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The Fabianization of the British Empire: Postwar Colonial Summer Conferences and Community Development in Kenya and Uganda, 1948-1956

Joseph M. Snyder

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**The Fabianization of the British Empire: Postwar Colonial Summer Conferences and
Community Development in Kenya and Uganda, 1948-1956**

Joseph M. Snyder

**Dissertation Submitted to the
College of Arts and Sciences at West Virginia University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy
in
History**

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**Keywords: Fabians, Fabian Colonial Bureau, Colonial Development, Community
Development, Mass Education, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Uganda Protectorate
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ABSTRACT

The Fabianization of the British Empire: Postwar Colonial Summer Conferences and Community Development in Kenya and Uganda, 1948-1956

Joseph M. Snyder

This dissertation examines the influence of the Fabian Society on Britain's postwar colonial development regime between 1948 and 1956. This study demonstrates that a primary vehicle for the "Fabianization" of the British Empire was the Cambridge Summer Conference series, particularly the conference convened in 1948. Held on the "Encouragement of Initiative in African Society," the conference devised a policy framework of community development based on a model of mass education long-favored by Arthur Creech Jones, former chair of the Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB) and then Secretary of State for the Colonies.

While the findings of this study attest that Fabian influence ("Fabianization") during this period produced tangible development projects that concretely impacted social welfare in the colonies, the results suggest an ambiguity surrounding the relative success of "Fabianized" development. The findings indicate that "Fabianization," dependent upon the processes of negotiation which transpired between the African communities being "developed" and the agents responsible for change, and the ability of those agents to inspire and motivate the indigenous populations, was at best partial, even in ideal circumstances.

This study demonstrates that, despite Creech Jones' appointment to the Cabinet as Secretary of State for the Colonies, severe challenges remained for the realization of Fabian-favored designs. The most intransigent of these hindrances included the sterling crisis of 1947 and that posed by inertia and resistance in the territories, which emanated from both colonial officialdom as well as the indigenous populations.

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I would also like to thank Darren Treadwell, archivist at the Labour History Archive and Study Center, not only for pointing me in the direction of the J. S. Middleton Papers and making himself available to me long after I departed Manchester, but also for being an unparalleled raconteur whose many stories punctuated long hours of archival research with much-needed levity. Many thanks also to Barbara Sakarya of University College London's Institute of Education Library, whose spirit of willingness and eagerness to assist led me to a researcher's Valhalla, squirrelled away in the basement of the IOE.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACJ	Arthur Creech Jones Papers
ACEC	Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies
ACIQ	Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions
ACNETA	Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa
ACTA	Advisory Committee on Technical Assistance
AEC	Army Education Corps
BLUO	Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CAB	Cabinet
CDA	Colonial Development Act
CDC	Colonial Development Corporation
CDWA	Colonial Development and Welfare Act
CO	Colonial Office
CRAC	Colonial Research Advisory Committee
CRF	Colonial Research Fund
EAAEC	East African Army Education Corps
EAC	East Africa Command
ERP	European Recovery Plan
FCB	Fabian Colonial Bureau
FPL	Fabian Parliamentary League
FRD	Fabian Research Department
FS	Fabian Society
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IOE	Institute of Education, University College London
JSM	J. S. Middleton Papers
KAR	King's African Rifles
LegCo	Legislative Council
LHASC	Labour History Archive and Study Centre
LPA	Labour Party Archive
LRD	Labour Research Department
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
LSE	London School of Economics
NAC	National Administrative Council, Independent Labour Party
NEC	National Executive Committee, Labour Party
NFRB	New Fabian Research Bureau
NUL	Nairobi University Library
OFC	Overseas Food Corporation
PEW	Patrick E. W. Williams Papers
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SPR	Society for Psychical Research
TCA	Technical Cooperation Administration
TGA	Thomas G. Askwith Papers

TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCL	University College London
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
WEC	War Emergency Committee

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is concerned with the influence exercised by the Fabian Society (a dynamic referred to in this study as “Fabianization”) on Great Britain’s colonial development policy following the Second World War, and with the character and nature of that influence. It examines the evolution of Fabian perspectives on colonial policy beginning in the early twentieth century, when the Society was forced by circumstance to adopt a position on the empire, through the formulation and articulation of a Fabian vision of social-imperialism and trusteeship that rejected the dominant Chamberlainite doctrine of imperial trusteeship.¹ It then explores how this was related to contemporary Labour Party policy and how the Fabian vision came to fruition following the ascendance of the Fabian luminary Arthur Creech Jones as Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1947. The aim is to provide a more nuanced understanding of Fabian influence not only in the shaping of Britain’s colonial development policy, but most importantly in its practice.

I make the following claims in this dissertation: First, the role of the Fabians in forging postwar colonial development policy was neither straightforward nor predetermined. Despite the popular notion, as expressed by Nicholas Owen,² that they had an unprecedented opportunity to do so, it is quite clear that the Fabians’ ability to influence policy was limited. Most immediately, the exigencies of postwar economic retrenchment obliged by the sterling crisis of 1947 had the effect of rationalizing much colonial development in terms of offsetting looming fiscal emergency.³ As a result, the types of social development projects long-favored by the

¹ That is, the variant of imperial trusteeship formulated by Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1895-1903.

² Nicholas Owen, “Critics of Empire in Britain,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, ed. J. M. Brown and Wm. Roger Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³ The Second World War devastated Britain’s economy. In the period between 1938 and 1945, for instance, Britain’s external debt skyrocketed from £500 million to £3.355 billion while, during the

Fabians were marginalized as peripheral to more pressing development concerns. Moreover, constitutional restraints embedded within the structure of colonial administration itself circumscribed Creech Jones' already-narrow field of action. As the secretary himself acknowledged in 1950, he could not govern the territories by fiat; rather, he had to devise strategies that encouraged territorial participation. Forced into an unenviable position as negotiator-in-chief, Creech Jones' circumstances were made all the more intractable by the fact that many political appointees in the colonies were conservatives who, as David Goldsworthy has observed, had a stake in resisting his reformist agenda. Gradually, but inevitably, this resistance had a cumulative suppressive effect on many of the Fabians' designs.

My second claim is that, despite these constraints, the Fabians managed to exercise some positive influence on Britain's postwar colonial development enterprise, both in terms of policy formulation and practice. In keeping with Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton,⁴ I hold that evidence of this influence has been obscured by a historiographic tendency to emphasize the failure of such large-scale mechanized development projects as the East African Groundnuts and West African Poultry Schemes. Costly at a time when it could ill-be-afforded (and, therefore,

same period, the value of its reserves of gold and dollars was nearly halved, falling from £864 million in 1938 to about £453 million by October 1945. By the end of the war, Britain was nearly bankrupt. See: C. S. S. Newton, "The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan," *The Economic History Review* (New Series) 37, no. 3 (August 1984): 391-408; Rohland Schuknecht, *British Colonial Development Policy after the Second World War* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 193-283; Allister Hinds, *Britain's Sterling Colonial Policy and Decolonization, 1939-1958* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 37-68; Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (London: Routledge, 1996), 254-294; Billy Frank, "Labour's 'New Imperialist Attitude': State-Sponsored Colonial Development in Africa, 1940-51," in *The British Labour Movement and Imperialism*, eds. Billy Frank, Craig Horner and David Stewart (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 107-129; Alex Sutton, *The Political Economy of Imperial Relations: Britain, the Sterling Area, and Malaya, 1945-1960* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 55-93; Clive Whitehead, "The Impact of the Second World War on Education in Britain's Colonial Empire," in *Education and the Second World War: Studies in Schooling and Social Change* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 151-158.

⁴ Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton, "The Origin and Course of Fabian Colonialism in Africa," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4, no. 2 (June 1991).

high-profile) and initiated by a Labor regime whose Colonial Office (CO) was under the headship of a Fabian, the collapse of these projects fitted well with the contemporary conservative narrative that, *pace* Newman, worked toward the delegitimization of postwar state-planning, particularly considering then-nascent geopolitical and ideological reconfigurations between Russia and the West.

Third, to move beyond this obscurantist tendency and locate evidence of the substantive, tangible effects of Fabian-influenced colonial development initiatives following the war, I argue that it is first necessary to examine the work of the CO's postwar Summer Conference series on African Administration. In doing so, I borrow from and extend a premise of John Holford's study on postwar colonial education, in which he argues that the series was initiated by Creech Jones to "help win the colonial service" to his policies.⁵ Unlike Holford's survey, however, I take as my point of departure the conference of 1948, the focus of which was the Encouragement of Initiative in African Society. The decision to focus on the 1948 conference stems from the rhetorical and ideological genealogy of the community development policies formulated by the conference, which were derived from the prewar work of the CO's Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies (ACEC), the efforts of which culminated in the 1944 report *Mass Education in African Society*. The chief architect of the report was Creech Jones, who, by 1948, had garnered a reputation both at home and in the colonies as an ardent devotee of mass education. I therefore hold that, in terms of a springboard for "Fabianized" colonial development policy, the 1948 summer conference is best positioned for its realization.

⁵ John Holford, "Mass Education and Community Development in the British Colonies, 1940-1960: A Study in the Politics of Community Education," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 7, no 3 (1988), 167.

Linking colonial policy formulations and initiatives with Fabian influence leads to my fourth and final claim, wherein I argue that examining how the policies formulated at the 1948 summer conference were carried forward to practical effect in the colonies uncovers the depth and character of “Fabianization.” In doing so, I bring together the second and third claims made in this dissertation and extend them. For tracing mass education (framed alternatively as community development at the conference) through to its practical conclusion reveals that, as noted by C. L. Riley, Fabian influence on colonial development policy was “quietly effective.”⁶ To achieve this, I follow the efforts of two conference attendees who not only played vital roles in the deliberations at Cambridge, but subsequently devised strategies to implement the initiatives in the colonies themselves: P. E. W. Williams, Commissioner of Social Welfare in Kenya and chairman of the group responsible for defining community development at the 1948 Cambridge conference, and Andrew B. Cohen, conference chairman and later governor of Uganda Protectorate. The result is to complicate the preponderant image of large-scale development failure which dominates the historiography.

Dissertation Method

This study is explicitly interested in understanding the nature of Fabianized colonial development policy and practice. The primary method adopted is documentary research, particularly CO archival materials, those of the Labor Party, and those of the Fabian Society and its Colonial Bureau. Documentary research for this dissertation was carried out in the British National Archives, Kew; the Weston Library, Oxford University; the Fabian Society Archives, London School of Economics; the Labor Party Archive, People’s History Museum, Manchester,

⁶ Charlotte Lydia Riley, “Monstrous Predatory Vampires and Beneficent Fairy-Godmothers: British Post-War Colonial Development in Africa” (PhD diss., University College London, 2013), 30.

England; the Institute of Education, University College London; and the microfilm collection of the Kenya National Archives, Bird Library, Syracuse University, New York.

Consultation of these records provided the necessary perspective on the relationship between the Fabians, their policies, and policy-formulating machinery; the British Labor Party and its colonial policy initiatives; and the “official mind” of the British state and its colonial governments in Africa in the period immediately before, during, and after the Second World War. The range of primary documents collected from the archives and used in this dissertation includes: correspondences between members of the Fabian Society and various local, national, and colonial government bureaucrats, functionaries, and elected officials; government memoranda and interdepartmental correspondences; field reports from Community Development Officers and Social Welfare Workers; departmental annual reports; conference minutes; and other written materials. The range of secondary documents collected from the archives and used in this dissertation includes: published accounts in newspapers and periodicals; and other written materials.

Though these documentary research methods provide the necessary details on the relationship between the Fabians, the Labor Party, the CO, and colonial governments, and colonial policy formulation and implementation, it accounts only for the British perspective. The views shared in this material are oftentimes prejudicial, being framed by the paternalistic discourse typical of colonial powers even when propounding such antithetical notions as self-government and independence. An effort has been made to recover the African perspective on British development efforts, but the material necessary to do so was unavailable at the time principal research was conducted. For example, it is possible that the Local Native Council of Machakos District, the site of the Machakos Betterment Scheme in Kenya, deliberated aspects of

the scheme. However, the minutes of the council, if they exist, are not part of the Kenya National Archive collection housed at Bird Library, Syracuse University. Moreover, Uganda local government archives, where material on local response and reaction to community development schemes resides, have experienced a precarious existence. Until recently (2016), the Uganda National Archives had neither the space nor manpower to collect, catalog, and preserve the material from the country's many provinces. As a result, much historical paperwork has remained in the hands of local government authorities where, in several districts, archival material has been stored in conditions ill-suited for their preservation and use.

The future study of this subject lies in the recovery and inclusion of this material.

Significance of the Research

Although Labor's rise to power in 1945 stimulated a political and practical atmosphere in Britain that provided the Fabian Society with what Owen has referred to as an "unprecedented opportunity" to influence colonial policy, the historiography lacks a balanced, considered deconstruction of that role. Moreover, and despite the existence of several trends in the literature, it is evident that there is no consensus as to the depth or character of Fabian influence. While I hold no pretensions toward consensus-building, this dissertation represents an attempt to salvage (in part) the complexity and scope of Fabian influence on Britain's postwar colonial development policies. To do so, this dissertation takes as its point of departure the notion of a "Fabianized" British Empire, parsing the framework of Fabian influence by examining the community development-based policy formulations articulated at the CO's 1948 Summer Conference on African Administration and their subsequent implementation in Africa.

This dissertation also challenges the historiographic tendency to ascribe colonial development failures under the Labor regime to the Fabians, a trend that has produced a largely negative scholarship dominated by conservative opinion generally hostile toward socialist-inspired state planning—this, despite evidence that Fabian-influenced development in the colonies was also, to borrow from C. L. Riley, “quietly effective.” Furthermore, the propensity of scholars such as Susan Cooper, T. E. B. Howarth, and Paul Kelemen to emphasize the failure of large-scale development projects in both East and West Africa (the groundnuts scheme in Tanganyika and the poultry scheme in The Gambia, respectively) has obscured the real and tangible Fabian-influenced development projects that impacted social welfare practices in the colonies.

So considered, the findings of this dissertation carry forward the work of such scholars as Riley and I. C. Jackson,⁷ providing a necessary nuanced counterweight to a biased historiography inclined to emphasize postwar colonial development’s large-scale failures. The cacophonous criticism that has subsequently redounded from this narrative has managed to either marginalize or drown out entirely evidence of the success of postwar state planning as directed by a Labor regime whose CO was, at the time, under the guidance of a leading Fabian (if not *the* leading Fabian). To an extraordinary degree, this has to do with the very nature of those successes, which tend, in the last, to be unexceptional, inconspicuous, and ordinary. The effect has been to perpetuate a theme of the basic unsoundness of socialism and state planning as, of course, embodied by the Fabians.

Further, the findings provide insight into several opaque aspects of postwar colonial development, including: the evolution of Fabian Social Trusteeship, from its origins at the turn

⁷ Riley, “Monstrous Predatory Vampires;” I. C. Jackson, *Advance in Africa: A Study in Community Development in Eastern Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956).

of the twentieth century to its postwar culmination in what the Fabians called the “Social Foundation of Trusteeship;” the dynamic negotiation that unfolded between the FCB, the CO, and the colonial governments before and after the Second World War, complicating the notion that the success of Fabian-favored colonial development initiatives was irretrievably associated with the majority-status of Labor; and the persistence of institutional restraints on “Fabianization” despite the long-standing relationship between the Fabians, the Secretary of State, and the Labor Party, indicating that the success or failure of any given initiative was almost always critically dependent on buy-in on the part of the territorial governments.

“Fabianization”

The “Fabianising [*sic*] of the British Empire,” in the esoteric parlance favored by the contemporary Leftist press, first appeared in 1947 to herald the appointment of Arthur Creech Jones to the Labor cabinet as Secretary of State for the Colonies. It is noteworthy that for the socialist literati, it was Creech Jones’ apotheosis that signaled the onset of “Fabianization” rather than Labor’s 1945 electoral victory and the subsequent inundation of Westminster by MPs, secretaries of state, under-secretaries of state, private secretaries, and even a premier who identified on some level as “Fabian.” The distinction is not insignificant. Before 1947, it implies, the Fabian agenda in matters imperial was inhibited; after 1947, Fabian influence in the framing of colonial affairs and the implementation of colonial policy was unfettered.

Before we can arrive at an understanding of how Fabianization was to be achieved through the vehicle of the 1948 Summer Conference on African Administration, we must first come to terms with how it is connected with the notion of Fabian influence. We are not here concerned with “influence” of the textbook variety—such as the conversion of a decision-maker

by some other individual, or by a group, to a point of view which the decision-maker had not previously held. That the evidence for “influence” is purely circumstantial precludes any such proposition. Rather, this dissertation elaborates a dynamic identified by Goldsworthy: a *relationship* in which the views of certain prominent Fabians and the decision-maker were already so close that what went on was chiefly a matter of reminders, memoranda, or of suggesting details to fill out mutually-accepted plans.⁸

Creech Jones explained this very dynamic in a letter to Dr. Rita Hinden, who, at the time, had solicited his feedback on a manuscript of the Fabian Colonial Bureau’s pamphlet *Socialists and the Empire*. “The Bureau,” he explained in his critique of the manuscript (which he also faulted for being “lame” and “uninspired”), “offered to the Party constructive ideas which when the war was over needed to be implemented. It also strengthened certain tendencies in colonial policy which compelled action during the war years, thus by the time the war was over social and economic programmes were being launched, political development was proceeding, and many postwar problems were being surveyed.”⁹ Thus, such ideas as were expressed by the Fabians *vis-à-vis* affairs colonial were already part of the contemporary ideological firmament. They lacked only sufficient impetus, due in large part to circumstance. And after spending five years as chairman of the FCB, the organ chiefly responsible for researching and formulating colonial policy recommendations on behalf of the Labor Party, Creech Jones was certainly in a position to know.

⁸ David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961: From “Colonial Development” to “Wind of Change”* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 130-131.

⁹ Arthur Creech Jones to Dr. Rita Hinden, April 24, 1946, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford [hereafter BLUO], MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, Papers of the Fabian Colonial Bureau [hereafter FCB] 25/1

There continued to be a stream of “constructive ideas” from the Bureau on how current issues might be dealt with even after Creech Jones took up his position at Whitehall.¹⁰ As Goldsworthy notes, the relationship between the secretary and the Bureau existed largely on the level of “close personal friendship, finding expression in Creech Jones’ private, rather than his official, correspondence, and in his frequent confidential discussions,” particularly with Dr. Hinden, the secretary of the FCB, on both day-to-day and long-range problems.¹¹

The following excerpts from correspondences between the Secretary of State and Dr. Hinden prove illustrative of both aspects of Goldsworthy’s point. In March of 1947, Dr. Hinden wrote to Creech Jones, noting that:

On 21st October, 1946, I addressed to you on behalf of my Committee a letter putting forward certain proposals for action designed to win the confidence of the colonial peoples and to encourage a less suspicious attitude than that which now prevails in some of the colonial territories. You will remember that we proposed the holding of a colonial conference in London which would give the opportunity of making certain pronouncements regarding economic planning and race discrimination, and for enunciating the outlines of this Government’s colonial policy. We also raised *inter alia* the question of the appointment of governors.

You replied to us on 24th October, 1946, that our proposals were receiving your consideration and you would communicate with us in greater detail at some later date.¹²

Creech Jones replied to Dr. Hinden’s query on April 16, 1947, explaining:

I have studied your suggestions with great interest and find that several of them are matters which I have had in mind for some time past and with which I am hoping to make progress this year. ... I need hardly say how greatly I am fortified by your interest in the framing of colonial policy.¹³

This postscript appears in Creech Jones’ hand at the bottom of the typewritten letter:

Perhaps I had better meet the Committee sometime to talk about some of these things.¹⁴

¹⁰ Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 134.

¹¹ Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 135.

¹² Rita Hinden to Arthur Creech Jones, March 1947, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 25/2.

¹³ Creech Jones to Hinden, April 16, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 25/2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

This collaborative penchant framed the relationship between the Bureau and the Secretary of State throughout his tenure. When coupled with the Fabians' long-standing association with the Labor Party, which by 1947 had witnessed the inclusion of several prominent Fabians on Party advisory committees, this bond has done much to fuel a tendency among scholars to amalgamate and conflate Labor's colonial policy with that of the Fabians. Indeed, it is precisely this dynamic that led K. O. Morgan to observe in *Labour in Power* that the CO was "In many ways...the Fabian Colonial Research Bureau writ large."¹⁵

While Morgan's perspective is to a considerable extent justifiable, for our purposes it tends toward abstruseness; for the relationship between the Party, the Bureau, and their former chairman was nowhere near as straightforward as it implies. Nor even, as Goldsworthy has noted, was it at all times understood to everyone's satisfaction. To begin with, Fabian efforts were often frustrated *despite* their long-standing association with Creech Jones. Indeed, when, on several occasions the Bureau expressed views that differed from those of Creech Jones, it found itself "pressing against official resistance," particularly when it drew attention to aspects of policy that compromised the Party's principles as articulated by the minister himself.¹⁶ When, on other occasions, the Bureau received written responses from the CO it deemed unsatisfactory, it requested informal meetings with officials at Whitehall—which were only sometimes granted.

A further constraint on Fabian influence lay in the colonies themselves. By virtue of constitutional convention, colonial governors could only be *encouraged* to vouchsafe initiatives promulgated by the CO. They could not be compelled, as Creech Jones himself conceded in the

¹⁵ K. O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 205-206.

¹⁶ Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 140.

