afford the fullest possible guarantee that order and law will be maintained throughout the world." It went on:

"For Germany and also Japan military defeat and surrender must mean retribution and atonement, war criminals of every rank and status must bear the full penalty of their crimes, with the dissolution of all Nazi institutions and the re-establishment of full democratic rights. For all countries which have been plundered and devastated by the Nazis, restitution in suitable forms shall be exacted and territorial frontier changes carried out to ensure the stability of the states bordering Germany and strengthen European peace".

It should not be assumed from this rapid survey that the annual meetings of the war years were entirely dominated by political issues (although there was a suggestion in 1944 that "... no political matters should be discussed prior to the completion of the industrial business of the meeting"). It was rejected on the grounds that it was impossible to draw a line between Trades Union and political activities). In practice, industrial issues, particularly questions of wages and conditions and the mass of statutory rules and regulations governing working and other conditions, took up most of the time at each ADM. Members were also alert to the way in which science and technology were opening up new fields for Union activity and/or public ownership. One resolution of the 1946 ADM called for the nationalisation of the ophthalmic optical trade in view of

its importance to the National Health scheme. The same meeting carried a resolution urging the TUC to set up a National Council to bring together all unions catering for scientific and technical workers which, among other purposes, would study and report on the role of scientific workers in rebuilding the national economy.

Midway through the war death removed a man who, as delegate and as General President, had been an outstanding figure at the ADM for many years. On 9th July, 1942, John Jagger, MP, died in a road accident while on his way to his duties as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Herbert Morrison, then Home Secretary. Since 1919 he had been General President, first of AUCE, then of NUDAW following the amalgamation of 1921, holding this high office longer than any other incumbent, before or since. He was succeeded as Acting President by P. Cottrell, who was in due course confirmed in office by vote of the membership. A "Jagger Memorial Fund" of £1,000 was subsequently set up by the Union to be administered by the TUC for the purpose of developing Trades Unionism in the colonies.

Before leaving the politics of the war years one other distressing event must be recorded. During 1944 the Executive Council had been informed by the St. Helens Labour Party of their "profound dissatisfaction" with the services of W. A. Robinson as their MP. He had retired from the position of Political General Secretary in 1942, but retained his Parliamentary seat. (The position of Political General Secretary was abolished by the annual meeting of 1943.) Following the St. Helens approach, a meeting of the Executive in May made the painful decision that they must ask him to resign the seat, and the National Executive of the Labour Party was notified accordingly. W. A. Robinson declined to resign and the Executive subsequently withdrew a retaining allowance and certain other allowances made to him as a Union sponsored member.

This action was later referred to the House of Commons Committee of Privileges and the President and A. W. Burrows (who was at the material time Acting General Secretary) appeared before the Committee. After hearing a full explanation of the circumstances the Committee reported in June that there

had been no breach of the privileges of the House. It had long been recognised, said their report, that there were members who received financial assistance from associations of their constituents or other bodies and "A body which provides such assistance must normally be free and entitled to withdraw it". There had been "... no attempt to influence the action of the Member in the House of Commons in voting or speaking".

Victory in war was soon followed in Britain by Labour's greatest-ever victory at the polls in the General Election of July, 1945. Churchill had wanted the Coalition to continue at least until the end of the war with Japan. The Labour Party Conference (presided over by Ellen Wilkinson) would not have it. The Election was on. It was to be the "never-again" election; expressing the determination among men and women at home and in uniform that they would never go back to 1939.

In their tens of thousands and in their hundreds of thousands they turned out to cheer Churchill on his much-publicised election cavalcade through Britain. To cheer him as a war leader, the man who had put into burning words the peoples' will to fight. But they rejected him as a man for peace and particularly they rejected the Tory Party which he led, the Party which they identified with the dreary years of national decline, and of hardship and humiliation for millions of ordinary people. Labour had played a major part in the success of the wartime Coalition Government. In "Let us face the future", the Party sought a mandate for strong, positive policies for rebuilding Britain on firmer and healthier foundations. The voters gave the mandate, more than eleven and a half million of them, approximately two million more than the total Tory vote. There were 393 Labour MPs, and 20 who would normally support the Party (ILP etc.).

USDAW, which contributed £5,000 to Labour's Election Fund, went into battle with four sitting Members and entered the new Parliament with seven MPs. Those who already held seats and were again returned were E. Walkden (Doncaster), W. A. Burke (Burnley), R. J. Davies (Westhoughton) and Ellen Wilkinson (Jarrow). The three new MPs were A. Robens (Wansbeck), H. Boardman (Leigh) and T. Scollan (Western Renfrew). In the first Attlee Government Ellen Wilkinson was Minister of Education with a seat in the Cabinet, W. A. Burke

was Assistant Postmaster General, A. Robens became Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of War Transport (Alfred Barnes) and E. Walkden who had been PPS to the Minister of National Insurance in the Coalition Government, was appointed to a similar position with the Minister of Food (Sir Ben Smith). H. Boardman also became PPS to the Minister of Labour (George Isaacs).

Eleven members not on the Union's Parliamentary Panel were elected as Labour or Labour-Co-op candidates. They were A. V. Alexander (Hillsborough, Sheffield; Labour-Co-op), J. Baird (Wolverhampton, East), H. W. Bowden (Leicester, South), Mrs. E. M. Braddock (Liverpool, Exchange), P. Daines (E. Ham North; Labour-Co-op), N. Dodds (Dartford; Labour Co-op), E. Grierson (Carlisle), W. Hannan (Glasgow, Maryhill), P. L. E. Shurmer (Sparkbrook, Birmingham), T. C. Skeffington-Lodge (Bedford), L. Tolley (Kidderminster).

It had been a long war, the first (and one can only pray, the last) ever fought on a world-wide scale. When it began, two of the five Continents, Africa and Asia, were still largely under Colonial rule. The British Trades Union and Labour Movements were still weakened by their defeat in the thirties. NUDAW was still predominantly a Union of Co-operative employees, the second Industrial revolution was just beginning. All this had changed. Africa and Asia were on the march to freedom and the right to make or mar their own future. The Labour Party was established in Government. The Trades Union Movement was to assume a power not only in industry but in the State that it had never known before. USDAW had emerged as a large and growing general Union. The Co-operatives, after some post-war years of decline, began a new period of advance. And over it all was to lie the gigantic question mark with which nuclear power has faced mankind.



# 18 GOODBYE TO NUDAW, WELCOME USDAW

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AT the end of both World Wars the Union increased in size and scope through amalgamation. The 1921 merger with the Liverpool based Warehousemen's Union not only more than doubled the membership of the old AUCE but opened up a wide field of recruitment among general workers. Twenty-five years later, in 1946, two more amalgamations again brought increased membership and widened the scope for recruitment. The principal merger was with the National Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks, and the other with the Journeymen Butchers' Federation of Great Britain.

For NUDAW's Co-operative members the link with the Shop Assistants' was an emotional as well as an organisational event. For more than fifty years the two Unions had lived uneasily together, frequently competing for membership in the Co-operatives, sometimes at daggers drawn, sometimes in guarded alliance, inevitably duplicating machinery and costs in seeking to serve the same body of workers. Discussion on amalgamation had begun as far back as 1904. The subject had rarely been absent from Executive or ADM agenda of one or both Unions in the intervening years and we have already seen several false starts along the road. Now the goal was in sight. By 1946 NUDAW had much the greater number of Co-operative members and was the dominant influence in the retail societies and the Wholesales. The Shop Assistants were stronger in private distributive trades and in particular had a wide range of agreements with multiple firms. But the entire membership of both Unions was still only a small part of the total number of distributive workers.

The idea of amalgamation simmered quietly on during the early part of the war but came to the boil in 1944. In a statement on post-war policy to the annual meeting of that year the NUDAW Executive gave a high priority to obviating inter-Union competition by seeking amalgamation with "certain

organisations". This was approved by the meeting. Effectively, it meant the Shop Assistants', although, hopefully, other Unions would be included. At the end of the year the Executives of NUDAW and the Shop Assistants' were well on the way to agreement. By November the terms had been settled and at its meeting of 16/17 December NUDAW's Executive decided to recommend them to the ADM, and circulate to branches for preliminary discussion. Meantime, conversations had been taking place with the Butchers' Federation, but for convenience we will complete the NUDAW - Shop Assistants' amalgamation before coming to the second merger.

The terms agreed between the two Executives were not radically different from those that had been unsuccessful in 1931 and 1937. The title was to be "Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers", thus including something of the original title of both organisations. In scope, the new Union was to begin with the existing membership of its two constituents, with its future development to be "... in the organisation of workers employed in the wholesale and/or retail distributive operations and in the catering trades, administrative, clerical, supervisory and general commercial employees, and all such productive and manipulative workers who are employed in separate establishments or in premises ancillary to distributive departments as may be determined from time to time, with proper machinery set up to serve adequately the various occupational needs as well as the general interests of the members".

The central political funds of the two Unions were to be merged, and all other central funds were to go into a single general fund. For contributions and benefits the scales operative in NUDAW were to continue for the members of that Union "... and for all new members recruited in the Amalgamated Union". Shop Assistants' members were to have two options (a) to continue on contributions and benefits applicable at the time of the amalgamation; or (b) they could transfer to one of the scales applicable in the Amalgamated Union (i.e. the NUDAW scales).

The first — provisional — Executive Council was to consist of the existing Executive Councils of the two Unions at the time of the merger. For NUDAW this comprised twelve territorial members and the President, all with voting rights, plus the

General Secretary and A. W. Burrows, non-voting members. The Shop Assistants' had thirteen voting members and G. Maurice Hann (General Secretary) as a non-voting member. The President of NUDAW was to be President of the Amalgamated Union during the transitional period.

The Provisional Executive was to hold office for two years, provision being made for filling vacancies, and before the expiration of this transitional period arrangements were to be made "... for the amalgamated membership to decide the future composition and method of election of the Executive Council".

J. Hallsworth was to be the General Secretary with G. M. Hann and A. W. Burrows as Assistant General Secretaries, subject "... only to the direction of the General Secretary". There was provision to make full use of the specialised private trade and multiple shops experience of the Shop Assistants' Union. In these fields of distribution, Union activity would continue to be superintended from Dilke House, London — the headquarters of the Shop Assistants' — by G. M. Hann. The central office of the new Union was, however, to be at "Oakley", Manchester. The permanent staffs of both Unions were to be taken over at wages and other terms of service "not less favourable than those obtaining at the date of decision to amalgamate".

Both Unions had detailed arrangements for territorial and vocational contact with members and it was provided that existing arrangements for conferences, divisional councils and federations of branches prevailing in either or both should be adapted to serve for the Amalgamated Union. *New Dawn* and the *Distributive Trades Journal* of the Shop Assistants' were to continue "until such time as the Amalgamated Union has decided what shall be the future Journal/s needed therefore". Similarly, existing educational facilities would be continued until the new Union had decided upon a comprehensive scheme.

One benefit from the long delay over amalgamation had been that most of the differences between the two Unions had been identified, thrashed out over the years and acceptable compromises envisaged. The scheme of merger that has been summarised did not attempt too quickly or too sharply to alter established

practices in either Union. Time was given for the two Executives to get to know each other and establish a corporate identity, the subscription and benefit scales familiar to existing members of the Shop Assistants' were undisturbed for those who wanted it that way, decisions on such matters as Journals and education were left for later discussion when the new Union had settled down. Above all, the titanic struggle of the war had prepared the minds of men and women for change and, among distributive workers, for an end to old rivalries that indirectly helped to perpetuate the weakness of Trades Unionism in their field of employment.

This new mood was reflected in the ADM of 1945, held at Blackpool on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th May, by which date the proposals had already been adopted by the Shop Assistants' conference. The NUDAW meeting voted on a resolution, moved by J. Hallsworth, to adopt the proposed basis of amalgamation, submit it to a ballot of members as soon as practicable, and if that secured the necessary majorities, hold a joint special delegate meeting with the Shop Assistants to adopt rules and fix a date of operation. There were only three speakers from the floor, none opposing the proposals, which, on a show of hands, were carried by 446 votes to 8. But in moving the resolution Hallsworth mentioned several special problems arising from the war (which at the date of the ADM was expected to continue for an indefinite period against Japan once it was ended in Europe). NUDAW still had approximately 80,000 members in the Forces and the Shop Assistants' about 30,000 scattered in almost every corner of the world and on the high seas. To conform to the law, at least 50 per cent of the members must vote and the number in favour must exceed those against by 20 per cent. The first percentage would be no easy task when it was difficult or impossible to reach many members. Therefore, said Hallsworth, the Executive would not rush the ballot.

In the event, both wars were over before the two Unions balloted their members in 1946. Both, however, had sought to obtain the greatest possible number of addresses of members in the Forces or Civil Defence. NUDAW already had this information for members receiving regular copies of *New Dawn*

from Central Office. Branches were urged to send all the Forces addresses they could obtain to Central Office and to keep up to date with alterations.

An article in *New Dawn* of 3rd November, 1945, announced that ballot papers and explanatory circulars would be despatched to branches on 1st March, 1946, to be distributed to each member. Branch committees, particularly those with large memberships, were directed to plan team work distribution to ensure that all members knew the case for amalgamation. Forces members whose addresses were available would be covered direct from Central Office, the ballot cards to be returned by a date approximately two months later than that stipulated for the return of the civilian ballots. As a slight compensation for the work involved in distributing and handling this mass of paper there was to be an allowance to branches of 1d for each ballot paper returned. It was suggested that branch committees should allocate the allowance to shop stewards or other branch officials in proportion to services rendered in thus oiling the wheels of the ballot machinery. Branch meetings should also be called to discuss the amalgamation proposals prior to the ballot.