1950 Fabian pamphlet *The Way Forward*: “you cannot in Whitehall dictate the changes you want in the Colonies.”¹⁷ Successful implementation of initiatives which emanated from the ministry depended therefore on constant cooperation and, to borrow from Monica M. Van Beusekom, negotiation between the CO and the *in-situ* regimes.¹⁸ For the Fabians and their like-minded ilk, this reality was made especially thorny during the postwar period; for although government witnessed the arrival of a Labor majority at Westminster in 1945, this ideological sea-change was not mirrored by a similar alteration of colonial circumstance. Indeed, the colonies remained largely in the hands of what Creech Jones referred to as “unimaginative reactionaries”:¹⁹ conservative appointees whose interests were served by resisting the Secretary’s policies.²⁰

The picture that develops of the relationship between the Fabians, Creech Jones, the CO, Labor, and the territorial governments is, therefore, a complicated one, belying the simplistic notion of a Fabian-dominated CO whose minister acted as little more than the Bureau’s cipher. Indeed, it is quite clear that, regardless of their aspirations following Creech Jones’ appointment, the Fabians could take nothing for granted.

Sources

My work is based to a considerable extent on the following source material: British government records, most especially those produced by the CO, held at the British National Archives, Kew (NA). This includes archived papers concerning the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya and the Protectorate of Uganda. In addition, I used Hansard to examine British

¹⁷“Labour’s Achievements in the Colonies,” in *The Way Forward* (London: Fabian Publications Ltd., 1950): 16, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 33.

¹⁸ Monica M. Van Beusekom, *Negotiating Development: African Farmers and Colonial Experts at the Office du Niger, 1920-1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann Publishing, 2001).

¹⁹ “Labour’s Achievements in the Colonies,” 16, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 33.

²⁰ See, for example, Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 50-51.

Parliamentary debates on colonial policy; this material is available online via the UK Parliamentary Service. I visited the collections of the Weston Library, Oxford, where I explored the papers of Arthur Creech Jones (ACJ), the Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB), Patrick Williams (PEW) and Thomas G. Askwith (TGA). This material not only helped me to develop an understanding of the relationship between the CO and the FCB, but also between the Bureau and the Parliamentary Labor Party (PLP) and Labor's National Executive Committee (NEC). The papers of Williams and Askwith provided essential detailed clarity on the connection between the 1948 Summer Conference and Kenya's postwar community development regime. For information on the origins and perspectives of the prewar Fabian Society, I used extensively the digital holdings of the Fabian Society Archives (FSA) made available online by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). This includes the diary of Beatrice Webb (nee Potter) and the Minutes of the Fabian Society. I also used the archives of the British Labor Party, which reside at the People's History Museum and Study Center, Manchester; this collection includes the archived papers of the NEC and the PLP. I explored the collections housed at University College London (UCL); I was able to access the archival holdings of the Institute of Education's (IOE) Department of Education in Tropical Areas, which included the Annual Reports of Uganda Protectorate's Department of Community Development.

Summary Review of Relevant Scholarship

This dissertation fits between several historical fields; in addition to British imperial history, modern African history, and the associated field of colonial development scholarship, it also shares space with the following historiographies: the history of the Fabian Society, the British Labor Party, and British Socialism.

Development is amorphous, prompting David Simon to conclude that it “defies definition.”²¹ This resistance has led other scholars to broadly frame development as an outcome-driven, purposefully-directed *process*,²² one which rests somewhere between development as “means” and development as “goal.” Complicating matters is the fact that “development” is freighted with controversy.

Applied incautiously, “development” suggests a “hierarchy of nations and communities” in which those at a more advanced stage are duty-bound to “modernize” those that are less advanced.²³ This Whiggish view of progress imposed on the history of economics, international relations, and social change is captured in W. W. Rostow’s *The Stages of Economic Growth*. In Rostow’s postwar view, the modern Free West constitutes the apex of development. Nations and communities expressing a stage of lesser development relative to this model ought to aspire to it, with the goal of achieving social evolution, optimistic economic growth, and (of course) modernization through state direction.²⁴ This is Modernization Theory, and it is the closest scholars get to an “orthodox” view of development. It is also the subject of much criticism and the point of origin for myriad development heterodoxies.

Bjorn Hettne, for example, takes to task Modernization Theory and addresses both the fluidity and controversy of development. He argues that a “critical approach” to development is necessary not only because the term itself is contested, but also because much of development practice is “rooted in colonialism” and therefore contains “a good measure of paternalism, not to speak of arrogance and racism.”²⁵ Further, Hettne condemns orthodox development theory as the “intellectual origin” of “underdevelopment” and proposes instead “another development,” one which would “transcend the

²¹ David Simon, “Development Reconsidered: New Directions in Development Thinking,” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 79, no. 4 (1997), 183-184.

²² Emphasis mine.

²³ Riley, “Monstrous Predatory Vampires,” 14.

²⁴ W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 1-13.

²⁵ Bjorn Hettne, *Thinking About Development: Development Matters* (London: Zed Books, 2009), 1-2.

European model” and “create a new kind of development thinking.”²⁶ This model would be “egalitarian,” “self-reliant,” “eco-,” and “ethnodevelopmental.”

This “alternative development” theory argues against the Eurocentric view of development as a top-down, externally-imposed process.²⁷ Instead, it sees progress as part of what the International Foundation for Development Alternatives (IFDA) has called a “third system.”²⁸ This “third system” is the segment of the population that has reached a kind of “critical consciousness,” a new awareness of their role in society characterized by the view that the essence of history is an endless struggle in which people try to master their own destiny. In this “humanist,” quasi-Marxist paradigm, agency rests not in the hands of state bureaucrats, but rather it is manifested locally, at the community level.²⁹ So conceived, the process of alternative development is mapped thusly: first, development is an endogenous process; that is, it stems “from the heart of each society, which defines in sovereignty its values and the vision of its future;” second, it is “self-reliant,” meaning each society relies primarily on its own “strength and resources in terms of its members’ energies and its natural and cultural environment;” third, it is ecologically sound; lastly, it is based on structural transformation, which is necessary for realizing the “conditions of self-management and participation in decision-making.” As such, alternative development is development from the bottom-up: it is divorced from external, state pressure and has as its goal the restoration of initiative to a nation’s disempowered sectors – which happens also to be most of the

²⁶ Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton, “The Invention of Development,” in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (London: Routledge, 1995), 41-42.

²⁷ For more on “alternative development,” see: Arturo Escobar, “Power and Visibility: Development and the Invention and Management of the Third World,” *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 4 (Nov. 1988): 428-443; by the same author, “Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development, and Social Movements,” *Social Text* 31, no. 32 (1992): 20-56; Richard Norgaard, *Development Betrayed: The End of Progress and a Coevolutionary Revisioning of the Future* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

²⁸ Jody Jensen and Ferenc Miskolczi, “Global Civil Society: From Dissident Discourse to World Bank Parlance,” in *The Language of Civil Society*, edited by Peter Wagner (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 177-178.

²⁹ John Friedmann, *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 3.

population. Furthermore, unlike Modernization Theory, alternative development proposes no silver bullet, no “universal path” that, if followed, makes a nation or community “developed.”³⁰

As this dissertation will show, the Fabianized model of colonial development rests somewhere between Rostow’s Modernization Theory and the “alternative development” approaches discussed above. This juxtaposition was on marked display at the CO’s 1948 Summer Conference on African Administration, which produced the following definition of mass education/community development:

We understand the term “mass education” to mean a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community, with the active participation and, if possible, on the initiative of the community; but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, it should be aroused and stimulated by special techniques designed to secure the active and enthusiastic response of the community. Mass education embraces all forms of betterment. It includes the whole range of community development activities in the districts, whether these are undertaken by Government or unofficial bodies; in the field of agriculture by securing the adoption of better methods of soil conservation, better methods of farming and care of livestock, in the field of health by promoting better sanitation and water supplies, proper measures of hygiene and infant and maternity welfare; and in the field of education by spreading literacy and adult education as well as by the extension and improvement of schools for children. Mass education must make use of the cooperative movement and must be put into effect in the closest association with local government bodies.³¹

While this definition accepts the possibility of endogenous (“bottom up”) community development (i.e. “better living...on the initiative of the community”), it is couched in the paternalistic language of midcentury Eurocentric development discourse. Failing local-level, “spontaneous” initiative, it is to be “aroused” by Europeans (“top-down”) who, through the agency of Mass Education/Community Development Officers, demonstration teams, and centralized training centers, can “stimulate” indigenous initiative and thus achieve “progress.” Significantly, progress as envisioned here is facilitated by the very same institutions that were

³⁰ Bjorn Hettne, *Development Theory and the Three Worlds* (Essex: Longman House, 1990), 153-154.

³¹ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 101, BLUO 600.17 r. 147 (2).

critical to the development of self-government in England in the nineteenth century: cooperatives and local government bodies.

This dissertation is not concerned with defining colonial development; rather, it acknowledges and adopts the term “colonial development” as it is broadly accepted and understood in the prevailing contemporary historiography.³² For our purposes, “colonial development” is understood to describe a process or series of processes which are meant to either: a) result in the more efficient exploitation of the economic assets of a colony; b) provide for the social betterment of colonial subjects (through, for example, local-level initiatives concerned with the improvement of health, education, and welfare as imposed by the imperial power); or c) a development regime which combines aspects of both (in whole or in part). This definition shares space with the work of Riley and Michael Jennings, both of whom acknowledge that “it is not always possible to isolate instances of ‘economic’ development from those of ‘social’ development.”³³

At the nexus of these considerations lies the Fabian Society, its Colonial Bureau, the British Labor Party, and the so-called colonial development offensive of the immediate postwar period. Historically, scholarly output concerned even tangentially with the subject of Fabian influence on postwar colonial development policy has tended to be reflexive, dismissing Fabian

³² See: Robert Chambers, *Settlement Schemes in Tropical Africa: A Study of Organizations and Development* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); Peter W. Preston, *Development Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997); Wolfgang Sachs, *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge and Power* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1992); Michael Watts, “‘A New Deal in Emotions’: Theory and practice and the crisis of development,” in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (London: Routledge, 1995); Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

³³ Riley, “Monstrous Predatory Vampires,” 15; Michael Jennings, “‘A Very Real War’: Popular Participation in Development in Tanzania During the 1950s and 1960s,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40, no. 1 (2007): 71-95.

influence as part of a vague but growing disillusionment with Labor's state-directed colonial development regime, the administration of which lay to a considerable extent in the hands of Creech Jones in his capacity as the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Privileged by opponents of Labor's ambitious postwar "colonial development offensive," the central conceit of this critique, as Cowen and Shenton have noted, is to invoke the costly failures of the East African Groundnut Scheme and the Gambia Egg Scheme as the "ultimate exemplars" of the sheer folly of the program of postwar development. The attendant orgy of excess and cynicism, meticulously and dutifully documented by Labor's own bureaucrats and condemned by Conservatives who bemoaned Labor's socialism (often, as Murphy has noted, after the fact³⁴), is meant to bring to an end the debate surrounding Labor's development regime and, by extension, the soundness of "Fabianized" state planning. As Susan Cooper has written: "[Labor] had already made a mistake with the groundnut scheme in East Africa: no good done for morale there. Instead they turned to food, to schemes for relieving shortage.... In doing so, they accidentally touched a spring of absurdity revealing perhaps more than anything else the strength which had resisted the series of catastrophes that had gone before."³⁵

With little variation, such criticism has been oft-repeated over the past sixty-odd years, producing a scholarship shot-through with a contrarian perspective. Indeed, decades after Cooper's verdict, T. E. B. Howarth wielded the very same stick with which to beat the postwar planners. "Even the most paralytic Parliamentary opposition," he wrote, "could scarcely have failed to make some capital out of mistakes of this magnitude, and the Conservatives were now

³⁴ Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41.

³⁵ Susan Cooper, "Snoek Piquante," in *Age of Austerity*, eds. M. Sissons and P. French (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 50.

beginning to recover a measure of their old confidence.”³⁶ Meanwhile, Hugh Thomas observed, “The groundnut scheme, in retrospect, seems to have been an object lesson as to how not to run a public undertaking.”³⁷ It was this propensity to which M. Newman referred when he wrote in *John Strachey*, his biography of the Fabian-influenced Minister of Food and shepherd of the groundnuts scheme: “When [Strachey] died in 1963, many obituary writers were more interested in recalling groundnuts than in discussing his theoretical contributions to socialism. This...reflected the success of a contemporary right-wing campaign to exaggerate the affair once it became clear that it was an area on which the government was vulnerable.”³⁸

Despite the apologist minority, a largely ungenerous view persists in the historiography, and further examples are legion: John Lonsdale’s “East Africa,” Anguibou Yan Yansane’s *Development Strategies in Africa*, Philip Murphy’s *Party Politics and Decolonization*, and Michael Havinden’s and David Meredith’s *Colonialism and Development: Britain and its Tropical Colonies*, to name a few.³⁹ It is arguable, however, that it is nowhere expressed more vividly and comprehensively than in Paul Kelemen’s article, “Planning for Africa: The British Labour Party’s Colonial Development Policy, 1920-1964.”⁴⁰ Kelemen not only takes to task earlier justifications for Labor’s postwar colonial interventionism—rejecting both the welfarist

³⁶ T. E. B. Howarth, *Prospect and Reality: Great Britain, 1945-1955* (London: Collins, 1985), 138.

³⁷ Hugh Thomas, *John Strachey* (London: Eyre, Methuen, 1973), 254.

³⁸ M. Newman, *John Strachey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 116.

³⁹ See: John Lonsdale, “East Africa” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 540; Anguibou Yan Yansane, *Development Strategies in Africa: Current Economic, Socio-political, and Institutional Trends and Issues* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 75; Michael Havinden’s and David Meredith’s *Colonialism and Development: Britain and its Tropical Colonies, 1850-1960* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 276.

⁴⁰ Paul Kelemen, “Planning for Africa: The British Labour Party’s Colonial Development Policy, 1920-1964,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 7, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 76-98.

and sterling-imbalance arguments—but, like D. K. Fieldhouse before him,⁴¹ characterizes the “Fabianizing of the Empire” as “exploitative of the colonies,” arguing that it had more in common with Joseph Chamberlain’s colonial estates doctrine than with anything Sydney and Beatrice Webb had envisioned.⁴² More recently, a trend has emerged in the historiography in which the Fabians are accused of cloaking their erstwhile imperialism with a mantle of social betterment in order to perpetuate the very empire they ostensibly opposed. This tendency has manifested assertions that the Fabians “stopped short” of calling for the independence of Britain’s colonies and that the FCB believed the future of the British Empire lay not in independence “as such,” but in a relationship “defined by looser bonds.”⁴³ As propounded by Riley, the argument suggests that the Fabians were at best lukewarm toward the notion of colonial independence and sought, instead, the reform of the empire, not its dissolution.

While to a point such perspectives are justifiable, particularly considering the sterling crisis of 1947 and the related work of the Overseas Food Corporation (OFC) and the Colonial Development Corporation (CDC), these trends have done little to advance the argument beyond the narrowly-construed, vogueish anti-imperial sentiment and criticism that has marked the subject of postwar British imperialism in general, and Fabian-influenced colonial development in particular, since the 1950s. For their part, Murphy, Lonsdale, Fieldhouse, and Havinden and Meredith have adopted virtually the same analytical framework based on the same set of assumptions: first, a high correlation between Fabian-favored, welfarist initiatives and official

⁴¹ D. K. Fieldhouse, “The Labour Government and the Empire Commonwealth, 1945-51,” in *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government*, ed. R. Ovensdale (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), 95.

⁴² Kelemen, “Planning for Africa: The British Labour Party’s Colonial Development Policy, 1920-1964,” 77.

⁴³ Charlotte Riley, “‘The Winds of Change are Blowing Economically’: The Labour Party and British Overseas Development, 1940s-1960s,” in *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?*, eds. Andrew W. M. Smith and Chris Jeppsen (London: University College, 2017), 51.

colonial *practice* (as distinguished from policy). Second, they privilege the phenomenon of large-scale, mechanized postwar development in the colonies necessitated by fiscal exigency which marginalizes (or outright ignores) the small-scale, community-level engagement projects designed to motivate native initiative and progress identified by Creech Jones as the fulcrum of a successful colonial development regime. Meanwhile, Riley oversimplifies the Fabian position on colonial independence. First, the looser bonds to which she refers are doubtless a reflection of the Fabians' penchant for gradualness; that is, the belief that the development of colonial people's democratic institutions—trade unions, cooperatives, local government, political associations, and so forth—was necessary if the “advance to freedom” was to be accompanied by what the Bureau saw as “social justice,” with its concomitant educational, economic, and civil equality.⁴⁴ The logic for doing so, as will be demonstrated, was reference back to Britain's own historical experience. It was, after all, these institutions which were the basis of Britain's own parliamentary democracy. In effect, this was the Fabian touchstone for self-government, with the fatal flaw being that the ideological DNA which lay at the back of British parliamentary democracy was not necessarily compatible with conditions in colonial Africa. However, to view the development regimes derived from these notions, with the intention of arriving at self-government at some unfixed date, as red herrings across the path of immediate self-government is off the mark.⁴⁵

Further, I contend that the contemporary historiography has perpetuated an obscurantist view of postwar colonial development, the majority of which was designed not to usher forth a revolutionary change in the condition of Africans in great bursts of innovation made manifest by mechanized modernity (like the groundnuts scheme), but rather to unfold gradually at the local

⁴⁴ Rita Hinden, *Socialists and the Empire* (London: Fabian Publications Ltd., 1946), 19.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

level as a means of stimulating the desire amongst Africans for their own progress. This distinction, I argue, is not semantic pettifogging; rather, it lay at the heart of the colonial development enterprise as imagined by Arthur Creech Jones and, at least for Creech Jones and the FCB, was the axis on which ultimately its success or failure pivoted. As Creech Jones himself reminded the governors of Britain's African territories at the 1948 African Conference in London: "It is for this reason that in recent colonial policy we have sought so strenuously to promote voluntary service and mutual aid, we have talked much about breaking through ignorance by community education, about extending mass education and literacy, and encouraging individual and community initiative."⁴⁶

It is this same collaborative hinge (or lack thereof) that in 1950 Dr. Hinden identified as the *prima ratio* of colonial development in a letter to Robert Brady, author of *Crisis in Britain*. Dr. Hinden wrote that, in the "working out of the ten-year development plans, many Colonies have drawn in Committee after Committee of local people to advise them.... The point is made in every debate in Parliament; and in the individual 'community-development' plans in different parts of Africa consultation has gone down to the lowest levels. It is *mainly* in the big Development Corporation schemes—such as groundnuts—that consultation has been entirely lacking...."⁴⁷ Like Creech Jones, Dr. Hinden envisioned "true" colonial development as a cooperative effort defined by a bottom-up approach centered on African villages and communities, rather than the "big" development schemes whose implementation lay outside the purview of the CO.

⁴⁶ African Conference, 1948, UK National Archives, Kew, Colonial Office Records [hereafter NA CO] 847/38/7.

⁴⁷ R. Brady, *Crisis in Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 629.

This singular aspect of the postwar colonial development regime, characterized by modest, decidedly unsexy and inexpensive schemes (relative to such large-scale industrial projects as the production of eggs in West Africa) concerned to nurture indigenous progress at its most basic level, remains overlooked and chronically underserved by contemporary historiography. It is in this regard that my work shares historiographic space with Riley, whose research on postwar colonial development in Africa likewise challenges the tendency of the scholarship to emphasize high-profile failures by arguing that, in a number of key areas, especially “health, education, and social welfare,” development was “quietly successful.”⁴⁸

Perhaps nowhere is the effort at “quietly successful” colonial development more apparent than in the efforts of the Fabian Colonial Bureau. The members of the FCB observed a particular version of socialism which, very early in the development of the Fabian Society, came to be known as “Fabianism.” Fabianism, to borrow from M. Margaret McCarran, is a socialist “mentality” exemplified by members of the Fabian Society either individually (as, for example, lecturers, politicians, or journalists) or as an “anonymous cohort” of devoted workers “for Social Democracy.”⁴⁹ As such, it is endowed with a collectivist social theory and is distinguished by a belief in the evolutionary and peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism through non-revolutionary “gradualism”:⁵⁰ that is, the bringing about of socialism not through the direct action or violence promoted by orthodox Marxism, but rather through research and, ultimately,

⁴⁸ Riley, “Monstrous Predatory Vampires,” 30.

⁴⁹ M. Margaret Patricia McCarran, “Fabianism in the Political Life of Britain, 1919-1931” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1954), x-xi.

⁵⁰ For Sweezy, the very “essence” of Fabianism itself. Paul M. Sweezy, “Fabian Political Economy,” *Journal of Political Economy* 57, no. 3 (June 1949): 245.

the permeation and penetration of Britain's political classes. Fabianism, *pace* Terence Qualter, is the “gospel of state-socialism rather than anarchist-socialism.”⁵¹

While inarguably accurate, this tidy definition is nonetheless disingenuous, for it bequeaths coherence to the amorphous ideological heritage which lay at the back of Fabianism, the wellsprings of which—like modern British socialism itself—lie deep in the history of Victorian society.⁵² Indeed, when considered philosophically, Fabianism—no less than its great contemporaries, liberalism and socialism—is manifestly an agglomeration of *au courant* “plebeian and middle-class radicalisms.”⁵³ So considered, it is, contra-Ernest Barker,⁵⁴ neither a “compact” nor “hermetically-sealed” package of traditions;⁵⁵ instead, historians generally agree, Fabianism's pedigree exhibits a mongrelized intellectual genealogy that has, at various times and to varying degrees, compassed, *inter alia*: the (quantitative) utilitarianism of Bentham, the (qualitative) utilitarianism of J. S. Mill, the (ethical) positivism of Auguste Comte, the social reform of Robert Owen, the ethical socialism embodied by the work of such intellectuals as T. H. Green, the rent theories of David Ricardo (filtered through Stanley Jevon and Henry George to

⁵¹ Terence H. Qualter, *Graham Wallas and the Great Society* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1980), 28. The society declared in its Report on Fabian Policy and Resolutions (1896) that the socialism it advocated was “strictly state-socialism—government ownership and bureaucratic control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.” As quoted in Donald F Busky, *Democratic Socialism: A Global Survey* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 93.