Altogether, more than 208,000 ballots were sent out in bulk by NUDAW, and 14,000 posted to members in the Forces or on National Service. Similar strenuous efforts to secure a large and favourable vote were taking place in the Shop Assistants' Union. Polling in NUDAW branches began after 1st March, 1946, and the last day for the return of ballot papers to Central Office was fixed as Friday, 12th April, or 21st June for the Forces vote.

And now — the stage was set. How would the cast perform? Given the two Unions' long history of "amalgamation — almost but not quite" there must have been some nail-biting at "Oakley" and Dilke House as the ballot papers began to come in, either in the slim envelope of a small branch or the bump of a parcel from one of the great city Co-ops. But all was well. Both Unions satisfied the two voting provisions of the Act, with comfortable margins in the case of the 50 per cent required to vote, and overwhelmingly in the case of the majorities in favour of amalgamation.

The actual figures were:

**NUDAW**

Ballot cards issued	—	222,864
For amalgamation	—	133,176
Against amalgamation	—	6,915
Majority in favour	—	126,261

**NAUSAW & C**

Ballot cards issued	—	106,282
For amalgamation	—	69,660
Against amalgamation	—	2,516
Majority in favour	—	67,144

Of NUDAW's Forces membership 43,603 either could not be contacted or did not vote.

The next step was the joint delegate meeting of the two Unions, held at Blackpool on Sunday, 10th November, 1946, to clothe the infant USDAW in provisional rules in readiness for its official launch into the world on 1st January, 1947. Complete revision of rules was to come later. There was one note of sadness at the November meeting. As we have seen, J. Jagger, for long an advocate of unity, would have been in the presidential chair but for the accident in which he lost his life. Another well known figure missing from the meeting was G. M. Hann, who had retired from the General Secretaryship of the Shop Assistants' to become a member of the Industrial Court. P. Cottrell, President-Designate of the new Union, ably steered the meeting through a somewhat intricate agenda.

All went well at the joint meeting and on 1st January, 1947. The **Officers** and provisional **Joint Executive Council** of the new Union were: President, P. Cottrell; General Secretary, Sir Joseph Hallsworth (who had been knighted in 1946); Assistant General Secretaries, A. W. Burrows and J. D. Hiscock (who took the place of G. M. Hann. Aged 42 at the time of his appointment, Joe Hiscock, as he was best known, had already been an official of the Shop Assistants' Union for 25 years.); Chief Organising Officer, G. Beardsworth; Chief Administrative Officer, R. A. Campbell. **Executive Council**, From former Shop Assistants' Union: J. Carruthers (Clydebank), B. C. Davies (Bridgend), H. Gunson (London CWS), W. Harvey (Reading), F. Jackson (Harrogate), D. McGibbon (Springburn, Glasgow), H. C. McGinty (Manchester Optical), W. Marsh (Salisbury),

S. Mills (Birmingham), H. Moore (Glasgow East), Miss M. Scott (Newcastle), Miss C. Smith (Leith), H. M. Tribe (West London Co-operative). From former NUDAW: J. Cunnick (Manchester Equitable), W. S. Jones (Birkenhead Co-operative), W. H. Marshall (Irlam CWS), R. T. Milloy (Kilmarnock), F. J. Newman (Bristol Retail), R. B. Seabrook (Chelmsford), W. H. Stacey (Birmingham Co-operative), S. F. Thrower (Woolwich Mutuality), J. White (Throckley, Northumberland), F. Williams (Stockport Co-operative), I. Williams (Aberdare), H. Worfolk (York).

The definitive rules were not adopted until 1948, the provisional period being used to unify administrative and other procedures of the two former Unions and to prepare a rule book based on the terms of the amalgamation agreement and other necessary provisions. One contentious feature of the proposals considered at a special rule-making delegate meeting on May 9th and 10th, 1948, typified the strong democratic tradition of NUDAW, and is worth recording in some detail. The proposal was that branches with fewer than 250 members should be grouped for the purpose of representation at the ADM. In moving, A. W. Burrows, the Acting General Secretary, acknowledged that this was a complete break with the former NUDAW practice of direct representation, although the Shop Assistants' combined direct and indirect representation, and for them the change would not be so marked. Even before the amalgamation, he argued, NUDAW's annual meeting, with 1,148 delegates and Divisional Councillors in 1947, was too big to be an effective deliberative assembly — and in the new Union there were almost twice as many branches (2,144).

But the delegates were not convinced. An amendment from Walsall branch proposed that each branch should have one delegate up to 500 members, with additional numbers for those with a larger membership. The proposer — James, could see no reason why the Union should be afraid of numbers when there were even larger attendances at the Labour Party Conference, the Trade Union Congress and the conferences of some other Unions. Small branches were often the liveliest. Another speaker enquired why it should be assumed that "... at 800 you are an intelligent lot, at 801 you are a mob". A Liverpool Butchers' delegate from a branch with under 200 members said

they could have some special trade problem which they wished to bring to the ADM, but under the proposed rule they might have to ask a hairdresser or a grocer to put the butchers' point of view. It was also argued that there was no reason why small branches should not voluntarily co-operate in selecting a delegate (this provision is in present rules of the Union). Executive Councillor McGibbon sought to avert defeat by pointing out that of 360 branches with from eleven to thirty members, 344 were not represented. But the meeting would not have it. The proposal was defeated on a show of hands and the amendment carried. It is still the rule of the Union. Probably the right decision was made. Grass roots democracy is not perfect but it does embody one essential freedom — the right to be heard if you so desire, however small your voice may be.

The new rules reduced the Executive Council from twenty-four plus President and General Secretary under the provisional arrangement to eighteen plus President and General Secretary. But by 1949 there were new occupants of the two latter offices. Percy Cottrell died on 2nd February, 1948. R. T. Milloy, a Union member since 1913 and Executive Councillor since 1930, was appointed acting President but at the ensuing election, W. (Walter) E. Padley was elected by the former NUDAW membership (as new rules were not yet operative), later confirmed by the entire membership of USDAW.

To complete the list of changes at the top, Sir Joseph Halls-worth resigned in May, 1947, to become a member of the National Coal Board. It would be a painful decision for him to make, for we have seen how intimately his life had been bound up with the Union. But he was also a convinced believer in social ownership and with USDAW now well established as the major distributive Union he no doubt felt that he must work for the success of the principle in which he so strongly believed. A. W. Burrows was appointed as Acting General Secretary. He retired in the Autumn of 1949, handing over the Acting Secretaryship to J. A. (Alan) Birch, who was subsequently confirmed in the position by vote of the members. A former active member of the Warrington branch and a Liverpool Divisional Councillor, Alan Birch, as he was known in the Union, became a Union Area Organiser and at the time of his election had been a National Organiser since 1943.



Percy Cottrell was the third President to die in office. He had held the position for only six years but had been a Union member since 1899. His working life from the age of ten had been spent with the small Delph Co-operative Society, perched on the Pennine Moors between Lancashire and Yorkshire. He had been secretary of the Society since 1923. The new President was well known in the Union as a skilled debater, a dedicated Socialist (for many years in the ILP) and an active Union member who had served for ten years on the Southern and Eastern Divisional Council. For two years he was at Ruskin College, Oxford, on a TUC scholarship, gaining the University Diploma in Economics and Political Science.

The amalgamation was "the end of the beginning" for Trades Unionism among distributive workers. And the story reaches its final chapter with the election of the first definitive Executive Council of USDAW in 1949. The Council included, of course, the two newly elected officers mentioned earlier. The other members were (with Divisions in brackets — note that some larger Divisions had two representatives):— F. Williams (Cheshire and North Wales); W. S. Jones (Liverpool); G. B. Hunter, R. Hanes (London); W. H. J. Marshall, J. Cunnick (Manchester); W. H. Stacey, F. H. M. Nichols (Midlands); J. White (Northern); A. Sutherland (North Scotland); D. McGibbon (South Scotland); W. L. Peck (Southern and Eastern); I. Williams (South Wales and Mon.); W. A. Parfitt (South Western); E. Rollinson, Edna Falkingham (Yorkshire).

So ended the long, often weary, road to amalgamation of the two pioneer Unions of shop workers. There were still alive founders of the Manchester District Co-operative Employees' Association of 1891 and no doubt of the men who founded the Shop Assistants' Union in the same year. Near the end of their days, they could feel satisfaction that from microscopic beginnings they had helped to build the largest Trade Union of distributive and allied workers in the Western World.

We come now to the merger with the Butchers' Federation. It is not to be belittled because it was smaller in size than the principal amalgamation, for it brought into a single Union specialist workers in one of the most important distributive trades. In this case, however, a simpler procedure was followed. The method was a transfer of engagements, which did not call

for the fixed voting percentages required in an amalgamation, simple majorities of those present and voting at the appropriate meetings being sufficient. The 1945 annual meeting of NUDAW unanimously adopted a resolution for a scheme of fusion "... as constituting the instrument of transfer required under the Societies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1940". But when the Federation delegates met at a special delegate meeting there was a hitch which threatened the merger.

It was mainly over the future organisation of branches. The scheme provided that, according to local circumstances, branches of the Federation would either continue a separate existence, merge with branches of NUDAW consisting solely of meat trade workers or become part of composite branches along with other classes of distributive workers. Probably through fears that this would destroy the craft basis of their trade, Federation delegates rejected the scheme. Assurances were given by NUDAW that there would be no compulsion; any merger of branches would be through persuasion. With this safeguard a second special meeting adopted the scheme, which was further endorsed by the vote of branch meetings.

On contributions and benefits the terms were similar to those agreed with the Shop Assistants' Union — existing members of the Federation to continue on present scales if they wished, with the option of transfer to NUDAW scales, all new members to join on the NUDAW scales. A National Committee for the meat trades membership of the Union was to be set up to deal with trade matters and advise the Executive Council. Organisers of the Federation would continue as such as part of USDAW's staff. The merger with the Butcher's Federation was followed by two other meat trade organisations joining USDAW in 1947 — Manchester Abattoir Workers' Association and the Glasgow Slaughtermen's Association.

With all the complications safely negotiated, the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks and the Journeymen Butchers' Federation of Great Britain — let us enjoy the full resonance of those names for the last time — passed into history. As a turning point, their merger ranks with, and was a continuation of, the decisions of 1915 and 1917 which, as we saw earlier, converted the

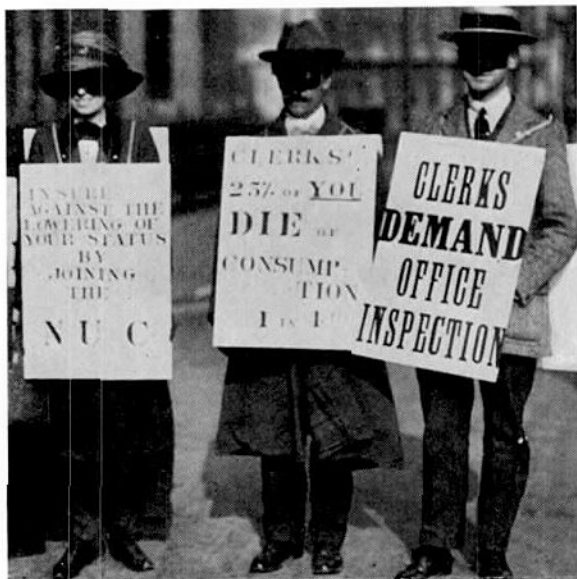
Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees of those years from a body mainly concerned with Co-operative shop workers into a general Union open to all workers in distribution and associated trades. That decision could never be fully implemented while the two main distributive Unions weakened each other by competition. January 1st, 1947, was the day of a "new dawn" of opportunity to mobilise the still scattered and exploited army of distributive and allied workers.

LIFE IN THE SHOP WHEN VICTORIA REIGNED



A DEPARTMENT STORE OF 1891 IN LONDON'S  
WEST END

## REVOLT BEGINS IN SHOPS AND OFFICES



The masks were not a theatrical stunt; these clerks of 1913 could have been sacked for parading.

Sandwich-board protest against living-in. Third on right is PC Hoffman, Shop Assistants' Union pioneer.



MANCHESTER AND BOLTON UNITE TO FORM AUCE

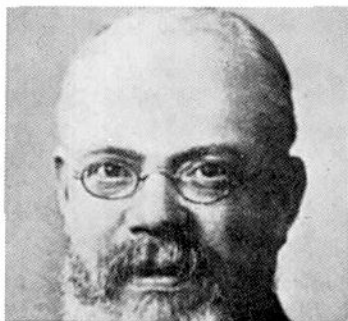


The joint committee of the Manchester District Co-operative Employees' Association and the Bolton Co-operative Employees' Trade Union, which formed AUCE in 1895. In centre, wearing the top-hat of his trade (he was manager of the Working Hatters' Co-operative Association) is J. Dyson, first President of AUCE, with A. Hewitt, first Secretary, on his right.