⁵² See: Paul Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party, 1880-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Margaret Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961); AM McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Paula Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize: 100 Years of Fabian Socialism* (London: Methuen, 1984).

⁵³ Gregory Claeys, “Political Thought” in *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. C. Williams (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 193.

⁵⁴ Ernest Barker, *Political Thought in England from Herbert Spencer to the Present Day* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1915).

⁵⁵ Michael H. Freeden, “The Stranger at the Feast: Ideology and Public Policy in Twentieth Century Britain,” *20th Century British History* 1, no. 1 (1990): 15.

suit England's industrial context), the political reforms of the Chartists, and even the socialism of Marx.⁵⁶

It was these selfsame radicalisms which, throughout the nineteenth century, generated a near-constant source of pressure to not only reform parliament, but also address the problems created by commercial society and industrialization—especially poverty and large-scale unemployment, which were “not susceptible to political solutions as such,” but required “new schemes” of economic organization, such as collectivism.⁵⁷ As H.C. G. Matthew and M. Taylor have quite rightly observed, it was owing to this climate of social and economic expectation that a series of “incremental” reform measures to redress such long-standing grievances as working-class enfranchisement and labor organization took hold in Great Britain, producing by midcentury something like a “rapprochement” between the existing political order, reform-minded liberals, and (the now-ageing) radicals.⁵⁸ These conditions subdued, but did not altogether suppress, criticism of the political system as a whole.⁵⁹ The reconciliation, such as it was, was short-lived; for in the 1880s, agricultural and industrial depression dovetailed with both the growing popularity of Marxian socialism on the Continent and the coalescence of what Jon Lawrence has described as a still-“vibrant radical subculture”⁶⁰ in Great Britain to produce a

⁵⁶ Busky, *Democratic Socialism*, 88; Mark Bevir, “Sidney Webb: Utilitarianism, Positivism, and Social Democracy,” *The Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 2 (June 2003): 217-252.

⁵⁷ Claeys, “Political Thought,” 189.

⁵⁸ M. Taylor, “Radicalism and Patriotism, 1848-1859” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1989); H. C. G. Matthew, “Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Politics of Mid-Victorian Budgets,” *Historical Journal* 22, no. 3 (1979): 615-643.

⁵⁹ Evidence of the persistence of radicalism during this period is endemic. See: Thomas Wright, “The Press and the People” in *Our New Masters* (London, 1873), 334-335 and 346; Aled Jones, “Workmen’s Advocates: Ideology and Class in a Mid-Victorian Newspaper System” in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Soundings and Samplings*, eds. J Shattock and M Wolff (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), 310 and 313.

⁶⁰ Jon Lawrence, “Popular Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain,” *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 2 (April 1992): 172.

“socialist revival.”⁶¹ It was against the backdrop of this late-Victorian recrudescence, set amidst riots of the unemployed and strikes by phossy-jawed matchgirls, militant dockworkers, and other unskilled laborers, that Fabianism was born.⁶²

An exercise in parsing Fabianism is an exercise equally in confirming Michael Freeden’s admonishment that “ideologies are modular structures, frequently exhibiting a highly fluid morphology.”⁶³ And indeed, despite having been founded in 1884, the Fabian Society lacked a coherent program for some time. In point of fact, although the Fabians later formally repudiated the “catastrophic insurrectionism” of the Marxian school,⁶⁴ a number of earlier Fabian works—those published before a distinctive “Fabian approach” had “jelled,” to borrow from Busky—suggest something like a vogueish (and lingering) flirtation with Marxism: Fox and Gordon, for example, read Marxism in *Facts for Londoners* (1889) as well as Sidney Webb’s *English Progress Towards Social Democracy* (1890), while Sweezy labors extensively over evidence of Marxism in George Bernard Shaw’s chapter “Economic,” which appeared in the Fabian bestseller *Essays in Socialism* in 1889.⁶⁵ But when, the following year, the Fabian Executive Committee published the Bernard Shaw-penned tract *What Socialism Is*, it disclaimed Marx’s rigidly deterministic class-based division of society. According to G. Foote, the Fabians had come to believe that Marx was “fundamentally wrong” about the nature of profit and that the capitalists exploited the workers and adopted instead the alternative view that the “real” class struggle was between the “idle owners” and the “producers”—that is, those who did nothing to

⁶¹ Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party*, 1-2; Claeys, “Political Thought,” 197; Lawrence, “Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain,” 172.

⁶² Sally Alexander, *Women’s Fabian Tracts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1988), 3.

⁶³ Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 88.

⁶⁴ Paul W. Fox and H. Scott Gordon, “The Early Fabian-Economists and Reformers,” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science/Revue canadienne* 17, no. 3 (Aug. 1951): 317.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

earn their money and those who did all the work.⁶⁶ The tract's policy prescriptions did not end there; for it not only confirmed the Fabian pivot away from anarchism, the source of much debate and, thus, friction since 1886, in favor of state collectivism,⁶⁷ but it likewise invoked worker enfranchisement (and with it, the spirit of Chartism) as a means of banishing the "propertied classes from the House of Commons."⁶⁸

For all this, *What Socialism Is* reflects the larger pattern of ideological maturation underway among the infant society since 1887, the year the Fabians issued the programmatic tract *The True Radical Programme*. A discursive riposte to *The Official Liberal-Radical Programme*, *The True Radical Programme* brought together a number of nineteenth-century radicalisms and, as A. M. McBriar notes, constituted them as the "sum and substance" of early Fabianism.⁶⁹ "Amplified" and "modified" by subsequent tracts throughout the 1890s, most notably in the tract, *The Workers' Political Program*, this foundational ideological schema called for, *inter alia*: parliamentary and local government reform (echoing the Chartist movement's calls for adult suffrage, annual parliaments, and payment for MPs); the "progressive" taxation of the unearned income or "economic rent" (i.e. profit) of the idle classes to be redistributed to the laboring and poorest members of society (a notion of "leveling down" drawn and adapted from a

⁶⁶ Gregory Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1997), 26-27.

⁶⁷ An earlier tract titled *What Socialism Is* (1886) included a section on "Anarchism" written by the society's foremost anarchist, Charlotte Wilson. Wilson resigned from the society when it became clear most of the Fabians preferred to effect social reconstruction through the extant (albeit reformed) political system, rather than by overthrowing the state. For a sense of the hostility with which the Fabian executive eventually came to view anarchism, see the Shavian tract *The Impossibilities of Anarchism* which, although published in 1893, was based on a lecture Bernard Shaw delivered to the society in 1891. For a description of the events leading up to Wilson's departure, see Mark Bevir, "Fabianism, Permeation and Independent Labour," *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 1 (March 1996): 186.

⁶⁸ George Bernard Shaw, *What Socialism Is* (London: The Fabian Society, 1890).

⁶⁹ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 24.

variety of sources, including Ricardo, George, and Jevon-via-Wicksteed⁷⁰); collectivism and state interference (as embodied by appeals for the municipalization of land to compete with private industry and the nationalization of such key industries as railways, elements which suggest the influence not only of Ricardo's Theory of Rent, but also T. H. Green's evolutionary approach to social development and the New Liberalism⁷¹); and the state-directed reform of workhouses and the provision of compulsory education (a notion of "leveling up" society drawn partly from Owenite social reform, with its effort to create a "new moral world," and, once again, New Liberalism⁷²).

If, as McBriar posits, *The True Radical Programme* manifested the earliest programmatic Fabianism, it would have remained little more than an amalgam of reformist radicalisms had it not been for the prescriptive formulations of Sidney Webb. For it was Webb⁷³ who, according to Mark Bevir, believed that the peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism could be achieved only by working *through* England's traditional democratic institutions, a framework of representational government he extended to include not only the institutions of local government,

⁷⁰ As elaborated in McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*; Sweezy, "Fabian Political Economy," 242-248; Bevir, "Fabianism, Permeation and Independent Labour," 179-196; Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*; F. Rosen, "Jeremy Bentham's Radicalism" in *English Radicalism, 1550-1850: Tradition or Fabrication?*, eds. G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Peter Weiler, "William Clarke: The Making and Unmaking of a Fabian Socialist," *Journal of British Studies* 14, no. 1 (Nov. 1974): 77-108; Fox and Gordon, "The Early Fabian-Economists and Reformers," 307-319.

⁷¹ Claey's, "Political Thought," 199. The "New Liberalism" represents a revision of nineteenth-century "Liberalism." Traditional Liberalism had at its core the notion of "liberty." Thus, as a political ideology, Liberalism came to mean the "freedom *from* the interference of the state." But after 1880, "liberty" came increasingly to be seen as the freedom to "develop human capacities and attributes." As Claey's explains, the most important consequence of this idea was that the state "could act as an agent of positive social good," as the "guardian of a common good or higher ethical community not sought by particular classes or interests, but discernible and defensible in terms of the wider, long-term, organic and evolutionary interests of the entire society."

⁷² As Claey's has noted, T. H. Green's thought encouraged a "more positive idea" of state interference on the basis of the fact that society "collectively" could assist in promoting moral life. Claey's, "Political Thought," 199.

⁷³ Bevir, "Sidney Webb: Utilitarianism, Positivism, and Social Democracy," 217-218.

but also trade unions and cooperatives.⁷⁴ For Webb, democratic England, suitably reformed and (more) broadly enfranchised, would, in time, produce a political class receptive to the ideas of socialism. The slow-moving “permeation” of this sympathetic group by “experts” (e.g. the Fabians) would result in democratic institutions that gradually acquired increasingly progressive accretions, such as a regulatory capacity over industry. In this way, Webb believed, industry need not be commandeered; rather, it need only be administered by a minister of government or “specialist” whose role it was “to establish an integrated, cooperative, and thus efficient organization.”⁷⁵ This same collectivist state would “enforce” social “duties” through taxation, a process which would, ultimately, yield public provisions for such things as education, museums, parks, and health services.⁷⁶ Thus Webb, and, eventually, the Fabians, equated socialism with the efficient, cooperative, and coordinated organization of society achieved through state activity. This reflected not only Webb’s peculiar form of utilitarianism—which produced a socialism “limited to practical efforts to modify the existing...order”⁷⁷—but also his belief that the principle of natural selection, much on the Victorian public’s mind since Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, taught that more efficient societies thrived.⁷⁸

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Fabian Society had welded together various elements of then-current radicalisms and emplaced them as the struts and armatures of their own ideological framework, one calculated to realize the “dream of the Socialist on sound economic principles, by gradual, peaceful, and constitutional means.”⁷⁹ In the broadest possible sense,

⁷⁴ Sidney Webb, *Towards Social Democracy? A Study of Social Evolution During the Past Three-Quarters of a Century* (London: The Fabian Society, 1916), 5.

⁷⁵ Bevir, “Sidney Webb: Utilitarianism, Positivism, and Social Democracy,” 235.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Stanley Pierson, *British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 331-332.

⁷⁸ Webb, *Towards Social Democracy?*, 29.

⁷⁹ G. Bernard Shaw, *The True Radical Programme* (London: The Fabian Society, 1887).

then, *fin-de-siècle* Fabianism sought not only to extend democracy and improve the machinery of democratic government, but to expand government powers in a way that yielded “positive government action” as a means of promoting social and economic equality.⁸⁰ It was a vision of (J. S.) Millite utilitarianism and Comtean positivism in that it was designed, in the last, to secure “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” through state-directed activity. The end result was a vision of social democracy that persisted, in one form or another, as the basis of Fabianism for the next half century.

The principles embedded within Fabianism had considerable future implications, particularly when extended to the British Empire. As we shall see, the society at first struggled to reconcile Fabianism with the domestic exigencies inspired by empire. Formulated to address the specific domestic grievances that had arisen in late-Victorian England, Fabianism’s sphere of interest all but excluded imperial or colonial policy considerations. The advent of the Second Wave of Industrialization, however, and the international economic competition it stimulated, especially from Germany, threatened the global economic dominance Britain had enjoyed since at least the end of the eighteenth century. As a result, the domestic industrial context came increasingly to the fore of imperial policy considerations, both at the level of officialdom and within the Fabian Society itself. At first, the Fabians responded by hewing closely to the pro-imperial policy stance of Whitehall, as expressed in Joseph Chamberlain’s Imperial Estates Doctrine. Progressively, however, the more conscientious members of the society recognized the exercise of this policy, or “social-imperialism” as it was known, as fundamentally exploitative of colonial subjects. This realization prompted a considerable revision of official Fabian policy, one formulated initially by (Lord) Sydney Olivier in the tract *Imperial Trusteeship*

⁸⁰ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 25.

(1929). This was the beginning of the gradual evolution of the Fabian Society's colonial policy recommendations which incorporated, as Kelemen notes, a "social democratic model of development."⁸¹ By 1950, the evolution of the Fabians' social trusteeship, which framed indigenous African interests as paramount and emphasized community betterment in terms of health, education, and welfare, culminated in "The Social Foundation of Trusteeship," a prescriptive framework intended to guide not only imperial governance, but colonial development as well.

Outline of Chapters

The first chapter considers the early development of the Fabian Society and concludes with the advent of the South African War. While it examines the origins of the society, notably the place of the Fellowship of New Life in the Fabian heritage, especially close attention is paid to the early formulation of Fabianism and the ideological DNA which lay at its back. In the second chapter, this dissertation explores the deepening affinity between the Labor Party, effectively born with the creation of the Labor Representation Committee in 1906, and the Fabian Society. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the processes and ideological proclivities which brought the Fabian Society and Labor together. We witness, first, the depth and breadth of Fabian permeation insofar as it informed Labor's official policy and, second, the maturation of the Society as it struggled through a period of intellectual stagnation and near-extinction only to witness, in 1938-9, an ideological rebirth. In chapter three, the evolution of Fabian perspectives on imperial trusteeship are explored, alongside a discussion of Fabian

⁸¹ Paul Kelemen, "'Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot': Components of the Social Democratic Model of Development," in *Empire, Development & Colonialism: The Past in the Present*, eds. M. Duffield and V. Hewitt (Suffolk: James Currey, 2009), 192-200.

influence of colonial development policy during the Second World War. While Fabian efforts at permeating political elites of the Coalition Government manifested changes in both mass education and colonial cooperative policy before the end of the war, the “welfarist agenda” which lay at the heart of Arthur Creech Jones’ favored policy initiatives was seriously undermined by the sterling crisis of 1947. The chapter elaborates the impact of this crisis, and the concomitant pivot toward large-scale mechanized agricultural production (in the form of the East Africa Groundnut Scheme and the West Africa Egg Scheme), while also exploring the establishment and work of the FCB between 1940 and 1945. Chapter four explores the “Fabianization of the British Empire.” It takes as its point of departure the vehicle arguably best-positioned to achieve this, the 1948 Colonial Summer Conference on African Administration. The nucleus of this conference, the second of three convened while Arthur Creech Jones was Secretary of State for the Colonies, was mass education/community development. As such, it connects Creech Jones’ earlier work with the CO’s Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies (ACEC), and the report which resulted, *Mass Education in African Society*, with the postwar colonial development initiatives enacted while the Fabian and former chairman of the FCB was in a position to determine and guide official policy. The conference is discussed at some length, fleshing out the connections between the organizers and leaders of the conference and the Fabian Society, along with the results of its deliberations. These policy formulations—in effect, a reimagining of mass education as community development—are then examined as implemented in two of Britain’s East African colonies: Kenya and Uganda. Here, we witness not only the evolution of a pair of closely-associated community development regimes, but also the multiplicity of indigenous, colonial, and metropolitan factors which ultimately helped influence the shape and efficacy of community development as realized on the ground. The

conclusions drawn at the end of the chapter, which consider some of the chief ideological and practical flaws embedded within community development, notably the paternalistic reliance on motivating African initiative and the broader implications this had for community development, are augmented by a concluding chapter. This concluding chapter sets out to examine some of the contradictions of Fabian colonial development designs, chiefly those surrounding the question of colonial independence, and considers whether or not the intention of the Fabians was autonomy for Britain's African territories, or rather something like a reformed imperialism. Included is a section which posits the notion, refracted through the globalization of community development during the Cold War and the new, hegemonic position of the United States in international affairs, that the Fabianization of the British Empire could only ever be "partial," to borrow from Dr. Hinden.⁸² The final section unpacks and assesses the notion of "partial" Fabianization with a discussion of this dissertation's findings and argues that sufficient evidence exists to determine that Fabianized community development was "quietly," if relatively, successful.

⁸² "Reflections on Colonial Affairs," Notes on a Meeting Given by Dr. Rita Hinden, House of Commons, November 20, 1953, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 48/1.

CHAPTER 1: 1880s-1899

On the Origins and Early Evolution of Fabianism: Ideological Refractions of Late-Victorian England's Reformist Zeitgeist, from the Socialist Revival to Social-Imperialism

For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently, when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain and fruitless.

—*Explanatory Note, Why Are the Many Poor?, Fabian Tract No. 1 (1884)*¹

Introduction

A product of the late-Victorian socialist revival, the selfsame crucible of ideology from whence Marxism exploded with such portentous vigor, the Fabian Society formed around a nucleus of radicals determined to “do something” about the manifold political, social, and economic injustices wrought on the English working-class by industrialization. Just what that “something” was, however, remained frustratingly elusive for several years. Indeed, it was not until the end of the 1880s that the Fabians promulgated something like a comprehensive philosophical framework on which to hang their particular “brand” of socialism, which they soon unimaginatively called “Fabianism.” An admixture of contemporary Victorian-era ideologies—a kind of “-isms” All Sorts that included, *inter alia*: socialism, liberalism, positivism, Chartism, and utilitarianism, all seasoned copiously with an overarching sense of social justice—nascent Fabianism was first, last, and foremost, a domestically-oriented ideology. Bent toward rectifying industrialism’s more egregious inequities as manifest in the cramped dwellings of England’s soot-choked streets and the factories in which their inhabitants daily toiled, Fabianism’s prescriptive formulae adamantly excluded the empire as a variable in its arithmetic. Until, that

¹ *Why Are the Many Poor?* (London: The Fabian Society, 1884), 1.

is, the South African War of 1899 forced a revision. The result was a calculus whose insular solution yoked the socialist cause at home—reform for the working class—to the Fate of Empire abroad. The upshot was a Fabian-favored paradigm of social-imperialism that aligned the society with Westminster’s pro-imperial (and anti-Boer) agenda.

This development, for all its practical implications in terms of Fabian designs, was not without consequence. For an irreparable schism soon formed within the society and fractured it, prompting the attrition of its most ardent anti-imperial progressive elements, including J. Ramsay MacDonald. Having been vacated of dissenting voices, the Fabian executive then promulgated *Fabianism and the Empire*, the society’s first official manifesto *vis-à-vis* matters imperial. In doing so, the Fabians effectively cemented their somewhat ignominious position as the only prominent socialist group in Britain to support the government’s blatantly imperialist war effort in South Africa. With few exceptions, notably the great Tariff Reform debate of 1906, the Fabian executive did not invest itself or the society in imperial politics for the next twenty-odd years—that is until 1929, when the society published *Imperial Trusteeship*. Written by Sydney Olivier, the tract revoked Chamberlainite trusteeship, the exploitative system which hitherto was an essential operational feature of Westminster’s (and, by extension, the Fabians’) social-imperial model.

In time, these formulations were folded into the principal rubric of Fabianism, the adherents of which had, by the middle of the twentieth century, come to be defined as observing a collectivist social theory and as being distinguished by a belief in the evolutionary and peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism through non-revolutionary “gradualism;”² that is, the bringing about of socialism not through the direct action or violence promoted by orthodox

² Sweezy, “Fabian Political Economy,” 245.

Marxism, but rather through research and, ultimately, the permeation and penetration of Britain's political classes. Fabianism is, in other words, a "gospel of state socialism rather than anarchist-socialism."³

This chapter examines the origins of the Fabian Society and its core philosophy, Fabianism. It takes as its point of departure the convergence of Victorian-era ideologies and the industrial conditions which inspired them. We witness how these circumstances created a sense among certain segments of England's middle-class population to "do something" about the injustices visited upon the working-class by industrialism. The Fabian Society was, manifestly, an epiphenomenal byproduct of this desire, which reached an apex during the so-called socialist revival of the 1880s. By the end of the decade, the young men who constituted the Fabian Society formulated a non-revolutionary, anti-anarchic socialism that came to represent the foundational ethos of Fabianism. This chapter includes an exploration of Fabian efforts to influence ("permeate") Britain's *fin-de-siècle* political discourse and how these efforts, inescapably informed by the upheaval of the Liberal Party and the South African War, resulted in the society's first forays into imperial policy formulation.

Fabian Origins: In the Beginning—The Supernatural and the Fellowship of the New Life

Society for Psychical Research. Haunted House Com(mittee).