PLATE III

PLATE IV

FIRST GENERAL SECRETARIES, AUCE AND NUDAW



A. HEWITT  
March, 1891 to April, 1916  
Full-time from Feb., 1899



SIR JOSEPH HALLSWORTH  
April, 1916 to Jan., 1921; Joint G. S. NUDAW  
Jan., 1921 to Dec., 1923; Industrial G. S. Dec.,  
1923 to Nov., 1942; G. S. Nov., 1942 to Dec., 1949

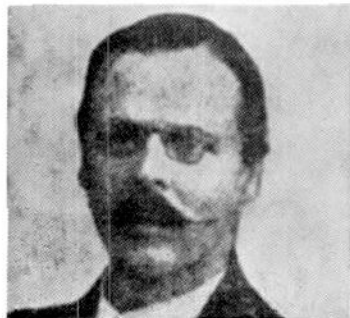
\*FOUR PRESIDENTS



W. A. ROBINSON  
Joint G. S. NUDAW Jan., 1921 to  
Dec., 1923; Political G. S. Dec., 1923  
to retirement from staff Nov., 1942



T. HOWE  
June, 1897 to Feb., 1915 *Died in office*  
\*J. DYSON, March, 1891 to June, 1897  
is on Plate III.



R. B. PADLEY  
Aug., 1915 to April, 1919



J. JAGGER  
April, 1919 to July, 1942 *Died in road accident*

## STRIKES IN THE EARLY DAYS



*Above:* A strike of AUCE members at Lincoln Co-op in 1913 ended after 6 weeks on terms satisfactory to the Union.

*Right:* Employees of Beavans, at Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne drapery firm, join in a strike organised by the Shop Assistants' Union.





MEN GO TO WAR IN 1914...



... WOMEN TAKE OVER IN THE SHOPS



## UNION BADGES, PAST AND PRESENT



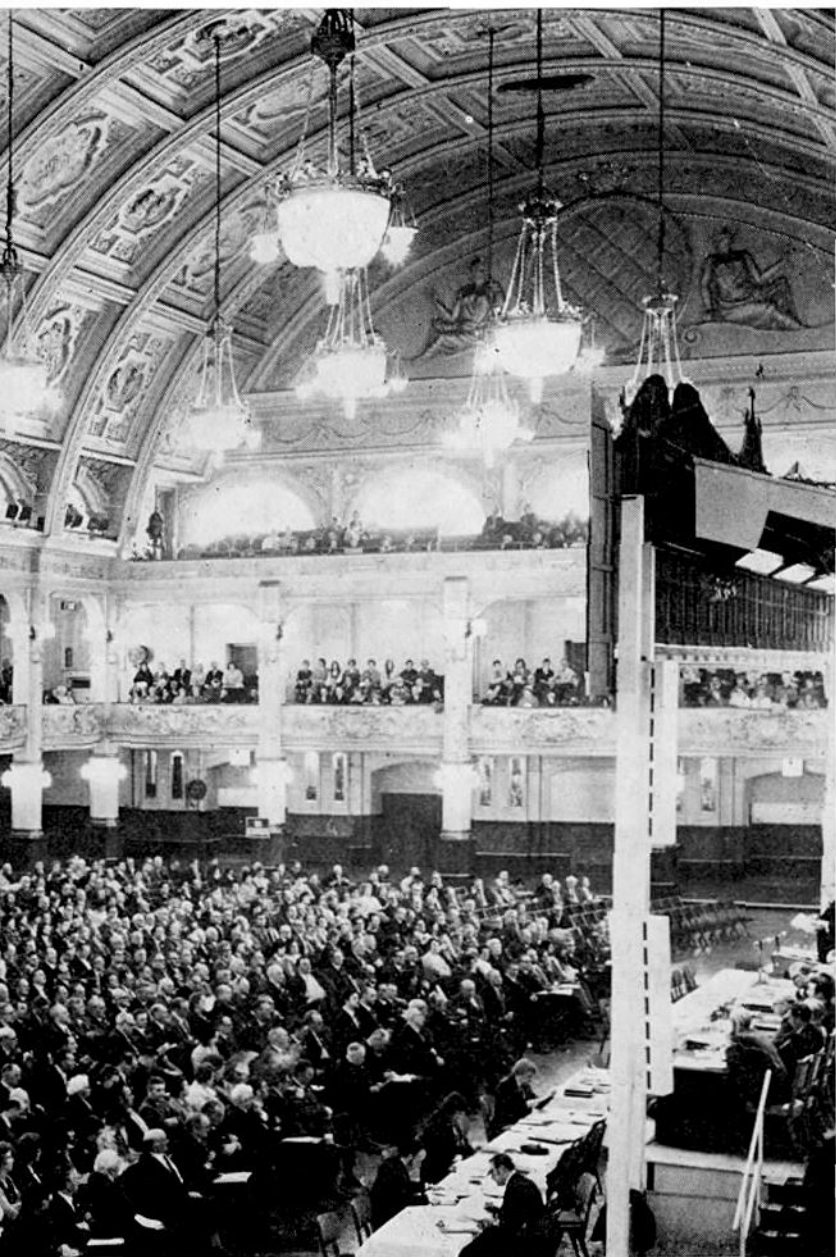
Badges of the National Union of Distributive & Allied Workers, the Shop Assistants' Union and USDAW. Some are in brilliant colours, a tribute to the craftsmen who designed and made them, and it is not possible to do justice to them in black and white. They were commonly worn by Union members in times past but badges are less frequently seen today.

AN USDAW ANNUAL DELEGATE MEETING IN  
ONE OF THE TOWNS MOST

PLATE VIII/IX



N IN THE EMPRESS BALLROOM, BLACKPOOL,  
NTLY VISITED BY THE ADM



**“OAKLEY”, FALLOWFIELD, MANCHESTER, USDAW’S CENTRAL OFFICE**



PLATE X

The original building is on the left, with most of successive additions to the right.

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1939-1945



Ration books meant that there was a fair distribution of basic foods but were frequently a headache for the housewife and USDAW's members in the shops.

Clement Attlee, soon to be Prime Minister, acclaims Labour's victory at the General Election of 1945.



THREE GENERAL SECRETARIES, 1949 TO 1979\*



SIR ALAN BIRCH  
Dec., 1949 to Dec., 1961  
*Died in office*

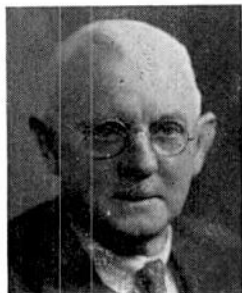


LORD ALLEN  
May, 1962 to July, 1979



W. H. P. WHATLEY  
July, 1979, to date

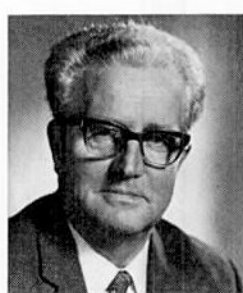
SIX PRESIDENTS, 1944 TO 1979\*



P. COTTRELL  
May, 1944 to Feb., 1948  
*Died in office*



W. E. PADLEY  
June, 1948 to Oct., 1964



R. B. SEABROOK  
Feb., 1965 to April, 1965  
*Re-elected May, 1967 to May, 1973*



R. HANES  
April, 1965 to May, 1967



J. D. HUGHES  
May, 1973 to April, 1977



S. TIERNEY  
April, 1977 to date

\*Both these positions were at times held by an acting member until elections took place. Only those directly elected are given here.