*—Fabian Society Executive Committee
Minute Book, 23 December 1885 – 21
January 1887*

It may perhaps seem unusual that a minute book of the Fabian Society's Executive Committee should have written at the top in the fluid, upright hand of Edward Pease, the

³ Qualter, *Graham Wallas and the Great Society*, 28.

society's long-serving secretary, a heading that is so strikingly phantasmagoric. And yet, the Executive Committee's Minute Book from 1885 begins with precisely this heading, albeit scribbled out. The obvious question is, why? What, if anything, does Thomas Linehan's portrayal of the Fabians as "scientistic"⁴ have in common with the dubiously spiritualistic Society for Psychical Research (SPR)? A number of straightforward—and dismissive—explanations do in fact present themselves: it is a reused minute book and is therefore a curiosity, but indicative of nothing; hastening, the secretary forgot himself and belatedly corrected his error or, perhaps the Fabian Society was briefly—if incongruously—affiliated with the SPR. The answer, we find, is rather more compelling and revealing, not only of the Fabians but indeed the era that gave birth to them, than implied by any of these explanations.

In his study of British Socialism and its influence on the arts in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Ian Britain notes that the origins of the Fabian Society are "a matter of dispute."⁵ While it is undoubtedly true that the circumstances are rather more opaque than transparent, history nevertheless presents us with a moment, fleeting to be sure, when complementary strands of Victorian-era popular, political, and metaphysical culture met and fused, forging a kind of intellectual nexus from which would spring a few years later the imperfectly-formed nucleus of the Fabian Society. That moment we can trace to an intriguingly un-Fabian-like milieu: a darkened, purportedly haunted house in London's still-gentrifying Notting Hill neighborhood. There, huddled in the bleak interior of the unoccupied house, sat two future founder members of the Fabian Society in the "foolish hope that we might perceive something abnormal": Edward Pease and Frank Podmore. The circumstances which brought the

⁴ Thomas Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 117.

⁵ Ian Britain, *Fabianism and Culture: A Study in British Socialism and the Arts c. 1884-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25.

two men together that evening were their mutual interests in spiritualism and psychical research, the controversial Victorian obsession with testing the objective reality of spirit manifestations. That Pease would go on to serve as secretary of the SPR's Haunted House Committee testifies to the depth of his interest—and explains why, sometime later, he used an old committee minute book to record a series of meetings of the Fabian Society executive between 1885 and 1887.

Yet the pursuit of the supernatural was not atypical for members of Victorian England's intellectual elite broadly alive to the potential locked away in mesmeric, psychical, and spiritualistic phenomena.⁶ As Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert explain:

The Victorian age seems to be invested with a peculiar quality of difference...that is reflected in its ghosts. It was an age shaped, perhaps more than any other previous period, by the forces of transition. ... With the shadow of change falling across virtually every area of life and thought, the receding past became a focus for anxiety, and in literature the ghost story offered a way of anchoring the past to an unsettled present by operating in a continuum of life and death. In the ghost story, obligations do not cease with death, and the past is never a closed book. What has been can be again, though often terribly transformed. For a progressive age...the idea of a vindictive past held an especial potential for terror.⁷

This gothic preoccupation with psychical forces reflects, as Daphne du Maurier put it, an “anxious, weary time”⁸ during which Britain's ideological breakwaters, mortared together by the politics of *laissez-faire* capitalism, were fatally undermined and, in some cases, overcome by the revolutionary changes that were afoot. And although the troubles of the past stalked the darkened recesses of the Victorian consciousness like some formless beast, “future consequences of present actions”⁹ haunted contemporaries to no less degree—and with electrifying effect. For

⁶ Edward R. Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company Publishers, 1916), 16.

⁷ Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert, *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), xi.

⁸ Daphne Du Maurier, *Jamaica Inn* (Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., 2008), 11.

⁹ Judith Wilt, “The Imperial Mouth: Imperialism, the Gothic and Science Fiction,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 14, no. 4 (Spring 1981): 620.

quixotic men like Pease and Podmore, this culminated in a reunion of sorts in Chelsea in the autumn of 1883, when the two men found themselves attending the same lecture by Thomas Davidson, an American émigré.

A “peripatetic and pretentious scholar of humble Scottish birth,” Janet Oppenheim explains, “who collected disciples as he roamed,”¹⁰ the wandering Davidson returned to London full of interest in the philosophy of Rosmini¹¹ and on a mission to form “a small society of like-minded persons for the reorganization of individual life, and thereby the gradual uplifting of society to higher levels.”¹² Watchwords such as “uplift” and “reorganization” cast against the ghastly tableau of social inequity characteristic of the late-Victorian industrial age were a virtual tripwire for the morally-sensitive amongst the English middle class. And Davidson’s idealism was no less than manna for some in this umbrage-prone group, which sat at the table of the country’s recent bleak industrial past and supped on a veritable *a-la-carte* menu of ethical socialisms—from the work of Robert Owen and men like T. H. Green and William Maclure to the Rochdale Pioneers—intended to correct the worst ravages of industrialization. Like these and many others, Davidson was that quintessential man of ideas the Victorian age produced in

¹⁰ Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 146.

¹¹ Antonio Rosmini-Serbati was a nineteenth century Italian Roman Catholic priest and philosopher. The crucible formed by his education and temperament generated a philosophy shot-through with a pronounced religiosity that hearkened back to the cosmological purity of “the ancients.” From this emerged a Rosminian philosophy that stood in diametric opposition to modern thought, which the priest-philosopher regarded as the main factor underlying the nineteenth century’s increasingly severe “social disturbance.” In his analysis, John Favato Bruno observes that Rosmini was “persuaded of the social and humane mission of philosophy” and “could not fail to direct his attention to the national problem” within the contemporary Italo-Swiss context. Regardless, Rosmini had in mind a system ultimately designed to allow the “masses” to “rise to a better condition”—that near-ubiquitous idea of “uplift” that resonated so deeply with nineteenth century English ethical socialists, and hence Davidson’s interest. As discussed in: John Favato Bruno, *Rosmini’s Contribution to Ethical Philosophy* (New York: The Science Press, 1916), 19.

¹² William Angus Knight, ed., *Memorials of Thomas Davidson, the Wandering Scholar* (London: Ginn and Company Publishers, 1907), 16.

such abundance: an evangelist of ethical socialism orbited sun-like by “a number of people interested in religious thought, ethical propaganda, and social reform.” Included among these adherents were many who constituted the nucleus of the early Fabian Society: Podmore and Pease, of course; but also Havelock Ellis, Hubert Bland, and Percival Chubb.¹³

The chief concern of the so-called “Davidsonian Fellowship”¹⁴ was not in fact the dread past, which so haunted contemporaries, but instead the forging of that most alluring of anti-industrial Victorian ideals: a socialist-utopian future shorn of the industrial age’s grievous social injustices.¹⁵ And although Davidson did not himself linger long in London before returning to Italy,¹⁶ the company he gathered around him—marshalled by Chubb, Davidson’s very own John the Baptist—was inspired to hold a series of meetings at which they debated the essence of Davidson’s grandiose vision: the creation of a brotherhood devoted to the attainment of ethical perfection in its members and, ultimately, throughout all society.¹⁷ What emerged was the so-called English Fellowship of the *Vita Nuova*, the founding principle of which was the alleviation of the deformities plaguing Victorian society through the “subordination of material things to spiritual things.”¹⁸

Almost immediately, the nascent brotherhood fractured. The obvious religious and ethical essentialism prescribed by the founding principle triggered impassioned rejections by such would-be adherents as Frank Podmore, who saw in the unregulated operation of the

¹³ Knight, *Memorials*, 16.

¹⁴ Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 16.

¹⁵ Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 177.

¹⁶ Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, *The Fabians: The Extraordinary Story of that Famous Circle of Enthusiasts, Reformers & Brilliant Eccentrics—Shaw, the Webbs, Wells—Whose Ideas and Unconventional Attitudes Fashioned our Modern World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 24.

¹⁷ Britain, *Fabianism and Culture*, 25.

¹⁸ Knight, *Memorials*, 19.

Victorian economic system the harsh tangible means by which the English working class was oppressed, condemned to an unimaginably grim existence chained to Britain's industrial engine. Thus, on December 16, 1883, Podmore wrote to the society's secretary, the orthodox Davidsonian Chubb,¹⁹ that "some of us, after talking the matter over, find that we cannot subscribe to the resolution.... At the same time we wish to have a society, only on more general lines."²⁰ Two weeks later, Podmore addressed a similarly-veined letter to Davidson confessing, "I feel so uncertain what is meant by religion, that I do not like to use the word—at present. I wish to learn: & I have not yet learnt enough to enable me to sympathise with the creed of the Fellowship heart & soul."²¹ Increasingly for some, the solution lay not in the existentialist aim of "being something," but in the materialist aim of "doing something;" in the creation of a brotherhood "which will not necessarily be *exclusive* of the 'Fellowship'" but invested with a character that emphasized materialist solutions to the ills that tormented Victorian society.²²

Appalled, Podmore's rhetoric managed to justify Chubb's suspicions concerning the now-hereticated materialists, whom he derided to Davidson as "not of the right fibre for a movement such as ours" and would later condemn as "merely materialistic, atheistic, aggressive" socialists.²³ Nevertheless, there would be no turning back as the fissure between the two groups—the orthodox Davidsonian acolytes and Podmore's secularists—opened wide, and from

¹⁹ For his part, the disillusioned Percival Chubb became an enthralled Puritan, professing to Davidson in April 1882 that he yearned "to work out in myself the life that should be...and to aid in the realization of the Social Utopia." See: MacKenzie, *The Fabians*, 23.

²⁰ Knight, *Memorials*, 19. The "resolution" to which Podmore refers was the "Vita Nuova" proposed by Dr. Burns-Gibson, the decisive principle of which was "The subordination of material things to spiritual things." See a clarification of the timeline of these events in Pease, *The History of the Fabians*, 16-17.

²¹ As quoted in Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World*, 146.

²² Knight, *Memorials*, 19. The emphasis here is Podmore's.

²³ Britain, *Fabianism and Culture*, 26; MacKenzie, *The Fabians*, 27.

it sprang the “more socialist” Fabian Society.²⁴ The timing was not coincidental; for in Podmore’s labored, moralizing justification we glimpse the uncomfortable juxtaposition of belief and doubt that helped stir the ideologically complacent late-Victorian middle-class from a decades-long reverie. The age of the great “socialist revival” was at hand.

Changes Afoot: Radicalism, the Socialist Revival, and Early Fabianism

In a sense, the socialist revival signals both an ideological terminus as well as an embarkation; for on the one hand, it marks the end of the rapprochement that had characterized relations between the existing political order, reform-minded liberals, and radicals ever since the 1850s. Indeed, despite the persistence of a still-“vibrant radical subculture,”²⁵ centered primarily on “obscure” working men’s clubs “dominated” by Marxian socialists from the Continent, it had been a remarkably inactive period for nearly thirty years, at least in terms of organized socialist movements in Great Britain.²⁶ On the other hand, however, the socialist revival portends the emergence of a decidedly more volatile revolutionary movement, one set amidst economic depression—and its multitudinous precipitates, including riots of the unemployed and strikes by phossy-jawed matchgirls, militant dockworkers, and other unskilled laborers—and infused with political disillusionment.²⁷ It was this paroxysmal context which gave rise to the Fabian Society and, in time, its socialist “mentality,” Fabianism.²⁸

²⁴ Knight, *Memorials*, 19.

²⁵ Lawrence, “Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain,” 172.

²⁶ Paul Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party, 1880-1945* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1972), 3.

²⁷ Willard Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 163.

²⁸ McCarran, “Fabianism in the Political Life of Britain,” x.

It was a profound wellspring, yet the Fabian Society that celebrated its inauguration on January 4, 1884 possessed nothing like a coherent ideology. Beyond its members' general aversion to the Fellowship of the New Life's resolution and a more pragmatic approach to addressing society's ills,²⁹ it remained, as Podmore implied in his letter to Chubb, philosophically indeterminate.³⁰ This vagueness, coupled with the founding Fabians' lingering affinity for both Thomas Davidson and the Fellowship, is perhaps responsible for Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie's observation that the society had been "casually" founded in 1884.³¹ Yet neither the correspondences nor the early resolutions of the Fabians fully justify this assessment; for if nothing else we find a straightforward—even if idealized—sense of purpose already present in January 1884: "the association's ultimate aim shall be to help on the reconstruction of Society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities" and that, "with the view of learning what practical measures to take in this direction the Society should...delegate some of its members to attend meetings held on social subjects, debates at Workmen's Clubs, etc., in order that such members may in the first place report to the Society on the proceedings, and in the second place put forward, as occasion serves, the views of the Society."³²

From this, it is evident that the Fabians had at the very least staked out the *locus* of their interest, the working class, and framed the-albeit-cautious means by which they hoped to achieve their aims: influence and infiltration, practices which presaged the educative "permeation" which eventually became emblematic of Fabianism. In the short-term, however, the society's

²⁹ Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 16-17.

³⁰ Knight, *Memorials*, 18.

³¹ MacKenzie, *The Fabians*, 27.

³² Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Fabian Society [hereafter Minutes, FS], October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, January 4, 1884, London School of Economics, Fabian Society Archive [hereafter LSE FSA], C/36.

early resolutions were ambiguous; but a lack of clarity, arguably typical of most (if not every) new Victorian social clubs, ought not to be equated with an unpremeditated foundation.

Some three months later, the society voted to form a pamphlets committee and took the decision to start issuing booklets “as occasion might arise.”³³ *Why are the Many Poor?*, the first of these tracts, tacked into the rhetorical headwinds of the debate surrounding what Thomas Carlyle referred to as the “Condition of England” by asking the central question which troubled the conscience of the reform-minded late-Victorian middle class. The Fabians’ humdrum solution to Carlyle’s problematic was sheer polemic: “You who suffer think of this also, and help forward the only cure for these evils. The time approaches when Capital can be made social, and be no longer left at the disposal of the few, but belong to the community for the benefit of all. ... The power is in your hands, and soon the chance of using that power will be yours also. Neglect that chance, and you and your children will remain the victims of Competition—ever struggling—ever poor!”³⁴

Despite its lackluster rhetoric, this bombast indicates some of the ideological genealogy which lay at the back of nascent Fabianism. First, the society is clearly alluding to the Reform Bill of 1884, which extended the franchise among working-class men. Virtually from the outset, then, Fabian philosophy compassed the radical reformism of the Chartists, which had been in abeyance since the 1850s. Moreover, the influence of early Victorian ethical socialism is likewise evident, particularly the work of the social reformer Robert Owen and the moral philosophizer T. H. Green, who coincidentally counted Carlyle among his favorite authors.³⁵ Indeed, it was Owen who, writing some forty years earlier in his *Book of the Moral World*,

³³ Minutes, FS, October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, March 7, 1884, LSE FSA, C/36.

³⁴ *Why Are the Many Poor?*, 4.

³⁵ R. L. Nettleship, ed., *The Works of Thomas Hill Green: Philosophical Works* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888), xiv.

prophesied: “Are there any who have yet considered the extent of the new, most inferior, and degrading circumstances created within the last half century by the competitive increase of the new manufacturing system of Great Britain? No: this knowledge, so valuable to man to acquire, has hitherto been hidden from him—it is yet unknown to him. But the dawn of the day of this knowledge approaches—the destruction of the causes of man’s misery, and the advent of his happiness, draw nigh....”³⁶

Meanwhile it was Green who, even after the passage of the Second Reform Act in 1867, assiduously campaigned for the further extension of the franchise to “include artisans and town laborers.” A vocal advocate of the continued reform of the electoral system, Green saw the extension of the vote as a “contribution to greater citizenship.” As he explained in a speech on “Parliamentary Reform,” “citizenship only makes the moral man;...citizenship only g[ives] that self-respect, which is the true basis of respect of others, and without which there is no lasting social order or real morality.”³⁷

Benefiting from a porous ideological membrane, early Fabianism’s absorptive syncretism readily incorporated both Chartism and ethical socialism into its burgeoning program. Taken together, this helps us to understand why Owen’s desire to “build a ‘new moral world’”—or, at a minimum, an environment that would systematically encourage the development of “‘social’ qualities”³⁸—and the sentiment embedded in Green’s philosophy—which anchored the ability of

³⁶ Robert Owen, *The Book of the New Moral World, Explanatory of the Elements of the Science of Society, or of the Social State of Man* (London: J. Watson, 1842-44), 20-21.

³⁷ Matt Carter, *T. H. Green and the Development of Ethical Socialism* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2003), 42.

³⁸ Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, 169. Just what constituted this new moral world or these social qualities is somewhat elusive, but we can infer Owen’s broad social betterment intent from the following excerpt, which appears in his *Book of the New Moral World*: “It is thus that the good of evil done in one generation benefits or affects future generations; and hence the utility of making the greatest possible progress in every kind of amelioration, and in every species of government during each successive generation; that the offspring which proceeds from us...should have the greatest amount of

the poor to realize their potential to democratization and reform—feature so prominently in many of the society’s earliest doctrines.³⁹

Yet despite being embedded in a social system which simultaneously reinforced the exploitative evils of early industrialization while encouraging a belief that class conflict was essential to the regeneration of a new, moral society, few of the Fabian Society’s middle-class founders had any practical experience in or with the radical politics of the age. Hubert Bland, for instance, was a twenty-eight-year-old failed businessman who “spent his leisure energetically attending advanced societies devoted to arts, crafts, literature and politics.” For his part, Podmore was an Oxford-educated clerk at the Post Office and a lukewarm spiritualist at best. Pease, meanwhile, was a stockbroker fascinated in equal measure by spiritualism and H. M. Hyndman’s “social revolution.”⁴⁰ Absent an immediate interest in controversial issues like land reform or the increasingly volatile Irish question, the first Fabians were cast unflatteringly as poseurs by the contemporary radical and socialist press, which scoffed at their pretensions and damned them as “radical philanthropists with vague, melioristic aspirations.”⁴¹ This critique, leveled by *Justice*, the organ of Hyndman’s “avowedly Marxist”⁴² Social Democratic Federation (SDF), and the ultra-radical *Republican*, signals the general uncertainty which dogged the

advantages and enjoyments. ... Thus, when reason shall prevail over superstition, the different proportions of the elements of our nature which are united in different individuals, will be calculated to produce harmony among mankind, and infinitely to increase the happiness of the human race.” See: Owen, *The Book of the New Moral World*, 24.

³⁹ Peter Clarke, *Liberals & Social Democrats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 14-15; Carter, *T. H. Green*, 42-43.

⁴⁰ Mackenzie, *The Fabians*, 18-27.

⁴¹ Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, 154

⁴² Henry Tudor and J. M. Tudor, *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate, 1896-1898* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 12.

Fabians' early program, the ideological broad strokes of which were painted in a lecture delivered by George Bernard Shaw to the society in May 1884.⁴³

Recruited by Bland, the itinerant Bernard Shaw, whom the socialist activist and SDF member, William Morris, called "one of the clearest heads and best pens Socialism has got," had for a time been linked to Hyndman's SDF.⁴⁴ In an atypical pique of pragmatism, however, Bernard Shaw abandoned Hyndman's fiery socialism and, when called upon, penned a foundational declaration for the Fabians that downplayed the Marxian fantasies of militant workers, barricades, and upheaval so gleefully imagined by the zealot Hyndman and his more ardent sentimentalists. As Bernard Shaw later recalled, "we knew that a certain sort of oratory was useful for 'stoking up' public meetings; but we needed no stoking up, and, when any orator tried to process on us, soon made him understand that he was wasting his time and ours."⁴⁵

The product of this quintessentially Shavian legerdemain was a *Manifesto* that struck a decidedly middle-class, non-fanatical socialist tone for the society. As far as position papers go, it was a rousing piece of propaganda, dense with the kind of high-minded rhetoric and anti-capitalist pomposity favored by the more genteel Victorian middle-class reformers and their ciphers. From prophesying the inevitable division of "society into hostile classes" to pointing an accusatory finger at the maldistribution of wealth as evidence that the veneer of fairness had been well and truly stripped from the façade of *laissez-faire* capitalism, Bernard Shaw hit all the

⁴³ Published in 1881, the program of the SDF (at the time, the Democratic Federation) borrowed much from that of the Chartists, including: adult suffrage, equal electoral districts, payment of members and official expenses out of rates, bribery, treating, and corrupt practices to be made acts of felony, abolition of the House of Lords as a legislative body, legislative independence for Ireland, national and federal parliaments, and the nationalization of the land. See: Chushichi Tsuzuki, *H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955), 40.

⁴⁴ *Commonweal*, January 25, 1890. As quoted in Britain, *Fabianism and Culture*, 29.

⁴⁵ G. Bernard Shaw, *The Fabian Society: Its Early History* (London: The Fabian Society, 1906), 5.

right notes.⁴⁶ There was, however, one niggling problem: nowhere did the *Manifesto* mention the claims and aims of the working class, the oppressed demographic whose position was so dire. Indeed, anything that might have resonated with this group, be it trade unionism or cooperation or wages or even hours of labor, escaped the querulous pen of the nimble-minded Bernard Shaw. These are noteworthy deficiencies, which Pease, some thirty years later and in full apologist mode, attributed partly to the society's early fixation with "abstraction, Land and Capital, Industry and Competition, the Individual and the State" and, at least in the case of the cooperative movement, open hostility towards certain working class concerns.⁴⁷ As a result, the early Fabian program lacked much substance that could recommend it to an audience beyond ideologues, revealing a disconnect between early Fabian rhetoric and the reality of England's working class. In the immediate term, this glaring disparity rendered the Fabians susceptible to charges of "elitism."⁴⁸

Two things happened in 1885 to alter this state of affairs. In November, the SDF was humiliated and its cause done irreparable harm when the scheme to finance two of its London general election campaigns with Tory money—a marriage of convenience between the conservatives and Marxists designed to split the vote in contested constituencies and thus ensure Tory victory—backfired. Although such conduct was not entirely beyond the pale of propriety in the context of Victorian English politics, the coupling was, according to Bernard Shaw, an "utter abomination" to radical sensibilities. Indeed, for many it was impossible to imagine a

⁴⁶ MacKenzie, *The Fabians*, 42-43; G. Bernard Shaw, *A Manifesto* (London: Geo. Standring & Co., 1884), 1-2.