## THE UNION'S SUMMER SCHOOLS



*Above:* Beatrice Webb House, Holmbury St. Mary, where the first school of each year is held.  
*Below:* Students at the second series advanced school, held each year at Ruskin College, Oxford.





## THE UNION IN THE TUC

USDAW is the sixth largest Union affiliated to the TUC. It is also a member of the Scottish TUC, Wales TUC and the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions. Two General Secretaries, Sir Joseph Hallsworth and Lord Allen, were presidents of the British Congress.

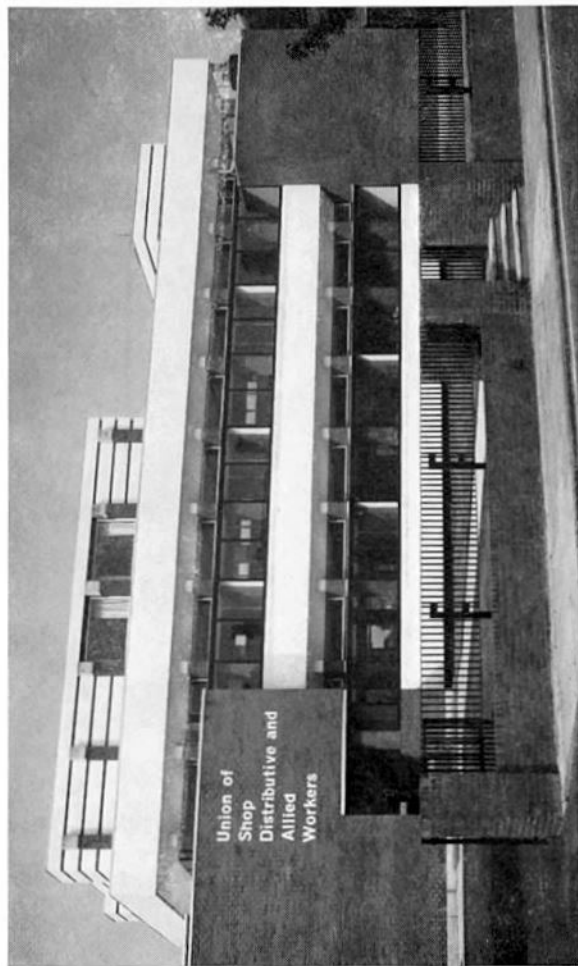
### USDAW delegates vote at Congress...



### ...and at the TUC Women's Conference

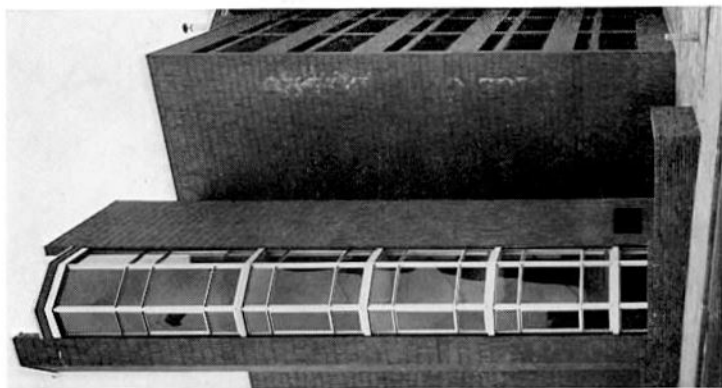


## DIVISIONAL OFFICES AND OTHER PROPERTIES



Only two can be illustrated — the Liverpool offices at Edge Lane and a section of Concord House, Leeds, a joint project with the General and Municipal Workers' Union.

PLATE XV



# THE VOICE OF THE UNION IN PRINT

SEPTEMBER

1978



Time-off for Wookies stewards PAGE 4

Watch on Visual Display Units PAGE 3

Focus on human rights in USSR PAGE 6

President calls for political response PAGE 8

## Boots drive

### JOIN US APPEAL TO NON-UNIONISTS IN HIGH STREET

SEPTEMBER sees the launching of another national membership campaign. Once again the Union is using modern advertising techniques to get its message across to non-unionists in the High Street.

The first company whose employees are receiving a direct invitation to join the Union is Boots Retail. And a special conference has just been held in Manchester where all Deputy Divisional Officers and Area Organisers concerned with the exercise have been briefed by senior officials.

Our picture shows (right to left): National Officer Mr. Sid Williams, Chief Organising Officer Mr. Bill Whalley, General Secretary Lord Allen, P.P. O. Mr. Pat Jones and Mr. Eddie Waddington (Assistant to C.G.O.) at the conference.

White Boots is the simple: "Join your Union, USDAW — for September, not 400,000 already have." Meanwhile at Boots, facilities have been agreed with Management for siting meetings at major stores. Organising material is being distributed to the Union, including the special DAWW supplement for Boots in conjunction with the issue of the paper.

### Listen in to USDAW on Radio Trent

THE first area to be visited by the DAWW mobile unit is the Trent Valley. The first stop will be at Mansfield. The mobile unit will then visit other areas in the Trent Valley including Nottingham and Derby.

### Never mind £44.50 — £55 is not too much— General Secretary tells bosses

## Union sticks to £55 not 5%

THIS ADVERT HAS APPEARED IN THE PRESS ON YOUR BEHALF



## USDAW NOW campaigning for £55 for 35 hrs

USDAW is sticking to its policy of submitting pay claims for a £55 basic minimum rate for adult workers and for a reduction of the working week to 35 hours despite the Government's White Paper outlining its intention of a fourth stage of Government Pay Guidelines.

Assistant General Secretary Mr. John Phillips made this clear in a press statement when he added: a policy of a 5 per cent ceiling will make a solution to the pressing problem of automation which have arisen as a result of earlier stages much more difficult.

Government pay guidelines do not, however, limit the lower paid to 5 per cent but say it can be higher in better working wage up to a substantive level of £44.50 — and that is where the leaders of the retail employers (the Retail Consortium) think the Government is not being tough enough.

The Union reacted immediately to the view that £44.50 was "too much" for some shopworkers.

General Secretary Lord Allen told the press: "£55 a week, never mind £44.50, is not too much for Britain's shopworkers. Of course there may be some small price rise, but that is what we shall all have to pay to end this appalling exploitation of so many workers in shops and catering."

"I am shocked that these comments should have come from the Retail Consortium at a time when the retail trade is enjoying the biggest consumer boom ever."

"I repeat that shopworkers are entitled to fair shares. For too long we have seen them have been forced to work for a pittance."

"USDAW's aim is for £55 a week for adult staff — and this is still less than two thirds of average earnings."

USDAW—the Union for retail, wholesale and process workers, is seeking a £55 minimum basic wage and a 35 hour week for all its 450,000 members. That's a reasonable demand for the men and women who serve the shopping public. And more are joining us and backing our campaign every day.