⁴⁷ Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 22-24 and 63.

⁴⁸ Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Ronan Van Rossem, "The Verein fur Sozialpolitik and the Fabian Society: A Study in the Sociology of Policy-Relevant Knowledge," in *States, Social Knowledge, and the Origins of Modern Social Policies*, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 130.

more ideologically incongruous arrangement, particularly the insurrectionist wing of the SDF which, having repudiated political action altogether, was appalled at the revelation that the Federation had colluded with a *political* party. Shocked and disillusioned, many who had sacrificed their reputations abandoned the SDF. In their response to the controversy, the Fabians sharply denounced the SDF for behavior “calculated to disgrace the Socialist movement in England.”⁴⁹ Thus, the same year that ended with the embarrassment of the SDF found the Fabians unexpectedly occupying a dubiously situated moral high ground.

Ensnared as they were, the Fabian Society members who chastised the perfidious radicals could look back on 1885 as a transformative year. Not only did the society now count amongst its members such socialist luminaries as Annie Besant, Sidney Webb, and Sydney Olivier, but it could pride itself in its gradual abandonment of abstraction and utopian idealism. As early as March, for example, the Fabian executive formed a committee to examine “and report upon the working of the Poor Law,”⁵⁰ with special reference to “figures and assertions recently cited and made by...Gov[ernment] officials to disprove the allegations of great distress among the workers.”⁵¹ In June, following his visit to the strike-affected Denaby Main Colliery

⁴⁹ In a motion proposed by Hubert Bland on December 4, 1885 and subsequently carried. The text of the response is as follows: “The conduct of the Council of the Social-Democratic Federation in accepting money from the Tory Party in payment of the election expenses of Socialist candidates is calculated to disgrace the Socialist movement in England.” Not every member of the society agreed with the rebuff, for then-secretary Frederick Keddell resigned from the executive committee in protest. See: Minutes, FS, October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, December 4, 1885, LSE FSA C/36.

⁵⁰ Minutes, FS, October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, March 6, 1885, LSE FSA C/36. The “new” Poor Law of 1832, as it came to be called, was based on the concept of deterrence. As explained by Professor Frederick Powell, deterrence was achieved through the “rigorous application of the doctrine of ‘less eligibility’, that is, recipients of poor relief were to be exposed to conditions inferior to the lowliest laborer engaged in gainful employment. The able-bodied poor were henceforth only to receive relief in the carceral environment of the workhouse.” There was, in essence, no relief for the indigent beyond the rigorous, centralized control of the workhouse. And what relief there was to be had within that context was to be substandard. For an analysis of the Poor Law and its operation, see: Frederick W. Powell, *The Politics of Civil Society: Neoliberalism or Social Left?* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2007), 39-40.

⁵¹ Minutes, FS, October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, March 6, 1885, LSE FSA C/36. It is worth noting that the work of the 1885 committee appears never to have been published. However, in 1893 the Fabians

in Yorkshire, J. H. Watts reported on the conditions of the miners and the families he found there. Meanwhile, and as papers on “Socialist Reconstruction,” “Socialism and Political Liberty,” and the “Master Key of Social Reform” circulated among its members, the society set about organizing a conference to be held in 1886 to discuss the “aims and methods of Democracy.”⁵² Though minor, these changes signal an important step in the society’s early evolution towards a more fundamental awareness not only of the condition of England’s working class, but also the Fabians’ own position in the overarching debate.

Throughout the following year, the Fabians worked to secure a more pragmatic and utilitarian footing in the discourse surrounding the working-class movement. On the one hand, the society articulated a refined—albeit still vague—position *vis-à-vis* the condition of England question by publishing *What Socialism Is*,⁵³ a tract in which both surplus value⁵⁴ and the tendency of wages to a minimum⁵⁵ were mentioned and the work of trade unionism was alluded to. The society also assumed a more active role in the dialogue surrounding the grievances of the working class by hosting “An Eight Hours Working Day,” a debate in which several socialist organizations participated, including the SDF.⁵⁶ Rounding out their wheelhouse of interests that year, the Fabians did the inevitable: they turned to the fraught realm of politics. Thus, in June, the society convened a three-day conference of radicals and socialists in London to examine that

published *Capital and Land*, which examines the operation of London’s Poor Law. It is possible that the earlier work provided a substantial foundation for this later pamphlet.

⁵² Minutes, FS, October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, September 4, 1885, LSE FSA C/36.

⁵³ Based most probably on Sidney Webb’s paper “What Socialism Means.”

⁵⁴ A central concept in Karl Marx’s critique of political economy, *Das Kapital*, in which he argues that “surplus value” is the additional value produced by labor in the process of production. In capitalist societies, this additional value is appropriated by capitalists as profit when products are sold.

⁵⁵ The nineteenth-century economist David Ricardo’s theory of the “Iron Law of Wages,” which argues that all attempts to improve the real income of workers were futile and that wages perforce remained near the subsistence level.

⁵⁶ Both Tom Mann and H. M. Hyndman attended. Minutes, FS, October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, April 16, 1886, LSE FSA C/36.

great socialist triad of land utilization, capital utilization, and “Democratic policy.”⁵⁷ It was the Fabians’ hope that the conference would act as a catalyst and create the kind of ideological atmosphere in which a common basis could be found “on which Radicals, Socialists, and Social Reformers of every kind may cooperate to form a Democratic organization for practical work in and out of parliament.”⁵⁸

While the conference did not have the hoped-for salubrious effect—in fact, it nearly cleft the society in two—it nevertheless resulted in the creation of the Fabian Parliamentary League (FPL) as a separate body within the society. Designed as a vehicle for those who favored “Parliamentary action” and as an “instrument whereby the forces of Radicalism and Socialism might be united in the criticism and initiation of practical steps towards their common goal,” the League’s mandate was, as Sidney Webb audibly sighed, “the result of a compromise between two schools of opinion...so as not to commit the Society at large to political propaganda.”⁵⁹ The schools represented a pair of rival, although not mutually-exclusive, political strategies: Charlotte Wilson’s anarchist-influenced “party of action,” which worked to draw like-minded elements away from the Liberal Party so that it might create the “nucleus of a Socialist party in Parliament;”⁶⁰ and Webb’s “party of education,” wed thoroughly to his tactic of “permeation,” which sought not the creation of a socialist party in Parliament, but rather favored working within the existing Liberal Party to promote “Collectivist Socialist” policies.⁶¹ While the

⁵⁷ Minutes, FS, October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, December 4, 1885, LSE FSA C/36.

⁵⁸ “Fabian Notes,” *Our Corner* 7 (1886), 189; *The Fabian Society: What it has Done and How it has Done it* (London: The Fabian Society, 1892), 10-12. Fifty-three societies sent delegates. The SDF, not surprisingly, declined.

⁵⁹ Minutes, FS, October 24, 1883-July 6, 1888, November 6, 1886, LSE FSA C/36.

⁶⁰ *The Fabian Society: What it has Done and How it has Done it* (London: The Fabian Society, 1892), 13.

⁶¹ Norman MacKenzie, ed., *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume I: Apprenticeships, 1873-1892* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 102.

compromise that resulted in the creation of the League had not been arrived at easily, for the debate that occurred prior to its agreement caused the manager of Anderton's Hotel, the meeting's location, to send notice to the Fabian executive "that the Society could not be accommodated there for any further meetings,"⁶² the debacle over the FPL—and the uncomfortable anarchist-Fabian marriage that resulted—seems to have been little more than a storm in a teacup. For by April 1888, the League was reabsorbed as the Political Committee of the society, and the remnant anarchists either apostatized and converted or left the society entirely.

Despite its brief existence, the FPL produced several documents that proved significant to the long-term development of the society, both in practical and ideological terms. Indeed, as Bernard Shaw later recalled, it was the League's foundational *Manifesto* which provided the "sketch"⁶³ of what later came to be understood as "Fabian tactics."⁶⁴ After all, the FPL was an avowedly apolitical entity dedicated in part to the research and propagandization of the "political questions of the day" with the ultimate goal of encouraging advancement toward "the Socialist ideal."⁶⁵ This, arguably, is the quintessential definition of the Fabian mission throughout most of the twentieth century. Moreover, the League's *True Radical Programme*, intended as a discursive riposte to *The Official Liberal-Radical Programme* of 1887, was a nexus of nineteenth-century reformist radicalisms and, as McBriar notes, constituted the "sum and substance" of early Fabianism.⁶⁶ "Amplified" and "modified" by subsequent tracts, this

⁶² *The Fabian Society: What it has Done and How it has Done it* (London: The Fabian Society, 1892), 13.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁴ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 21.

⁶⁵ *The Fabian Society: What it has Done and How it has Done it* (London: The Fabian Society, 1892), 13-14.

⁶⁶ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 24.

foundational ideological schema called for, *inter alia*: parliamentary and local government reform (here, echoing again the Chartist movement's calls for adult suffrage, annual parliaments, and payment for MPs); the "progressive" taxation of the unearned income or "economic rent" (i.e. profit) of the idle classes to be redistributed to the laboring and poorest members of society (a notion of "leveling down" drawn and adapted from a variety of sources, including Marx, David Ricardo, J. S. Mill, Henry George, W. Stanley Jevon, and Philip Wicksteed⁶⁷); collectivism and state interference (as embodied in appeals for the municipalization of land to compete with private industry and the nationalization of such key industries as railways, elements which suggest the influence not only of Ricardo's Theory of Rent, but also T. H. Green's evolutionary approach to social development⁶⁸); and the state-directed reform of workhouses and the provision of compulsory education (the complementary notion of "leveling up" society drawn partly from Owenite social reform and New Liberalism).⁶⁹

The Fabians' philosophical maturation into one of late-Victorian England's foremost socialist societies was confirmed with the tracts *What Socialism Is* (revised by Bernard Shaw in 1890) and *The Workers' Political Programme* (published in 1890). While the latter was little more than a modified recapitulation of *The True Radical Programme*, signifying, in effect, the Fabian executive's official arrogation of the work done by the now-defunct FPL, "What Socialism Is" did considerably more: in the first place, it formalized the Fabians' rejection of

⁶⁷ As elaborated in McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*; Sweezy, "Fabian Political Economy," 242-248; Bevir, "Fabianism, Permeation and Independent Labour," 179-196; Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*; F. Rosen, "Jeremy Bentham's Radicalism" in *English Radicalism, 1550-1850: Tradition or Fabrication?* eds. G. Burgess and M. Festenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Peter Weiler, "William Clarke: The Making and Unmaking of a Fabian Socialist," *Journal of British Studies* 14, no. 1 (Nov. 1974): 77-108; Fox and Gordon, "The Early Fabian-Economists and Reformers," 307-319.

⁶⁸ Claeys, "Political Thought," 199.

⁶⁹ Bernard Shaw, *The True Radical Programme*.

Marx's rigidly deterministic class-based division of society and the revolutionary upheaval it anticipated. The Fabians, Foote notes, had come to believe that Marx was "fundamentally wrong" about the nature of profit and that the capitalists exploited the workers and adopted instead the alternative view that the "real" class struggle was between "idle owners" and the "producers"—that is, those who did nothing to earn their money and those who did all the work. In addition, *What Socialism Is* confirmed the Fabian pivot away from anarchism (a largely academic exercise, since this was all but accomplished in practice with the reabsorption of the FPL in 1888) in favor of state collectivism.

This early programmatic Fabianism would have amounted to nothing more than an amalgam of *au courant* radicalisms had it not been for the prescriptive formulations of Sidney Webb. The society's "leading theorist," Webb believed that the peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism could be achieved only by working *through* England's traditional democratic institutions,⁷⁰ a framework of representational government he extended to include not only the institutions of local government, but also trade unions and cooperatives.⁷¹ As Webb saw it, democratic England, suitably reformed and (more) broadly enfranchised, would, in time, produce a political class receptive to the ideas of socialism. The slow-moving permeation of this sympathetic group by "experts" (e.g. the Fabians) would result in democratic institutions that gradually acquired increasingly progressive accretions, such as a regulatory capacity over industry. In this way, Webb believed, industry need not be commandeered; rather, it need only be administered by a minister of government or "specialist" whose role it was "to establish an integrated, cooperative, and thus efficient organization."⁷² This same collectivist state would

⁷⁰ Bevir, "Sidney Webb: Utilitarianism, Positivism, and Social Democracy," 217-218.

⁷¹ Webb, *Towards Social Democracy?*, 5.

⁷² Bevir, "Sidney Webb: Utilitarianism, Positivism, and Social Democracy," 235.

“enforce” social “duties” through taxation, a process which would, ultimately, yield public provisions for such things as education, museums, parks, and even health services.⁷³ Thus, Webb, and, eventually, the Fabians, equated socialism with the efficient, cooperative, and coordinated organization of society achieved through state intervention. This reflected not only Webb’s peculiar form of utilitarianism—which produced a socialism “limited to practical efforts to modify the existing...order”⁷⁴—but also his belief that the principle of natural selection, much on the Victorian public’s mind since Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, taught that more efficient societies thrived—while those encumbered with disorganized systems withered and died.⁷⁵

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Fabian Society had welded together various elements of then-current radicalisms and emplaced them as the struts and armatures of their own ideological framework, one calculated to realize the “dream of the Socialist on sound economic principles, by gradual, peaceful, and constitutional means.”⁷⁶ In the broadest possible sense, then, *fin-de-siècle* Fabianism sought not only to extend democracy and improve the machinery of democratic government, but to expand government powers in a way that yielded “positive government action” as a means of promoting social and economic equality.⁷⁷ It was a vision that married (J. S.) Millite utilitarianism with Comtean positivism designed, in the last, to secure “the

⁷³ Bevir, “Sidney Webb: Utilitarianism, Positivism, and Social Democracy,” 235.

⁷⁴ Pierson, *British Socialists*, 331-332.

⁷⁵ Webb, *Towards Social Democracy?*, 29.

⁷⁶ Bernard Shaw, *The True Radical Programme*.

⁷⁷ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 25.

greatest happiness of the greatest number”⁷⁸ through state-directed activity.⁷⁹ The result was a statist conception of development and social democracy that had both national and imperial ramifications; for not only did it serve as the basis of Fabianism for the next half century, but it also framed what, as of 1950, the FCB called the “Social Foundation of Trusteeship”—the society’s particular postwar model of late-colonial imperial governance and colonial development.

The Fabians and *Fin-De-Siècle* Britain: The Tumultuous 1890s

At the confluence of these developments we find a burgeoning working-class populism among the Fabians, a transformation reflected in the prodigious propaganda and proselytizing campaigns which characterized the society’s output in the late-1880s. Indeed, through 1889 the

⁷⁸ There is a rich literary tradition in which scholars have extensively explored the philosophical underpinnings of utilitarianism. One is spoiled for choice. See: Bevir, “Sidney Webb: Utilitarianism, Positivism, and Social Democracy;” John Stuart Mill, *Essays on Ethic, Religion, and Society*, ed. J. M. Robson (London: Kegan Paul, 1985); Bruce L. Kinzer, *JS Mill Revisited: Biographical and Political Explorations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007); Norman Bowie and Robert L. Simon, eds., *The Individual and the Political Order: An Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998); R. Anschutz, *The Philosophy of J. S. Mill* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953); Wilfred Carr, *Education and the Struggle for Democracy* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002).

⁷⁹ Comtean positivism, derived from the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), is a philosophical approach to the problems of society that put “the social above the personal.” In the context of late-nineteenth century Fabianism and the evolution of social democracy, this meant putting the ordered progress of society in the hands of a “scientific elite” or “experts.” Thus, society’s “improvement” rested not on the reason of the “multitude,” but on the capability of “educated” and “instructed persons” to “carry the multitude with them.” It is this same logic which would, in time, determine Fabian imperial and colonial development policy formulations (discussed, in part, later in this chapter and, at length, in Chapter 3). See: A. Comte (trans.), *A General View of Positivism* (Aberdeen: A. King & Co, 1865); M. Cowen and R. Shenton, “The Invention of Development,” in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (London: Routledge, 1995); by the same authors, *Doctrines of Development* (London: Routledge, 1996); Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography, Vol. I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Fabians' omnivorous intellect yielded a rather considerable crop, including lecture series⁸⁰ delivered at radical and liberal clubs or sponsored by sympathetic societies⁸¹ which covered a range of topics from "The Politics of Labour" and the "Eight Hours Bill" to the "Trades Union Movement" and "Cooperation and Labor."⁸² Moreover, individual papers, such as Sidney Webb's detailed discussion of economic science, which examined the impact of the extension of voluntary cooperation on industry, were shared between society members to galvanize interest internally.⁸³ Articles were published, including Edward Pease's "The Labour Federation," which appeared in the Fabians' journal, *To-day*, and Beatrice Webb's (nee Potter)⁸⁴ article on the sweating system for *Nineteenth Century*, so as to extend awareness of Fabian views among the socialist community at large.⁸⁵ The society even prepared bills to be introduced in Parliament, notably the *Eight Hours Bill*.⁸⁶ The output of this prolific period, clearly a product of the evolving Fabianism, culminated in 1889 with *The Fabian Essays in Socialism*, a collection of earlier lectures on the condition of industrial England that were formatted for publication. Within two years, sales of the *Fabian Essays* reached some 27,000, a bonanza which not only marked the beginning of the Fabian "boom"⁸⁷ between 1890 and 1893, but also had the effect of

⁸⁰ The Fabians reckoned that the number of lectures delivered by members of the society in the year between April 1888 and April 1889 to be "upwards of 700." Though not all these lectures dealt with the concerns of the working-class, the statistic is nevertheless impressive.

⁸¹ The Socialist League, to name one.

⁸² Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 54.

⁸³ Mackenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume I*, 123.

⁸⁴ Married Sidney Webb in 1892.

⁸⁵ Mackenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume I*, 62.

⁸⁶ Minutes, FS, September 21, 1888-April 10, 1891, November 22, 1889, LSE FSA C/37. See also: Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 47.

⁸⁷ Typical Shavian evocation. It is a period that also witnessed the growth of local Fabian branches, including Edinburgh, Manchester, Oldham, Cardiff, and Glasgow. *The Fabian Society: What it has Done and How it has Done it*, 19.

reinforcing the society's growing reputation as the moderate socialists *par excellence* of the Victorian Age.⁸⁸

Had the essays been written in 1890 instead of 1888, however, the authors would have acquired from the great trade union upheaval of 1889 a fuller appreciation of the importance of trade unionism than they possessed just two years before. For the decade of the 1880s was a profoundly complacent one in the annals of late-Victorian trade unionism, characterized by what Paul Adelman refers to as the "ostrichlike" torpor of the trade union "old gang."⁸⁹ Having achieved a modicum of hard-won legislative and political recognition during the 1860s and 1870s, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) did the incomprehensible: it hung up its Phrygian cap and promptly buried its head in the smug quagmire of self-satisfaction. And there it stayed, refusing to confront the profound problems of rapid technological change, demarcation disputes, and unemployment that by 1889 threatened labor.⁹⁰ Indeed, stalwarts of "Old Unionism," including George Shipton, MP and the secretary of the London Trades Council, and George Howell, former secretary of the TUC, were steadfast in their opposition to popular movements, such as the Eight Hour Day.⁹¹ The result was a kind of broad-spectrum *laissez-faire* pacifism that manifested itself at the level of Parliament, where trade union MP's were content to be, in

⁸⁸ Mackenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume I*, 179. In *The Rise of the Labour Party, 1880-1945*, Adelman notes that there were "hardly more than 2,000 socialists in the country." Most significantly, the Fabians by this time offered a more broadly-appealing alternative socialism to that of the Marxist SDF and the anarchist-leaning Socialist League, neither of which was in a position to inspire allegiance beyond its increasingly marginalized fringe. See: Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party*, 10-12.

⁸⁹ Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party*, 10-12.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Shipton, in giving testimony on the proposed eight-hour workday before the Select Committee on the Sweating System in 1890, stated that, "We [the trade unions] have always resented any interference by the State in fixing hours of labour of men, who are perfectly free to combine and defend themselves." See: *Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons and Command, Vol. 17. Reports from Committees: Nine Volumes. February 11, 1890 – August 18, 1890, Volume 8: xcix.*

Friedrich Engels's memorably contemptuous phrase, "the tail of the Great Liberal Party."⁹² Such circumstances exposed "Old Unionism" and its avatars to increasingly vitriolic criticism from within its own ranks, which denounced both it and them as "useless" and little more than "charitable institutions for doling out funds for sick and superannuation, thus relieving the upper and middle classes of poor rate..."⁹³ The calculus of official apathy and sustained criticism inflamed the membership at the level of the unskilled laborers, fracturing the ranks and clearing the way for the "New Unionism,"⁹⁴ an outcome Shipton gravely warned would "be the active agent of their ruin."⁹⁵

A conservative craft unionist from London, Shipton was no stranger to the revolutionary intransigence of which unskilled laborers were capable. For barely a year had passed since, in his capacity as mediator during the London matchgirls' strike at Bryant and May's,⁹⁶ he witnessed a working-class victory achieved, "for the first time in many years," "not by the well-organized Trade Unionists, but by the class of workers whose very weakness was a source of strength."⁹⁷ A precedent had indeed been set, of course, but for the new generation of labor leaders, men like the future "father" of the Independent Labor Party (ILP) Henry Hyde Champion, New Unionism was hardly the harbinger Shipton prophesied. It was, instead, the

⁹² Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892), xiii.