USDAW—Union of Shop, Distributive & Allied Workers  
Oakley 188 Winslow Road Fallowfield Manchester M14 6LJ

Dawn, the present colour printed tabloid newspaper of the Union, is its fifth journal since the establishment of the Manchester District Co-operative Employees' Association. Other were *Gleanings for Members*, *The Co-operative Employee*, *AUCE Journal* and *New Dawn*. Shop Assistants' Union publications, eventually merged in *New Dawn* were *The Shop Assistant* and *The Distributive Trades Journal*.

## 19 THE FIRST PEACETIME NATIONAL AGREEMENT:

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THROUGHOUT this history we have followed NUDAW's efforts to improve wages and conditions in the Co-operative Movement and also to establish some degree of uniformity. Twelve chapters ago we saw the first cautious probings of the Manchester District Co-operative Employees' Association to find out what was actually being paid in 1892. In the following years the Union won many victories with wage rates and conditions but made little headway towards uniformity. Until 1946. On 2 October of that year the Joint Trade Union Negotiating Committee for the Retail Co-operative Movement and the National Wages Board of the Co-operative Union Ltd. signed their first ever peacetime national agreement on basic rates. NUDAW — only two months away from becoming USDAW — had been the principal member of the Trade Union Committee, and A. W. Burrows, the Union's Organising Secretary, was the main architect of the agreement and also the spokesman for NUDAW and the other Unions involved throughout just under a year of negotiations.

Two weeks after the signature, on the pay day of the week beginning 14th October, the wages packets of Co-operative shop workers, branch managers and manageresses, clerical, dairy and transport workers were heavier. Some very much heavier, for one purpose of this historic agreement was to smooth out local anomalies, many entrenched in custom and practice, some imposed regionally during the depression years.

And it all happened almost by chance! We saw in Chapter 16 that it was the binding decision of a Conciliation Board chairman in 1945 that led the Union's Executive Council almost reluctantly to begin discussions on a national agreement, and the best that could be said of the 1945 ADM was that it tepidly accepted the principle by defeating a proposition to resume Divisional negotiations after the war.

War weariness may have had something to do with this

apparent reluctance to support a reform which the Union had sought in the past. Certainly, to turn a decision in principle into detailed agreements would be one of the most complex tasks that any Trade Union had faced. There were about 300 (some reports said 200) separate agreements with the retail Co-operative Movement which had to be reshaped into a uniform pattern. There were 1,037 retail societies in 1946, varying in size from a few hundred members to tens of thousands, each of them an independent entity. All would have to agree before the new national scales could operate. A little hesitation in plunging into that maelstrom could be understood, and when the series of national agreements surfaced in August, 1946, the contents gave some measure of the concentrated work by Union and Co-operative negotiators that had gone into their composition.

In the draft proposals there were around 3,000 variables according to job specification, age or (in the case of branch managers and manageresses), sales; Many, of course, were small age/wage steps or variations in skill or responsibility, such as an ascending scale for transport workers according to carrying capacity of vehicle. But all would be carefully scrutinised and frequently argued over from the two sides of the negotiating table. This enormously detailed settlement had been reached through a Joint Committee of the Unions and the Co-operative National Wages Council (later to become the National Wages Board) and in particular through a joint sub-committee of twenty. Of the ten representing the Unions, NUDAW appointed four members, the Shop Assistants' two and other Unions four. This sub-committee conducted the actual negotiations with the Co-operative side, beginning its work (after some preliminary sparring over procedure) on 3rd September, 1945, and holding 26 two-day meetings before agreement was reached on 9th August, 1946.

The first progress report on the sub-committee's work was given at a joint conference of NUDAW's Executive and Divisional Councils in Manchester on 20th October, 1945. A. W. Burrows reported that after some resistance the Unions had accepted as inevitable that there should be grouping of societies and grading. It was envisaged that there would be four groups — Metropolitan, Provincial A, Provincial B and a

“temporary” group (eventually designated as Provisional). This group was for small societies where current wages went so far below a group scale that there could be financial difficulties if there was an immediate jump. The actual grouping of societies would be arranged through the Sectional Wages Boards of the Co-operative Union and the Divisional Officers of the Unions concerned. The Unions were pressing for a 40 hour week, but if one reads the conference report aright Burrows was not optimistic that it would be conceded (nor was it). There was also deadlock over equality of adult male and female rates. They were, however, optimistic that the two weeks holiday would be obtained. On actual wage rates, the Unions were concentrating on eliminating the low rates then prevailing in some Divisions.

So far so good. The negotiators continued to slog it out in many a “smokefilled room”. They must frequently have been dizzy in following the permutations of age, wage, group and even terminology (for instance, first assistants were called “second hands” in Scotland and “foremen” in the Northern Section). There was occasional light relief. A. W. Burrows tells the story of an argument over payment for weekend ostling duties (*there were still many horses in transport in the forties*). Five shillings for these duties was claimed. One of the Co-operative side quoted the case of an old pensioned horse, the last in the society, of which the ostler was very fond. So much so that he came in each weekend to tend it. “If you want 5/- for looking after that horse”, he said, “you might as well take the confounded animal.” But one by one obstacles were overcome and in the early part of 1946 the main agreement covering general distributive and ancillary workers had been worked out and NUDAW referred it to the democracy of the membership in a series of Divisional delegate conferences (details of the agreement are given in Appendix I).

It must be rare for Trade Union negotiators to produce an agreement that is satisfactory to all their constituents. NUDAW members ran true to form. There were complaints, very strong in London, that the proposed basic rates were too low. Ex-servicemen in particular seem to have maintained that the Co-operatives had lagged behind rising wage standards during the war, and were continuing to do so. Some members were

concerned that the war bonuses had not been consolidated into the basic rates. A. W. Burrows and G. Beardsworth (the Assistant Organising Secretary) met these points at all the Divisional conferences. It is probable, however, that many of the complaints reflected the feeling that even if you consider your negotiators have on the whole done a good job, there is no harm in prodding them to try and do better.

Nine of the eleven Divisional conferences were reported in *New Dawn* during March and April, 1946. London and Cheshire and North Wales rejected the proposals. London because of "... the inadequacy of the wage rates at the adult age for both men and women", the other Division presumably for the same reason (its conference was not directly reported, but the hostile decision was mentioned at the ADM). For the other Divisions the reported verdicts were:

Southern and Eastern, accepted by an "overwhelming majority".

South Wales and Monmouthshire, carried "with only one branch dissenting".

Liverpool, carried on a show of hands.

Manchester, carried 107-19.

Yorkshire, carried 106-1.

Northern, carried 126-43.

Scotland, carried 127-13.