⁹³ John Burns, who was a colleague of the Fabians Tom Mann and Ben Tillett in the running of the Great Dock Strike of 1889, shared this opinion, referring to unions as "mere middle and upper-class rate-reducing institutions." J. L. Mahon, "Trade Unionism," *Murray's Magazine: A Home and Colonial Periodical for the General Reader*, Vol. VIII (July-December 1890): 116-119; Adelman, *The Rise of British Labour*, 11.

⁹⁴ "The New Trades Unionism" recognized no inequality between skilled and unskilled workers, because the unskilled is only so through a force of circumstances over which he had no control, and all occupations require skill—more or less. See: Mahon, "Trade Unionism," 124.

⁹⁵ Mahon, "Trade Unionism," 116.

⁹⁶ John Tully, *Silvertown: The Lost Story of a Strike that Shook London and Helped Launch the Modern Labor Movement* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014), 134.

⁹⁷ Alex C. Michalos and Deborah C. Poff, eds., *Bernard Shaw and the Webbs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 22-23.

instrument of labor's rejuvenation and its defenders needed only point to the most spectacular manifestation of the New Unionism to stifle the millennial ravings of Shipton and the picayune "old gang:" the Great London Dock Strike of August 1889. Arguably the most spectacular of the strikes by unskilled laborers to grip London, from his vantage point at the head of the strike, John Burns described the scene in the most evocative contemporary terms imaginable: "This, lads, is the Lucknow of Labour, and I...can see a silver gleam, not of bayonets to be imbued in a brother's blood, but in the gleam of the full round orbs of the docker's tanner."⁹⁸ Later, Champion reflected that it was "The greatest struggle between Capital and Labour that this generation of Englishmen has seen" which "ended in the victory of the weaker side."⁹⁹

Amidst the welter of revolution engulfing the Port of London, the Fabian Society seems oddly voiceless. Indeed, the group took no official role in the Dock Strike and, in fact, the Executive Committee seems not to have met at all between July and September of that year. Filling the void created by the society's official silence were elements from its more aggressive "right wing," including Will Crooks, Ben Tillett, and Tom Mann,¹⁰⁰ all of whom were leaders of the strike and harsh critics of the "Old Unionism."¹⁰¹ Moreover, many Fabian sympathizers were

⁹⁸ MacKenzie, *The Fabians*, 106-107. A "docker's tanner" was the going rate of pay. At the time, sixpence on the hour.

⁹⁹ H. H. Champion, *The Great Dock Strike of August 1889* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1890), 4. The conditions of men hoping to find a day's employment at the docks were appalling. Every day, thousands of them, dependent entirely on casual employment, hung around the dock gates, fighting not only for the chance to work, but also to scavenge the rubbish heaps for food when they were not taken on. See: MacKenzie, *The Fabians*, 106.

Ben Tillett later recalled that "coats, flesh, and even ears were torn off...mad human rats who saw food in the ticket." For a fuller account describing the conditions of working men at the docks, see: Ben Tillett, *A Brief History of the Docker's Union* (London: nd).

¹⁰⁰ Details on the Fabian affiliation of Will Crooks, Ben Tillett, and Tom Mann can be found in the following: Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 129-131; Jonathan Schneer, *Ben Tillett: Portrait of a Labour Leader* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 66; Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, 206; McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 291.

¹⁰¹ Alan Haworth and Diane Hayter, *Men Who Made Labor* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 47; Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism, 1666-1920* (London: Printed by the Authors for the Trade Unionists of the United Kingdom, 1929), 390.

very much alive to the significance of these events, including Beatrice Potter, who “eagerly read every detail” published in the papers and noted in her diary that, “Commercially and financially, an extended labor disturbance in London is far more disastrous than in any other part of England...therefore an organised labour party would have in London a lever for working its own will that provincial labor does not possess.” Even given this, however, she ruefully added that “It is doubtful...whether, even if the Dock [Companies] capitulate, the great struggle of 1889 will effect [*sic*] any permanent advance.” Potter’s ambiguity aside, the London Dock Strike was symptomatic of growing labor discontent; for less than two months later, trade unionists were actively working toward the “empoverishment [*sic*]” of manufacturers by forcing a stoppage of work.¹⁰² Labor unrest, it seemed, had once again become “the order of the day,”¹⁰³ prompting Westminster to appoint the Royal Commission on Labor (1891)¹⁰⁴ charged with investigating “relations between employer and employed” in England.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Beatrice Webb’s Typescript Diary [henceforth BWTD], January 1, 1889-March 7, 1898, August 20-August 29, 1889 and September 22, 1889, LSE FSA, Passfield/1 [henceforth PASS/1].

¹⁰³ Mackenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume I*, 69. Though short-lived, the movement epitomized by the London Dock Strike was part of the nineteenth century’s continuum of “enthusiasm” in which unskilled laborers were periodically swept into the trade union ranks. Similar events transpired in 1833-1834, 1848-1852, and 1872—engulfing various industrial sectors, from the iron trades to cotton-spinning and shipping—and all were at least partially influenced by Owenite socialism. These similarities can be seen, for instance, in the socialist propaganda between 1833-1834 and 1884-1889. Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism, 1666-1920*, 401-405.

¹⁰⁴ Commission warrant dated April 4, 1891.

¹⁰⁵ Mann, a Fabian and prominent leader of the London Dock Strike, was invited to take part in the commission, which sat for three years and recorded hundreds of hours of testimony regarding labor relations in England. In his *Memoirs*, Mann wrote cynically of the commission: “When the recommendations came to be made in the final report, four of us were unable to agree, and so a minority report was also presented. It is frequently asserted that the main object of a Government in appointing a commission or select committee, is to shelve the troublesome question. I regard this criticism as substantially sound. Still, I am sure that much genuine effort was put forth to make proposals of a remedial character in the Labour Commission reports; but I am unable to point to any legislative measure as a direct result of recommendations made by the Labour Commission.” Thomas Mann, *Tom Mann’s Memoirs* (London: The Labour Publishing Company Ltd., 1923), 102.

Though the downturn that soon buffeted England's industrial economy dampened the spirit of working-class radicalism evinced by the Great Dock Strike, the volatility that lay at its heart soon found expression in the political landscape of *fin-de-siècle* Britain. For the hitherto dominant Liberal Party ran aground on questions of empire and Irish Home Rule (and, as we shall see later, free trade and protectionism).¹⁰⁶ Languishing throughout the 1890s in protracted bouts of opposition, the Liberal Party was consumed by internecine strife as William Gladstone's principal successors—Lord Rosebery, William Harcourt, and John Morley—vied for supremacy. The upshot of this political cannibalism was a largely rudderless Liberal Party and Unionist Government until 1898. In the meantime, the decade bore witness to increasing working-class activism and Fabian permeation—a subtle process whereby the society attempted to influence

¹⁰⁶ Tradition holds that the Liberal Party was formally founded in 1859, with the formation of Lord Palmerston's second government. A composite, loosely-affiliated coalition of Whigs and radicals, including men like John Bright and Richard Cobden, "Liberalism" at first came to be synonymous with the premiership of William Ewart Gladstone. Gladstone served as prime minister on four occasions (1868-74, 1880-85, 1886, and, finally, 1892-94). Under Gladstone, Liberals favored financial policies that emphasized balanced budgets, low taxes, and *laissez-faire* economics—that is, the regime worked to prevent and/or remove any obstacles in the way of free trade and capitalism. Liberal foreign policy under Gladstone tended toward non-interventionism, but that was not always the case. Indeed, it was under Gladstone that British forces occupied Egypt in 1882. Nevertheless, his *modus operandi* in matters foreign was chiefly one of cooperation, rather than antagonism. The Gladstonian era witnessed several important reforms, including the introduction of the secret ballot and the legalization of trade unions.

Irish Home Rule proved to be catastrophic in terms of the Gladstonian political mandate. With the Third Reform Act (1884), many Irish Catholics were enfranchised. Consequently, when the general election of 1885 was held, the newly-enlarged Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) held the balance of power in the House of Commons. Wielding immense political power, the IPP demanded Irish Home Rule—i.e. self-government for Ireland within the United Kingdom—as the price of their continued support of Gladstone's ministry. While Gladstone personally supported Home Rule, the move revealed serious fissures within the Liberal Party, for a strong Liberal-Unionist camp, led by "Birmingham Joe" Chamberlain, opposed it. At the same time, Britain's aristocrats, knowing full-well Queen Victoria's disapproval of Home Rule, largely abandoned the Liberals for the Conservatives. Not surprisingly, the conflict over Irish Home Rule, and the bifurcation of the Liberals it precipitated, doomed Gladstone's Third Ministry.

The historiography of the Liberal Party is vast and, at times, unwieldy, since different wings of the party frequently embraced contradictory policies. For my discussion above, see: Stephen Driver, *Understanding British Party Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); Graham Goodland, *British Foreign and Imperial Policy, 1865-1919* (London: Routledge, 2000); Robert D. Pearce and Roger Stearn, *Government and Reform: Britain, 1815-1918* (London: Hodder & Staunton, 2000); Robert Ensor, *England, 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

political discourse *without* becoming political. Instead, the society acted as a clearinghouse, gathering and distributing information on a range of topics that particularly interested them with the intention of massaging the contemporary narrative. To this end, Fabians attended the Liberal Party's Newcastle Conference;¹⁰⁷ presented papers at workers' conferences on such topics as "The relationship between cooperators and trade unionism;"¹⁰⁸ engaged in lecture series hosted by labor organizations, significantly at the Bradford Labor League; prepared new tracts on *The Workers' Political Programme*, *The New Reform Bill*, *Reform of the Poor Law and Organisation of the Unemployed*; and corresponded regularly with members of parliament, including Gladstone himself.¹⁰⁹

Arguably the most suggestive of the Fabians' efforts during these boom years came in 1892, with the publication of Bernard Shaw's *Fabian Election Manifesto*. The subject of heated debate internally since January of that year and finally published in the run-up to the general election in July, the manifesto did not so much make the Fabian case *for* an independent labor party, as a case *against* the Liberal and Conservative Parties.¹¹⁰ In the text, Bernard Shaw railed

¹⁰⁷ Convened in 1891. The Newcastle Programme which resulted from the conference included Irish Home Rule and a major extension of factory regulation. Early on, the Fabians attempted to characterize the program as being primarily a product of the society's influence. Edward Pease, while writing his *History* in 1915, infers heavily that the Programme—the "result," as he calls it—was "largely attributable to our efforts." Yet in a letter to Beatrice Webb (nee Potter) from September 1891, Sidney Webb casts much doubt on this reminiscence. In the letter, Webb laments that the Fabian-favored "excessive hours of labor" resolution had to be "moderate"—as opposed to the society's preferred eight-hour day—and that it "went little beyond what the bulk of Liberal MP's have already committed themselves to...." We cannot hold Pease entirely accountable for this bit of flummery, for his own account of the Newcastle Conference seems to have relied on Bernard Shaw's *The Early History of the Fabian Society*, in which he touts the triumph of Fabian permeation at Newcastle. See: Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 62; MacKenzie, *Letters*, 301-304; *The Fabian Society: What it has Done and How it has Done it*, 20.

¹⁰⁸ Presented in August 1892 at the annual meeting of trade union officials and cooperators at Tynemouth.

¹⁰⁹ Minutes, FS, September 9, 1891-February 24, 1893, May 16, 1892; and March 3, 1893-January 4, 1895, March 3, 1893, LSE FSA C/4.

¹¹⁰ After a "prolonged debate," the decision was made at a meeting of the Special Executive held on January 28, 1892. The tract was meant to embody the "views of the [executive] on the Labour

against the “Tyranny of our Party System.” He excoriated the Conservatives, “the party of privilege” then in power, for their “scandalous” disregard of the working class, their sanction of state interference only as a means of suppressing trade unionism (this, rather than intervening to alleviate the causes of unionism’s discontent), their failure to extend the voting franchise to include agricultural laborers, and their “denial of payment to Members of Parliament.” He likewise castigated the Liberals, the party in opposition, for “practically” abandoning the working class, their “persistent” ignorance of the condition of workers, refusing to adopt the “vitally important” reform measure of “Payment for Members (of Parliament),” and their enduring “servility” to the *laissez-faire* economic principles of Gladstone. Bernard Shaw was no less vociferous in his denouncement of the working classes, which he upbraided for their “political apathy.”¹¹¹ Developing on this sort of theme of equal opportunity chastisement, Shaw then dug his rhetorical boot heel into the neck of the “labour men,” criticizing them for their policy of affecting meaningful political change by “swamping the Liberal Associations with Socialists and Radicals.” Warming to his subject, Bernard Shaw then sniffed that this was a “paltry substitute for the straightforward action of a genuine Working Class party, supported by Working Class subscriptions and completely independent of both Liberal and Conservative aid.”¹¹²

This is a telling turn of phrase, for it is precisely the reverse of the Fabians’ policy since 1887. Indeed, the Fabians had to this point demurred when the question of an independent labor party came up, preferring, instead, to hew closely to Sidney Webb’s admonition that “the time was not ripe for the society to give much encouragement to the attempts that were being made to

movement and the attitude of the Fabian Society towards the Liberal, Conservative and Labour Party.” See: Minutes, FS, September 9, 1891-February 24, 1893, January 28, 1892, LSE FSA C/4.

¹¹¹ *Fabian Election Manifesto*, 1-3 and 4-5.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 1-8.

form a Labour Party.”¹¹³ For Webb believed that the mere threat of a third party would sufficiently motivate the Liberals to gradually adopt a more progressive policy, thereby eliminating the need for a true party of labor. Thus, until 1892, Fabian designs were chiefly limited to the permeation of the Liberal Party, a process begun immediately following the party’s promulgation of its Nottingham Program in 1887. Bernard Shaw’s manifesto signaled a break from all of this, albeit a muddled one: for in the general election, and in clear defiance of both the society’s apolitical stance and Webb’s stricture, the Fabians directly supported Ben Tillett,¹¹⁴ the independent labor candidate in East Bradford, while at the same time contradictorily backing the Liberal John Morley against the independent labor candidate in Newcastle. When the election results were returned, in which three labor men were elected and others—including Tillett—polled well, it laid bare the costly implications of the Fabians’ indecisive and ham-handed intervention: a new labor movement was manifesting itself politically, and it threatened to leave the Fabians behind.¹¹⁵

Initiative now passed to the nascent Independent Labor Party (ILP), which convened its foundation conference at the Bradford Labor Union’s hall in January 1893. The result of a meeting of ILP representatives led by the Bradfordian W. H. Drew¹¹⁶ during the Trades Union Conference in Glasgow in September 1892, Bradford was the first clear indication of stronger

¹¹³ Sidney Webb, “Wanted a Programme.” In a speech to the Fabians on December 11, 1891, Webb articulated his clearest position yet *vis-à-vis* the Labor Party: “Some members wish to see Fabian [Society] devote itself exclusively to the support of the Labor [*sic*] Party, and throw its entire influence unreservedly upon that side. Well, with this view I cannot agree.” See: Mackenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume I*, 354.

¹¹⁴ Mackenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume I*, 418. Tillett failed in his bid, but polled very well with 2,749 votes to the 3,306 for the Liberal and 3,053 for the Conservative candidates.

¹¹⁵ Beatrice Webb, *Our Partnership*, ed. Barbara Drake and Margaret I. Cole (Longmans, Green & Co., 1948), 110.

¹¹⁶ Henry Pelling, *The Origins of the British Labour Party, 1880-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 112.

“cooperation between socialists and trade unionists”—a development confirmed by the fact that the party’s leading figure was the Fabian J. Keir Hardie, himself a former miner.¹¹⁷ When the Fabian executive in London received Drew’s invitation to the congress, it agreed to send Bernard Shaw and W. S. De Mattos as delegates only on condition that “doing so does not hamper our independence.”¹¹⁸ This is an instructive caveat; for not only does it reveal that the society was determined to guard against any encroachment on the swathe of ideological middle-ground it had staked out, which privileged permeating the Liberal Party, but it also speaks to the Fabians’ distrust of the ILP, which Bernard Shaw ruefully jibed was “nothing but a new SDF with Champion instead of Hyndman.”¹¹⁹ Most troublingly, it also indicates that the outcome of the 1892 general election had brought no clarity to the tangled Fabian position—a stance many of the district Fabian Societies were so unwilling to forgive or forget, it prompted a mass provincial apostasy.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Hardie’s Fabian membership is confirmed both by Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 113; McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 248.

¹¹⁸ Minutes, FS, September 9, 1891–February 24, 1893, December 30, 1892, LSE FSA C/4. As with much concerning the Fabians, debate surrounds the degree of “influence” the society—in this case, its executive—exercised over the constitution of the ILP. As represented by the society’s London delegates at the January meeting, there is some evidence to suggest that Fabian influence extended into the early structure of the ILP (as a federal, rather than amalgamated organization, though this would later change), the use of the word “Socialist” in the name of the new party (which the Fabians opposed), and the rejection of the “Manchester Fourth Clause,” which called for “members to abstain from voting for the Liberal or Conservative Parties, even where there were no ILP candidates in the field.” It is, however, difficult to quantify such influence as being wholly derived from the Fabians, for many of the delegates already supported such measures even in the absence of proponents like Bernard Shaw and De Mattos. Thus, it is probable that the changes would have been adopted even had members from the London executive not been present. For a detailed exposition and analysis of the events as they unfolded at the Bradford Conference. See: McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 280–306.

¹¹⁹ Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw Collected Letters, 1874–1897: Volume I* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1965), 366–367.

¹²⁰ Following the publication of the *Fabian Essays*, the society’s popularity and membership increased tremendously. An outgrowth of this was the formation of satellites or “provincial societies” which sprang up in England, Scotland, and Wales. Importantly, these provincial groups were independent of the London Fabian Society, adopting campaigns as they saw fit but never ultimately beholden to the London-based executive. Thus, when later in 1893 many of these societies adopted close affiliations with the ILP, some even becoming ILP branches, the executive was in no position to challenge them.

This bitterness found expression at the foundation conference on one especially provocative occasion. Several hostile delegates had interpreted the society's caveat, which appeared in the circular *Workman's Times* under the Bernard Shaw-penned article, "The Bradford Conference: From the Fabian Point of View," as indicating it would actively work to prevent the formation of a national ILP. This dubious if understandable interpretation of the Fabian position triggered a challenge to the London Fabian Society's credentials, particularly those of the always-incendiary Bernard Shaw. During the debate that followed, one speaker, inflamed to the point of paroxysm, began a general protest over the Fabian executive's involvement in John Morley's Newcastle campaign, the outcome of which had snatched victory from the teeth of the Newcastle Labor Party. In the ensuing chaos, Bernard Shaw was debarred from the house floor and straightaway took up a "strong enfilading position in the gallery," from whence he launched a violent and vitriolic defense. Although the London Fabians ultimately won the vote of confidence, these events signaled a grim beginning to the year for the society. Indeed, within a few months, most of the provincial Fabian groups had either reconstituted themselves as ILP branches or were now closely associated with the party.¹²¹

It was increasingly obvious that the heady popularity the society had once enjoyed was ebbing—and with it, the potential for a terminal slide into irrelevancy. Coupled with the gradual realization that the Liberal government had no intention of legislating along the lines envisaged by the Newcastle Programme, which in turn threatened the status of the men in the society who had backed it, notably Webb and Bernard Shaw, the Fabian executive was gripped by a new sense of urgency.¹²² By now thoroughly disillusioned, Webb wrote to Graham Wallas,

¹²¹ MacKenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume II: Partnership, 1892-1912*, 4.

¹²² Among other things, the Newcastle Programme called for: Home Rule for Ireland, "One Man, One Vote," payment of parliamentarians, "adequate representation of labour in the House of Commons,"

effectively abrogating his earlier pro-Liberal position. “The time has come,” explained Webb on September 12, 1893, “for a strong tract showing up the Liberal Party, and advocating as many decent Labor candidates as possible.”¹²³

The result was “To Your Tents, O Israel!,” a jointly-penned treatise in which both Bernard Shaw and Webb heaped scorn on Gladstone’s cabinet for their collective failure to “make good the professions of friendliness to Labor which gained its majority at the General Election of 1892” and recommended that “the working-classes, through their trade organizations...take matters into their own hands at the next general election by sending fifty working men as independent Labor members to Parliament.”¹²⁴ Unsurprisingly, Webb’s *volte-face* affronted the party’s ministers who had hitherto looked upon the Fabians with a benevolent eye; for many of them now stood accused of failing to introduce legislation the society deemed suitable.¹²⁵ Thus, from the moment “To Your Tents, O Israel!” appeared in *Fortnightly Review* in November 1893, the Fabians all but doomed their plan of working through the Liberals to achieve their aims.¹²⁶ As Pease later observed in his *History of the Fabian Society*: “At this point the policy of simple permeation of the Liberal Party may be said to have come to an end.”¹²⁷

the extension of the Factory Acts, and the “limiting or ending” of the House of Lords. See: *A Plan of Campaign for Labor* (London: The Fabian Society, 1894), 14.