For some reason no reports were published of the Midland and Western Divisional conferences. But the mandate was clear and it was basic to the whole concept of national negotiations. General distributive workers formed much the larger part of the Union's Co-operative membership, and had they rejected the proposals there would have been little hope for national scales for branch managers and manageresses, clerical, transport and milk workers. These were completed by the summer, and endorsed by a further joint conference of the Executive and Divisional Councils on 24th August for reference to the Divisions, London voting against. At similar conferences of the Shop Assistants' Union the proposed agreements were discussed and eventually ratified, with some dissentients.

All the agreements were built round the same framework — the grouping of societies into the four categories of Metropolitan, Provincial A, Provincial B and Provisional.

The main general distributive workers' agreement covered male and female shop assistants in all departments (except hairdressers and cafe workers); cash desk workers; leading assistants; first assistants in grocery and provision, butchery, green-grocery, fish and dry goods departments; ancillary workers such as head warehousemen, male warehousemen, packers, porters, cleaners, lift attendants and cellarmen; female packers, cleaners, lift attendants and warehouse workers; travelling shop workers.

The branch managers' and manageresses' agreement covered male and female grocery managers; male managers of butchery branches; tobacco manageresses of separate shops detached from grocery; bread and confectionery manageresses; male or female manageresses of all departments other than those mentioned and pharmacy; grocery and butchery travelling shop managers with responsibility for stock control, leakage and other factors. The clerical agreement covered male and female clerks, calculating machine operators, shorthand typists and section heads.

The transport agreement covered one-horse carters; four categories of drivers of mechanically and electrically propelled vehicles ranging from those with a carrying capacity of up to 15 cwt to those with a capacity between 3 and 5 tons; junior drivers and "all other workers"; adult and junior bakery rounds workers; coal workers. For adult milk workers, rates were prescribed for roundsmen, rotary roundsmen, head sterilisers and pasteurisers, foremen, and for assistant roundsmen, pasteurisers, sterilisers and "all other male workers". There were scales for adult and junior females other than roundswomen. Scales for adult transport workers, mainly or wholly employed on milk work (other than roundsmen) were similar to those in the transport agreement. Additional amounts were listed for night work.

All agreements specified that the rates did not include national war bonuses. All except that for clerks were for a working week of 44 hours. For the clerks it was 40 hours. The clerical agreement also went up to age 26, most others which prescribed an age/wage scale, to 23. In general, overtime was to be at time-and-a-half, with double time for Sundays or Statutory holidays. But the ostler and his horse were not forgotten. Weekend ostling was to be at the rate of 1/- per horse per visit, with a minimum



of 3/- per visit. For milk workers any overtime could range up to double time in certain specified circumstances.

All five agreements provided for up to twelve days annual holiday, according to length of service. The question of wages during sickness was deferred until after the enactment of the National Insurance Bill, and pending negotiations that would then take place the former agreements continued to operate.

It would require an impossible amount of space to give the actual wage rates in full detail. They were, as Burrows repeatedly insisted, not designed to give all-round increases (wage increases were still being negotiated as war bonuses) but to even-out anomalies, establish standards that members in many societies could never have won on the old basis of sectional or local negotiations, and provide that at least within each group members doing the same job received the same pay. As a guide to the new scales, the table in Appendix I gives the top male and female rates for shop assistants *inclusive* of War Bonus, and for grocery branch managers and manageresses the rates without bonus added.

The general distributive agreement had already been approved at the earlier series of conferences. The agreements for transport, milk, clerical workers and branch managers and manageresses now went through a similar rigorous examination at separate meetings in September for each occupational group. In many societies there were also preliminary discussions at branch meetings. The agreements were accepted in all except two Divisions. At long last a pattern of order and discipline had been carved out of chaos in one important field of the Union's activities.

It was not likely, however, that any agreement covering so much ground could continue for long without amendment, and in 1947 there was considerable turmoil on the wages scene, partly over the national agreement, partly over war bonuses. Although the two were linked they will, for convenience, be dealt with separately.

London was the centre of the strongest protest against the national scales. There were unofficial strikes and the strong feelings among the workers concerned persuaded the Metropolitan Wages Board to seek and obtain the permission of the Co-operative National Wages Council to negotiate an increase for the five Metropolitan societies (London, Royal Arsenal, South

Suburban, Enfield Highway, Grays). There was a similar situation at Bristol and it was soon known that a number of Group A societies were giving outside-scale increases under one guise or another. In these circumstances an attempt was made to negotiate a Super A Group, but after long argument no agreement could be reached on the criteria for such a group.

In May the Unions had claimed a tenth war bonus, designed in part to secure a minimum wage of £5 for the lowest paid workers (a broadly similar claim was simultaneously made for private trade workers through the four principal JICs for the retail trade). The Conciliation Board chairman awarded USDAW members approximately one-third of what had been claimed, and by the end of 1947 there was simmering discontent that *no progress on wages and conditions* was being made, either through the National Agreement or war bonuses. At this point the two began to coalesce.

In January, 1948, the joint Unions applied for consolidation of bonus into the basic national scales and for an advance to all employees of 7/6 weekly for those over 18, 5/- for those below that age (more or less the balance of what had been claimed in May). Again it was emphasised that one reason for the claim was to establish a basic minimum of £5. It was mid-summer, 1948, before the two sides had hammered out an agreement. Negotiations were complicated by the fact that the Co-operatives, in response to a direct appeal by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, were voluntarily operating a series of price cuts on basic foods, and there was some resentment that they were simultaneously being pressed by the Unions for a wage increase. But the Unions had a strong case *on grounds of the cost of living and comparability with other industries*. When agreement was reached consolidation had been effected and, in the words of the official statement "... the parties have endeavoured to approach the claim for a £5 minimum for the lowest paid workers".

For shop assistants, increases at various ages brought the consolidated rates at age 23 to:

		<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Metropolitan	—	113/-	85/6
Provincial "A"	—	105/6	81/-
„ "B"	—	102/6	79/-

Approximately similar increases were given to other groups — branch managers and manageresses, warehousemen, porters, packers, etc., clerical workers, transport workers, milk workers. The agreement also tidied up previous arrangements for paying wages during sickness without deduction of National Health Insurance benefits, a national scale of sick pay entitlement being substituted, based on length of service. The Provisional Group, which covered only a minute number of employees, was to be abolished after 1st January, 1949. Finally, it was agreed that superannuation payments and benefits which in most societies were based on the pre-war basic wage, would so continue unless there were agreed local arrangements for a different basis, actuarially approved.

Negotiations on grouping were a continuous process and by the end of 1949 more than 90 per cent of provincial Co-operative employees were on Group A rates.

From the first war bonus of 1939 it had taken almost ten years to establish a national wages pattern throughout the Co-operative Movement. Nothing has been said in this chapter about the Wholesale Societies, but in general they followed the lines of the retail agreements, both with war bonuses and now with consolidation. Wages negotiations were never likely to be easy, but both Union and Co-operative negotiators must have sighed with relief that at last the basic groundwork had been laid. However much they might disagree in the future, they had ensured that there should be a base for an approximate equality of rewards.