¹²³ MacKenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume II*, 9.

¹²⁴ *A Plan of Campaign for Labor*, 3. “To Your Tents, O Israel!” first appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* on November 1, 1893. As it appears in *A Plan of Campaign for Labor*, it is Bernard Shaw’s revised version.

¹²⁵ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, 211. It is worth noting it had a similar effect on the pro-Liberal wing of the society. Several resignations followed, including H. W. Massingham on October 20, 1893 and R. Whiteing, and Rev. A. Jephson on November 3, 1893.

¹²⁶ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, 211.

¹²⁷ Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 64.

Meanwhile, the Fabians found it no less difficult to convince the ILP of their sincerity, a task further complicated by the publication of *A Plan of Campaign for Labor*. In the tract, the Fabians outlined the scheme by which they hoped to secure victory for Labor candidates in the upcoming general election. The plan hinged on two essential elements: first, financing achieved through the collaboration of the TUC and, second, a compromise in which the trades councils and the socialist parties worked in tandem to decide on suitable candidates. For the ILP, the farce had been revealed, for it now appeared that the Fabians were unwilling to support Labor candidates where progressive or liberal candidates were running—a circumstance independent Labor rejected outright. At the same time, not only did the TUC balk at the proposal, but it also refused to throw its exclusive support behind the ILP. For the Fabian executive, it was *déjà vu* all over again: the ILP's failure to secure the TUC rendered it unreliable, confirming the society in its belief that independent labor action was "futile."¹²⁸ Clearly, both the ILP and the senior Fabians—Webb, Bernard Shaw, Pease, and Wallas—found the idea of electoral alliance repugnant. Importantly, this position was not universally shared by all members of the executive, a difference of opinion that would have significant ramifications.

For their part, Sidney Webb and the pro-Liberal wing of the society (including Beatrice Webb, Pease, Bernard Shaw, and William Clarke) found none of this especially disconcerting, for a timely upheaval in Gladstone's Liberal government—almost always in the offing—virtually delivered the Liberals into the hands of the Fabians.¹²⁹ When Gladstone's "blubbing Cabinet" collapsed under the weight of a series of debacles between 1893 and 1894, including

¹²⁸ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 250. As McBriar explains, the Fabians proposed that the ILP secure the TUC as a test of independent labor's ability—which it clearly failed to achieve, thus disappointing the Fabians.

¹²⁹ Webb hoped for as much in 1892, when following the Liberals' narrow majority, he gloated that the election "would deliver them into our hands." MacKenzie, *The Fabians*, 164.

Home Rule and naval expenditure, it brought to power Lord Rosebery, an imperialist¹³⁰ and committed social reformer who “wished to see as much as possible of the Gladstonian past wiped off the slate.”¹³¹ Perhaps “To Your Tents, O Israel!” did less to shatter the hopes of the society’s pro-Liberal faction, for many of Rosebery’s keenest political allies—including Haldane, H. H. Asquith, and E. Grey—were intimates of the Fabians from as early as 1891.¹³² Hope in the Liberal Party was resurrected in the bosom of the Fabians.

As events would prove, however, it was to be a short-lived recrudescence. For by spring 1895, it was clear that the Liberal government under Lord Rosebery had “virtually ceased to function.”¹³³ In her diary, Beatrice Webb described the debauched indolence into which Rosebery’s moribund administration had slipped, concluding with a passage from a conversation she had with Haldane.¹³⁴ Taking in the long view, the thoroughly-disaffected Haldane lamented that “Rot has set in. There is no hope now but to be beaten and then reconstruct a new party.”¹³⁵ It was not long before Haldane’s dire prediction was realized; for in June, Rosebery’s Government was defeated on a snap vote over army supply, under ordinary circumstances seen as nothing more than a vote of confidence in the then-secretary-of-war, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Instead, Rosebery, demonstrating the umbrage-prone naiveté that informed his headship, treated the vote as a censure of his entire government, a sentiment which prompted

¹³⁰ D. A. Hamer, *Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery: A Study in Leadership and Policy* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 264

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹³² In March 1891, Haldane invited Sidney Webb to dine with him, Grey, Asquith and their wives. In May, Beatrice arranged another dinner party for the group, which evidently did not go well, for Asquith “seemed bent on blocking Fabian efforts to move the Liberal Party to the left.” Mackenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume I*, 270.

¹³³ Michael S. Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 138-139.

¹³⁴ Of all the more progressive Liberals, Haldane was the closest to the Fabians.

¹³⁵ Leo McKinstry, *Rosebery: Statesman in Turmoil* (London: John Murray Publishers Ltd., 2005), 338.

him and his ministers to resign.¹³⁶ In short order, Lord Salisbury formed a new Unionist coalition of Conservatives and Liberals which carried Whitehall through to the general election, in which the Unionists trounced the competition in a “landslide” victory.¹³⁷ In a stroke, the Fabians’ would-be allies in the Liberal Party, the “Roseberyite” Liberal-Imperialists (“Limps”),¹³⁸ men such as Haldane, Asquith, and Grey, fell from power and became the opposition. In a matter of weeks, the Fabians’ had lost their last best hope of influencing Liberal policy.

Yet all was not lost; for in Haldane’s fortuitous turn of phrase documented by Beatrice Webb, the game was indeed afoot to “reconstruct” the Liberal Party. Acting as intermediary, Haldane enrolled the Webbs and Bernard Shaw as experts at permeating political parties—a development that drew the Fabians deeper and deeper into the factional struggle which at the time embroiled the Limps. The intensification of this relationship, which no doubt helped influence both the “collectivist” mentality and “progressive social reform” which characterized

¹³⁶ “Lord Rosebery’s Leadership,” *The Spectator*, March 7, 1896, 332-333.
<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/7th-march-1896/8/lord-roseberys-leadership> (accessed on January 1, 2017).

¹³⁷ Both the Liberal and Conservative Parties’ memberships included unionists branches—that is, imperialists who rejected the notion of Irish Home Rule, since it implied the gradual dismantling of the empire. It was in June 1895 that Salisbury corralled this group and successfully waged a Unionist election campaign in July. The Unionist victory that resulted was a “landslide,” producing a Parliamentary party of 411 seats (comprised of 341 Conservative Unionists and 70 Liberal Unionists). The brief “Liberal interlude” of 1892-1895 had come to an end. See: T. G. Otte, “Lord Salisbury,” in *British Conservative Leaders*, eds. C. Clarke, T. James, T. Bale, and P. Diamond (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015), Amazon Kindle Reader e-book.

¹³⁸ Although tidy definitions are notoriously elusive and, in any event, suspect, it can be stated, broadly, that Liberal-Imperialists were members of the Liberal Party who disagreed with Gladstone’s foreign policy, particularly insofar as it concerned Irish Home Rule. Yet, Liberal-Imperialists as a group were not monolithic. Indeed, Limps were motivated for a variety of reasons: there were those, of course, who feared the gradual dismantling of the empire, but there were also those who thought of imperialism as a means of increasing state power, which could then be canalized to solve domestic problems through social reform. At the same time, there were those Limps who cared little or nothing about social reform at home, but rather saw imperialism as a means by which the British state could “improve” and “civilize” others. See: Hamer, *Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery*, 266-267.

the “New Liberalism,”¹³⁹ had grave consequences for the Fabians, for it commingled with their own internal division between the pro-ILP wing of the society¹⁴⁰ and the Fabian old guard, who now stood accused of intrigues with the Liberal-Imperialists. In the context of political volatility seasoned with suspicion and distrust, the society had exposed itself to the toxicity of Liberal Party politics.

Though a catastrophic split of the Liberals had already occurred when Gladstone committed himself to Irish Home Rule in 1885, the first formal split of the Liberals in Parliament happened in 1900 when the anti-imperial, pro-Boer faction demanded the censure of the Liberal-Unionist Government then in power over its handling of the South African wars.¹⁴¹ This immediately antagonized the pro-imperial faction of the Liberal-Imperialists who, led by the former “Roseberyites” Haldane, Grey, and Asquith—all of whom had close personal ties with Sir Alfred Milner, the High Commissioner of South Africa and, as such, the man responsible for prosecuting Britain’s war against the Boers—joined with the government lobby and defeated the resolution calling for their censure.¹⁴²

The bifurcation of the Limps in Parliament paralleled a schism in the Fabian Society. As Beatrice Webb recalled in a diary entry from October 30, 1899, the arch-imperialist Haldane told her that “the Liberal Party is completely smashed.” Further, “The cleavage goes right through the Liberal Party into the Fabian society. Shaw, Wallas and Whelan being almost in favour of

¹³⁹ Michael Freeden, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 7-21; Ben Jackson, “Socialism and the New Liberalism,” in *Liberalism as Ideology: Essays in Honour of Michael Freeden*, eds. B. Jackson and M. Stears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 39-44; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 30.

¹⁴⁰ Including Hubert Bland, R. E. Dell, J. Burgess, J. Keir Hardie, and S. A. Dobson.

¹⁴¹ See Chapter 2.

¹⁴² Robert J. Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition: The Politics of Social-Imperialism, 1900-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 32.

the war, J. R[amsay] MacDonald and Sydney Olivier desperately against it, while Sidney [Webb] occupies a middle position—thinks that better management might have prevented it but that now that it has begun recrimination is useless and that we must face the fact that henceforth the Transvaal and the Orange Free State must be within the British Empire.”¹⁴³

It was, as Pease noted in his *History*, as if “the left and right wings of the Fabians joined hands in opposition to the centre,” a verdict made manifest at the Members’ Meeting held on December 1, 1899.¹⁴⁴ A lengthy resolution was introduced by S. G. Hobson—followed by an equally long amendment by Bernard Shaw who, on behalf of the Fabian executive, tried to “persuade Hobson to withdraw his resolutions in favor of something with regard to which there was some chance of unanimity.”¹⁴⁵ Despite their length, the resolutions are worth reproducing here in their entirety, for they represent the fundamental positions of the Fabian Society at arguably one of its most crucial moments. Hobson moved:

That in view of the character and tendencies of the political and economic ideas which have conduced to the present South African war, involving as they do embittered antagonism to industrial Democracy and to Socialist principles, the Fabian Society deems it essential to the furtherance of its special aims and within the scope of its work to declare: -

1. That the war is not caused by the Franchise quarrel but by the British intention to establish supremacy from the Cape to the Zambesi clashing with the set purpose of the South African Republics to maintain their independence;
2. That the Society is therefore not called upon to criticise either the Outlanders’ political claims or the Boers’ policy in regard thereto;
3. That no justification for the war has been shown; and that the plea that it was inevitable, if British paramountcy in South Africa were to be preserved, can only satisfy a debased national conscience informed by incapable statesmen;

¹⁴³ BWTD, March 29, 1898-January 1, 1901, October 30, 1899, LSE FSA, PASS/1.

¹⁴⁴ Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 72-73; Minutes, Fabian Society, November 17, 1899-June 26, 1903, December 1, 1899.

¹⁴⁵ Bernard Shaw to Harley Granville Barker, December 6, 1900. See: Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw Collected Letters, 1898-1910* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1972), 116.

4. That the Imperialist passion of the moment, the chief cause and support of the war, has swept aside all interest in liberal ideas; has distracted the attention of the country from domestic progress; has debased the conscience and lowered the democratic spirit of the English people; has effected a sinister cooperation between professional financiers and the military power; and in consequence threatens to involve us in political responsibilities, which we cannot meet save by the establishment of militarism as the predominant element in our national life.

The Fabian Society therefore resolves, through its Executive, its publications, and by all available means, strenuously to work for the revival of a sane democratic public temper as the necessary basis of all Socialist progress.

Bernard Shaw's motion proposed amending Hobson's resolution along the following lines:

That in view of the character claimed for the South African War by the Government as a disinterested struggle to secure democratic institutions for the Outlanders of the Transvaal, the Fabian Society ventures to remind the public:

1. That the time has gone by for regarding the acquisition of a parliamentary vote as alone worth a war. If it were, about a third of the adult male population of these islands, and all the adult women, would be justified in resorting to armed revolution.

2. That Democratic Institutions in the modern sense imply: -

- a. The recognition of public rights in the natural resources of the country, and the effective safeguarding of these rights against aggression from the private corporations and individual speculators to whom it may be advisable to grant concessions for commercial purposes.
- b. The protection of waged workers by legislation making due precautions for their health and safety compulsory.

3. That the country is therefore entitled to expect that in the event of the war being carried to a successful issue, the Government will take steps to: -

- a. Secure the rights of the Transvaal population in the valuable mines of the Rand by either placing them in public hands, or else exacting in royalties their full economic rent to be expended on public works for the development of the country, after recoupment of a reasonable share of the expenses of the war
- b. Impose a stringent Mines Regulation Act for the protection of miners of all races and their fellow workers underground.

4. That failing the above Imperial precautions, the only effect of victory will be to deprive the Transvaal of its present institutions under the Boer Republic, and make it the prey of the commercial speculators of all nations and races whose avowed object is to make private fortunes out of the mines without regard to the public welfare. Such a result

would expose the British Government to the charge of being the dupes of these speculators, and of having spent the nation's blood and treasures, and outraged humanity by a cruel war, to serve the most sordid interests under the cloak of a lofty and public-spirited Imperialism.

5. And finally, since the spokesman and newspapers of both our political parties, without a single exception, declared before the war that the constitutional grievances of the Outlanders must be remedied in any case, every member of these parties, whether he approves of the war or believes that it might have been avoided by more skillful diplomacy, is bound to insist that the advance in liberty and good government for which we are professedly fighting shall not be lost sight of in the hubbub of party recrimination, theatrical patriotism, and financial agitation.

The Fabian Society pledges itself to do its utmost to recall public opinion to the realities of the situation as set forth above, and to abstain from factious expressions which can only introduce party divisions on a matter which demands and admits of complete unanimity among disinterested and politically conscientious Englishmen.¹⁴⁶

There is a sharp contrast between these two resolutions.¹⁴⁷ For Hobson, who marginalized the issue of the Outlanders' franchise in the Transvaal (the circumscription of which being a key component in Paul Kruger's efforts to consolidate Boer power as a check against the growing clout of British mining interests on the Rand, and thus a grievance partly motivating some of the violence precipitating war), the question was one of balancing the autonomy of the Boer Republic against the establishment of British supremacy from the Cape to the Zambesi. Bernard Shaw's political calculus, meanwhile, held out no such gratifying illusions. Instead, his amendment assumes that the war against the Boers will be "carried to a successful issue"—hardly a surprising sentiment given the ardent jingoism that polluted the politics of the age. As such, Bernard Shaw's motion is concerned chiefly with recommending to the British government things it should do *after* its victory.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes, FS, November 17, 1899–June 26, 1903, December 1, 1899, LSE FSA C/8.

¹⁴⁷ Speakers for the amendment to Hobson's resolution included Robert E. Dell, Hubert Bland, and Frederick Whelen; those against it included Charles Charrington, H. T. Muggeridge, and F. Lawson Dodd.

Tellingly, neither the resolution nor the amendment was carried at the meeting. Stymied but determined, the executive recognized the need to consult its membership to decide whether it should make “an official pronouncement...on Imperialism in relation to the War” to begin with. Thus, in February 1900 the society sent the “Referendum on the Transvaal War and its bearings upon the Socialist Movement” by postal ballot to its members and, to no one’s surprise, the caucus revealed a divided membership.¹⁴⁸ On the one hand, there were those who argued that “the Society should resist aggressive capitalism and militarism, thus putting itself into line with international socialism, and that expenditure on the war” would postpone social reform at home. On the other hand, there were those who “contended that the question was outside the province of the Society” and warned “that a resolution...might have a serious effect on the solidarity of the Society itself.”¹⁴⁹ In both instances, the Fabians tacked closely to the insular, domestically-focused agenda they had privileged since the society’s inception. Yet, when the time came to vote, a majority of Fabians favored the government’s imperialist position in South Africa.¹⁵⁰ The attrition that followed not only “sheared off [the Society’s] most politically aggressive spirits,”

¹⁴⁸ The referendum, as worded by J. Ramsay MacDonald, was divided into two different sections and members were encouraged to vote on both. Division I asked for members to indicate whether or not they were in favor of “an official pronouncement on the war being made by the Fabian Society” with this caveat: “In the event of the ‘noes’ being a majority, that will settle the matter.” Division II asked members to decide whether or not to condemn the war “to be the result of capitalism...and declaring that it is necessary that the Socialist movement should strenuously oppose the national temper which attempts to justify this war, or...a resolution applying socialist ideas to the settlement when the war is over – e.g. the nationalization of the mines on the Rand...” In any event, the result of the “Transvaal War Poll” mooted further debate: 259 voted “no” in Division I, while 217 voted “yes.” Thus, the society voted to make no official pronouncement on the war. See: Minutes, FS, November 17, 1899-June 26, 1903, January 12, 1900, LSE FSA C/8.

¹⁴⁹ Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society*, 72-3.

¹⁵⁰ Minutes, FS, November 17, 1899-June 26, 1903, February 23, 1900, LSE FSA C/8. This was a very complicated affair for the Fabians. Bernard Shaw, for his part, disliked empire and imperialists, but nevertheless worked to ensure amity among the Fabians, as is demonstrated by the response both inside and outside of the society to his *Fabianism and the Empire*; while Sidney Webb, if Beatrice Webb is any judge, agreed politically with the imperialists, but emotionally sympathized with the Boers. See: BWTD, January 2, 1901-February 10, 1911, October 30, 1899, LSE FSA PASS/1.

including J. Ramsay MacDonald and J. A. Hobson, but “most of its union and Radical members,” as well.¹⁵¹

The rump of the society that remained, which included Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Charles Charrington, and S. G. Hobson, was thus compelled to stake out the Fabian position *vis-à-vis* empire by publishing *Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto of the Fabian Society*. Written by Bernard Shaw, this provocative pamphlet represented the Fabians’ first published foray into the tempestuous waters of British imperial policy, which helps explain why more than half of its hundred pages were dedicated to domestic, rather than international, issues. Nevertheless, as Clarke observes, the “aim” of the manifesto was to “give imperialism a socialist rationale.”¹⁵²

Fabianism and the Empire steered no middle ground. Directed against both the *laissez-faire* individualism of “unteachable Liberal[s]...bound by Cobdenite tradition”¹⁵³—a swipe at free-trade “Little Englanders” like Sir William Harcourt and John Morley, who, according to *The Fortnightly Review*, “out-Cobdens Cobden”¹⁵⁴—and those industrialists whose solution was to deal with foreign competition by imposing duties on imports¹⁵⁵—a position favored by the

¹⁵¹ Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 36. Eighteen socialist and radical members who had formerly served on the Fabian executive resigned following the poll. It was the largest *en masse* resignation recorded by the society over any issue.

¹⁵² Peter Clarke, *Liberal & Social Democrats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 84.

¹⁵³ Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto by the Fabian Society* (London: Grant Richards, 1900), 3 and 14. Cobdenites were adherents to the political and economic philosophy espoused by the “new industrialist” Richard Cobden. At the time Shaw was writing his demonstrably pro-imperial tract, Cobdenites considered international free trade and a non-interventionist foreign policy essential to world prosperity and global peace—hence his rather unflattering (and unsurprising) jibe. For background on the Cobdenites, see: Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (Garden City: Anchor Books Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1968), 1-18.

¹⁵⁴ Robert Rhodes James, *Rosebery* (London: Phoenix, 1963), 190. On Harcourt’s position as a free-trader, see: Patrick Jackson, *Harcourt & Son: A Political Biography of Sir William Harcourt, 1827-1904* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 325-7. On Morley, see: W. L. Courtney, ed. “Mr. John Morley,” *The Fortnightly Review* 70 (July-Dec. 1898), 249-50.

¹⁵⁵ Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire*, 12.

protectionist Joseph Chamberlain—the Fabians argued that Britain was at a crossroads, and the choice before it never more existential. Would Britain be the “centre and nucleus” of a global empire in which inclusion was viewed as a modernizing “privilege?”¹⁵⁶ In the end, could that very same empire also be an instrument for socialism? Or would the empire, which appeared listless and weak, burdened by outdated institutions and caught between a Liberal Party that was in ruin and a Conservative Party empowered only in the absence of a viable alternative, lose its colonies and be reduced to a pair of isolated, insignificant islands in the North Sea?¹⁵⁷

For the Fabian theoreticians, the answer to saving the empire lay in attracting the “best elements from all political circles” (handily sidestepping the muddle-headed and incompetent Liberal and Conservative “old guard”) by combining a strong imperial policy with a “dynamic” but “nonrevolutionary” social reform program.¹⁵⁸ Or, as the Fabians saw it, a variant of Bismarckian social-imperialism¹⁵⁹ which framed an external solution (the empire) to an internal problem (improving the condition of the most depressed classes of the archipelago) with the ultimate goal of “influencing the future *domestic* program” of the government in power.¹⁶⁰ Doing so required subsuming the centrifugal forces—i.e. individual, parochial, and class-based barriers—which had dominated England’s nineteenth century political discourse within a unifying communal framework of both national and imperial interest.¹⁶¹ Crucial to achieving

¹⁵⁶ Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire*, 4 and 34.

¹⁵⁷ Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 37.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

¹⁵⁹ Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 11-12.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 123. Emphasis mine. At the time, there were several social-imperial campaigns in operation in England, from the Conservatives to the Roseberyites to prominent socialists like Robert Blatchford, and all of them were competing for roughly the same ideological space. Although each strain of British social-imperialism was somewhat different in origin from the body of thought usually referred to as “social-imperialism,” they overlapped with it at many points, generating no small amount of confusion. See: Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 37.

¹⁶¹ Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire*, 51.

this, as witnessed in Germany, was the adoption of a system of state socialism designed to convince Britain's working-class that its interests were inseparable from those of the nation—hence, the manifesto's prescriptions, which reeked of Fabianism: the taxation of “unearned income” (and the public provisions it would provide),¹⁶² further reform and subsequent democratization of the electorate (some 3.6 million adult males still awaited enfranchisement, to say nothing of 11 million women),¹⁶³ and an array of moral and social reforms that targeted the working-class (including the end of both the sweating system and “starvation wages,” two of the more egregious offenses wrought by the capitalist system, and the adoption of national minimums in terms of wages, sanitation, and housing).¹⁶⁴

Above all else, however, what the *Manifesto* emphasized was collectivism, a key principle of Fabianism since the society's earliest days, and one particularly favored by the Webbs. Collectivism, in the imperial context, called for the most efficient and least wasteful “means of advancing British interests” through the “intelligent direction of the imperial economy by experts”¹⁶⁵—lest, as Bernard Shaw feared, “trade be exterminated” by competition from more efficient states.¹⁶⁶ Such a dire prognosis meant the state had to do more than simply engage in social reform at home; it had also to assume regulatory control over factories and bring industry under “abler direction.”¹⁶⁷ Doing so would not only put an end to the “parasitic industries” whose owners' ruthless exploitation of labor had so destabilized the state, but make industry more effective and competitive.¹⁶⁸ This obliged not only a significant capital investment on the

¹⁶² Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire*, 54.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶⁵ Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 123.

¹⁶⁶ Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire*, 51.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

state's part to "organize industry at home,"¹⁶⁹ but also, in time, the establishment of an "industrial British fleet" to replace the "lines of commercial privateers" whose ships monopolized the transport of British manufactured goods abroad.¹⁷⁰ It was, in other words, to be a comprehensive collectivization of industry managed by the government and its cadre of experts.

The Fabians believed this model of social-imperialism, sustained by the ideology of "national efficiency,"¹⁷¹ which unified local, central, and imperial machinery into an "organically working whole,"¹⁷² would not only secure the empire—and, therefore, the long-sought social reforms—but also lay a foundation for "International Socialism."¹⁷³ This it would achieve by "making the British flag carry with it wherever it flies a factory code and a standard of life secured by a legal minimum wage.... It is not enough for trade to follow the flag when the flag has followed irresponsible explorers who purchase concessions from tribal chiefs who do not know what concessions mean: civilization must follow the flag. And it is becoming more and more our concern that no flag that does not carry a reasonable standard of life with it shall be the flag of a Great Power."¹⁷⁴

Thus, taking in the broad view of the imperial landscape from Clifford's Inn, the Fabians effectively doubled-down on empire—or at least a self-contained version of empire consonant

¹⁶⁹ Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire*, 53.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷¹ G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and British Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 55.

¹⁷² Sidney Webb, *Twentieth Century Politics: A Policy of National Efficiency* (London: The Fabian Society, 1901), 15.

¹⁷³ Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire*, 53.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

with Fabianism, which married social reform and efficiency at home to Britain's imperial destiny abroad.¹⁷⁵

Conclusion

As with the British Empire, the 1890s was a profoundly restive decade for the Fabians. The society had formed, broken apart, and re-formed alliances with the Liberal Party as and when the party's own internal configuration seemed to favor the Fabian tactic of permeation.¹⁷⁶ But even when the relationship between these two groups seemed to have reached a nadir, the upper echelons of the society—the Webbs, Bernard Shaw, Pease, and Bland, for example—never fully broke with the Liberals, even in the face of *A Plan of Campaign for Labor*. Perhaps ungenerously, then, we can read the society's flirtation with the ILP as nothing more than the manifestation of anti-Liberal spitefulness. The fact that the staunch core of the Fabian old guard made insouciant overtures to nascent labor that did little beyond antagonize it, from imposing unreasonable demands on its relationship with the TUC to hedging its bets in elections that also featured progressive or Liberal candidates, arguably testifies to this.

After several tumultuous and humbling years initially spent oscillating between factions of the Liberal Party and then between the Liberals and labor and then back again, the Fabians understood that they were best served by adhering to an apolitical principle. So it was that, in 1896, the society published *Fabian Electoral Tactics* in which they did two things: first, they declared that the society “does not seek direct political representation by putting forward Fabian candidates at elections;”¹⁷⁷ and, second, they positioned themselves to advance the cause of

¹⁷⁵ MacKenzie, *Fabians*, 277-278.

¹⁷⁶ Many contemporary Marxists referred to the Fabians, with at least a modicum of justification, as “opportunists.” See: James Boyle, “The New Socialism,” *The Forum* 44, no. 6 (1910-1912): 642.

¹⁷⁷ While Fabians could still run, it would not be with the endorsement of the society's executive.

whichever candidate was most likely to further their social reform agenda—regardless of party affiliation. At the level of principle, this remained the Fabian strategy for a decade; in practice, however, such a policy of benign disinterest proved—and would continue to prove—elusive and fractious, as the Fabian executive election of 1900 made apparent.¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, the society had, by the end of the century, succeeded in articulating a core philosophy of Fabianism that would, over time, prove both malleable and resilient. It is, in fact, this very same ideology—and the tortuous social, political, and economic paths wended by the Fabians to create it—which Bevir credits with being instrumental in the “transition from the radicalisms of the nineteenth century to the social democracy of the twentieth.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, Fabianism was an ideological bridge linking the two, bringing together Britain’s traditional democratic institutions with *au courant* progressivism through the subtle, non-revolutionary permeation of the political classes, from Westminster down to the local vestry. The Fabians’ goal was, of course, reform—specifically of the conditions which had motivated the radicalisms in the first place—but it was also a great deal more than that: for in achieving these reforms through “collective administration” and the “collectivist organization of society” prescribed by Fabianism,¹⁸⁰ Britain would gradually arrive at socialism *through* the selfsame traditional democratic institutions—this, rather than the destruction of the state. As we have seen, this design had taken on imperial as well as domestic dimensions, a development which would have significant future implications.

In the meantime, however, the Fabians were drawn inexorably into the decade’s most pressing imperial problems as they themselves became casualties of the South African War.

¹⁷⁸ MacKenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume II*, 129.

¹⁷⁹ Bevir, “Sidney Webb,” 245.

¹⁸⁰ Webb, *Towards Social Democracy?*, 3.

Indeed, the decisions made by the Fabians earlier in the decade came back to haunt them rather spectacularly in 1899. So much so that, in the end, the battlefields of Mafeking and Kimberley were strewn not only with the bodies of Afrikaner settlers and British soldiers—along with the ambitions of more than a few of the Cape’s more notorious political aspirants—but also whatever naïve illusions the Fabians had about the insularity of their agenda and ideology.

CHAPTER 2: 1900-1939

From “Benevolent Passivity” to Policy Architect: The Ebb and Flow of Fabian Fortunes—

From the British Labor Party to the New Fabian Research Bureau

Introduction

Stung by the fractious political entanglements of the late-nineteenth century, particularly the debate surrounding the South African War, the Fabian Society sought to avoid political controversy that could threaten its recrudescant and clearly fragile unity. As we shall see, when confronted by the arch-imperialist Joseph Chamberlain and his crusade for tariff reform, the society steered a largely rhetorical course, emphasizing vague “alternative policy”¹ solutions that targeted the uninspiring middle ground between the antipodean poles of free trade and protectionism. In the immediate term, then, Fabian policy initiatives tended toward the parochial while expressing little innovative spirit in the realm of imperial thought.

In the meantime, the Fabians, along with the Independent Labor Party (ILP) and the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), were invited to help create a body to represent the interests of labor in parliament. The Labor Representation Committee (LRC) which resulted became, in 1906, the British Labor Party. The Fabians showed little interest in the new entity beyond what Edward Pease described as “benevolent passivity.”² Yet of all of Labor’s founding socialists, the Fabians alone supported the party’s pro-government position when the First World War broke out in 1914. This proved decisive, for it brought the like-minded society into intimate and long-standing collaboration with the party, a process which secured its position of influence over

¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question: An Alternative Policy by the Fabian Society* (London: The Fabian Society, 1904), 35-38.

² Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, 151.

Labor. Indeed, as discussed in this chapter, the Fabians were enormously influential not only in the formulation of Labor's new constitution of 1918 and its related policy documents, such as *Labour and the New Social Order*, but also in its annual party programs, including *Labour and the Nation* (1928) and, to a lesser extent, *Labour's Immediate Programme* (1936).³

Yet in the period following the First World War, Britain's contemporary unemployment crisis, stoked as it was by disappointing industrial performance, exorbitant inflation, and a largely stagnant international context, created conditions that made many key elements of Fabianism unworkable—chiefly its favored “socialism by gradualness.”⁴ At the same time, the Fabians slowly descended into a period of intellectual “senility.”⁵ The stagnation of the twenties was carried over into the frustrating thirties, which witnessed the formation of the New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB). An independent body, the remit of the NFRB was devoid of the Fabian political and electoral activities and was intended solely to “follow the Fabian tradition of Socialist research,” an ambit that ranged from guaranteed wages to constitutional reform.⁶ Its subsequent output between 1932 and 1938 was comparable only to that of the pre-War Fabian Society, yet the Bureau's apolitical stance did not outlast the temporal bookend of that six-year period, for in 1938 the NFRB and the Fabian Society were amalgamated, the event that revitalized the Fabian Society.

This chapter examines the circumstances which brought together the Fabian Society and the Labor Party between 1899 and 1939. It takes as its point of departure the South African War,

³ See: Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, eds., *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Volume Three: 1905-1924* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), 305; Lawrence Goldman, *The Life of RH Tawney: Socialism and History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 157; Keith Laybourn, *Fifty Key Figures in Twentieth Century British Politics* (London: Routledge, 2002), 107.

⁴ Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the Labour Party* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 1997), 57.

⁵ BTWD, January 4, 1932-December 29, 1934, August 24, 1933, LSE FSA PASS/1.

⁶ Cole, *Fabian Socialism*, 225.

which catalyzed the Fabians' early, pro-imperial perspectives on empire, signaling what would become a provocative trend for the society. Indeed, the correspondence of the Fabian position with that of Whitehall in 1899/1900 mirrored that of the society when war broke out in Europe in 1914. As we shall see, this alignment of interests did much to shape the Fabian Society's fortunes in the twentieth century. For, on the one hand, it aligned the society with the pro-war Labor Party, while, on the other, it alienated the anti-war ILP, the body which had hitherto been the dominant ideological force in terms of party policy formulation. These circumstances nurtured and encouraged an affinity between the Fabians and Labor which, after the Second World War and the electoral rise of Labor in 1945, proved pivotal in terms of the potential for realizing the Fabianization of the British Empire. The nuance of these earlier developments is, therefore, essential to our understanding of later events. Necessarily, this chapter explores some aspects of the evolution of Fabian thought in relation to the colonial empire, but its emphasis is on the degree of Fabian permeation on Labor ideology.

The South African War and British Socialists: The Fabians, the SDF, and the ILP⁷

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, the issues that increasingly came to dominate British national politics were all connected with imperial expansion, particularly in Africa. In 1895, for example, the collapse of the Jameson Raid in South Africa revealed not only the iniquity of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and the magnate Cecil Rhodes, the raid's "chief conspirator," but also the depth of the cancerous malfeasance which characterized

⁷ Arguably the definitive account of the events leading up to the South African War is Iain R. Smith's *The Origins of the South African War 1899-1902* (London: Longman Pearson, 1996). In addition to Smith, Martin Meredith's *Diamonds, Gold, and War* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008) as well as Frank Welsh's *South Africa: A Narrative History* (New York: Kodansha International, 1999); Thomas Pakenham's *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979) help to put the flesh on the bones of this section of the study.

Whitehall's relationship with the British administration at Cape Colony.⁸ Indeed, Jameson's "underbred business" in the Transvaal laid bare the complicity of such figures as Hercules Robinson, the British High Commissioner at Cape Town, as well as that of Joseph Chamberlain, the Liberal-Unionist Government's newly-installed Colonial Secretary who, once assured of success by Robinson, agreed with the movement to secure British interests in the South African interior.⁹ These revelations created a public relations nightmare for the British government, which following the debacle stood exposed as bullying, bungling imperial *provocateurs*. That the South African Committee of Enquiry investigating the BSAC's folly was defanged while London "white washed" Cecil Rhodes, who at the time of the raid was also prime minister of Cape Colony,¹⁰ is testament to the political economy of the age.¹¹

Events, however, soon conspired to intensify British involvement in Africa. For barely two months after the Jameson Raid, the BSAC was once again mired in conflict, this time in the form of the 1896 Matabele Uprising, a murderous tit-for-tat game in which white settlers were massacred by Ndebele soldiers and Ndebele soldiers were butchered by the heavily armed forces of the BSAC. As the colony of Rhodesia got off to a bloody start, Chamberlain convened the 1897 Colonial Conference in London, a vaguely arranged meeting designed to solicit feedback from the premiers of the self-governing colonies on various topics, including the potential for

⁸ BWTD, March 29, 1898-January 1, 1901, LSE FSA PASS/1.

⁹ Chamberlain survived only by claiming later that: "I never had any knowledge, or, until, I think it was the day before the actual raid took place, the slightest suspicion, of anything in the nature of a hostile armed invasion of the Transvaal." Given that his acquiescence to Robinson came a month and a half before the Raid, Chamberlain's testimony is, at best, deceptive. For full details concerning Parliament's findings on the events leading up to and during the Jameson Raid, see: *Second Report from the Select Committee on British South Africa; with the Proceedings of the Committee*, July 13, 1897. For the quote above, see the section on "Colonial Office Knowledge," Q. 6223, xlv.

¹⁰ A position Rhodes resigned the day after the raid.

¹¹ BWTD, March 29, 1898-January 1, 1901, LSE FSA PASS/1.

federation and the colonial contribution to the British naval fund.¹² Little more than a year later, in September 1898, General Sir H. H. Kitchener led the combined Anglo-Egyptian Army in a vengeful slaughter of thousands of Muslim Dervishes at the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan. In the ghastly, industrial horror which followed “Shrapnel whistled and Maxims growled savagely. From all the line came perpetual fire, fire, fire, and shrieked forth in great gusts of destruction. ... The dervish army was killed out as hardly an army has been killed out in the history of war.”¹³ Omdurman, as had been hoped, was the ultra-violent means by which the British avenged General Charles Gordon who, along with the British forces under his command, was annihilated on virtually the same spot thirteen years earlier. Days later, the dreadfully effective Kitchener was dispatched to Fashoda, where the crisis that marked the climax of Anglo-French imperial competition in Africa unfolded.

This near-constant series of crises and conflicts culminated in the South African War of 1899, a difficult, large-scale colonial war waged by a truculent nation in defiance of the world. The profundity of this dynamic was no more competently expressed than by Bernard Shaw, who captured perfectly the sense of unyielding British public sentiment for the war in a letter to George Samuel in December 1899: “The Boer and the Britisher are both fighting animals. ... Do you expect me solemnly to inform a listening nation that the solution of the South Africa problem is that the lion shall lie down with the highly-armed lamb in mutual raptures of quakerism, vegetarianism, and teetotalism? ... Now—and here I am going to deliver a piece of

¹² Colonial Office, *Proceedings of a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies, at the Colonial Office, London, June and July 1897* (London: HMSO, 1897).

¹³ G. W. Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartoum* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1898), 283-285.

exquisitely English wisdom—either the Boers will lick the British in this campaign, or the British will lick the Boers.”¹⁴

This is not to say that Bernard Shaw felt some especial affinity for the empire or, for that matter, its imperialists. Rather, as he wrote to the playwright and fellow Fabian Edward Rose, empire “is the disease that kills civilization, and...as [William] Morris put it ‘no man is good enough to be another man’s master.’”¹⁵ Nevertheless, behind the cynicism of the paradigmatic piece of Shavian wit above lay the fast-flowing current of national sentiment, itself fueled ever more egregiously by copious amounts of incendiary propaganda meant to stoke the fires of great British race patriots and imperial zealots everywhere.

At the nexus of this cause lay the hydra-like tendrils of jingoistic and aggrieved officialdom. For privately, Chamberlain was determined to bring the Boers to heel following the Jameson Raid debacle—and in the high summer of 1899, he had in his grasp a nettle of provocation. After enduring weeks of torturous negotiations surrounding the question of British immigrant (“Uitlander”) franchise in the Transvaal, during the course of which he was inundated with increasingly frantic reports from Cape Town,¹⁶ Chamberlain minuted the following: “It is clear that we cannot go on negotiating for ever and we must bring matters to a head. The next step in military preparations is so important and so costly that I hesitate to incur the expense...so long as there seems a fair chance of a satisfactory settlement. But I dread above all the continued

¹⁴ Laurence, *Bernard Shaw Collected Letters, 1898-1910*, 121-122.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 154-155.

¹⁶ See: South African Republic, *Further Correspondence Relating to Proposed Political Reforms in the South African Republic*, July and August 1899 (London: HMSO, 1899). It is evident that the process of negotiating with President Kruger’s Transvaal administration was increasingly painstaking and exasperating. During these months, the tone in the official telegrams between Milner and Chamberlain shifts from cordial and businesslike to frenetic and rigidly succinct. Clearly, whatever patience propriety had thrust upon these men had been exhausted, particularly on the part of Chamberlain.

whittling away of differences until we have no *casus belli* left, although the Boers may claim a partial diplomatic victory and be as disagreeable and intractable in the future as in the past.”¹⁷

To effect the hoped-for punishment of the Boers, the Colonial Secretary had already installed at the Cape the necessary instrument: Sir Alfred Milner, a cultural Darwinist described by Beatrice Webb as “intolerant,” “sore,” and “bitter.”¹⁸ Like Chamberlain, Milner was an arch-imperialist who believed that the British race was the greatest of all governing races, a succinct characterization that hardly does Milner’s hidebound narrow-mindedness justice. For in his own words, Milner was “a British (indeed primarily English) Nationalist. If I am also an Imperialist, it is because the destiny of the English race, owing to its insular position and long supremacy at sea, has been to strike fresh roots in distant parts of the world. My patriotism knows no geographical but only racial limits. I am an Imperialist...because I am a British Race Patriot.”¹⁹

The Prime Minister Lord Salisbury loathed Milner and “his jingo supporters,” whom Salisbury was rightly convinced would “force the Government to make a considerable military effort [in South Africa]—all for a people whom we despise, and for something which will bring no profit and no power to England.”²⁰ No matter; for in the end, the provocative hawks and crowing jingoes, carried aloft on an upsurge of national sentiment stiffened into resolve by foreign expressions of sympathy for the Boers, particularly from Germany and Russia, got their war.

¹⁷ Despatches, South African Republic. Chamberlain Minute to Milner on Milner to Chamberlain, August 20, 1899, NA CO 417/265.

¹⁸ BWTD, January 2, 1901-February 10, 1911, October 14, 1905, LSE FSA PASS/1.

¹⁹ *Times*, July 25, 1925. As quoted in Bill Schwarz, *The White Man’s World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 99-100.

²⁰ R. Taylor, *Lord Salisbury* (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975), 178. In August 1899, following an especially truculent telegram from Milner, Salisbury noted to the Colonial Secretary that “It looks as if [Milner] has been spoiling for the fight with some glee and does not like putting his clothes on again.”

The South African War caused a remarkable realignment of friendships and hostilities among the British socialists. We have seen of course how the war coupled with the Fabians' neglect of foreign policy to open an ideological chasm within the society. Months after the split and before *Fabianism and the Empire* was published, the Fabian executive sent a cyclostyled letter to its membership with what reads like a self-justifying assurance: "we steered the Society safely through a rapid in which it might have been wrecked by a party pronouncement on the war."²¹ Numerically, perhaps, the assurance was correct; the society had not, after all, been "wrecked." Yet, the fact that the assurance appears in a paragraph above a reminder that the upcoming Fabian executive election featured candidates who opposed the imperialist pro-government view belies any sense of equanimity within the society. It seemed much remained at stake for the Fabians in a matter that would not be settled until the appearance of Bernard Shaw's uncharacteristically tactful and delicately-balanced manifesto.

For all this, the Fabians were not the only prominent British socialists²² to reckon with the South African War. The fact that they were one of the few socialist groups to actively side with the government, however, bequeathed to the society a certain ignominy amongst its fierier socialist peers. For its part, the SDF denounced imperial expansion because it smacked of capitalist iniquity, whatever its context. For such leading figures of the SDF as H. M. Hyndman, who criticized the Fabians for their "championship of the capitalist gang and their agents" in South Africa,²³ the war was an especially flagrant example of the sneer-inducing intimacies to which capitalism and imperialism were prone; for it was clear that the war's catalyst was the

²¹ Bernard Shaw to Members of the Fabian Society, April 11, 1900. See: Laurence, *Bernard Shaw Collected Letters, 1898-1910*, 157.

²² Of the three groups examined as part of this study, the Fabian Society was the smallest membership-wise: in 1899, the society counted 861 members, while the SDF had about 2,600, and the ILP, the largest organ of British Socialism, a little over 7,000.

²³ Laurence, *Bernard Shaw Collected Letters, 1898-1910*, 160.

greed of the Randlords and the rapacity of the mining speculators who were desperate to lay their hands on part—any part—of the Witwatersrand windfall. In fact, an article which appeared in its rabble-rousing journal *Justice* in December 1899 made clear the SDF position: “Those speculators of the City, helped by Chamberlain, have egged the Boers on to war, and they deserve the reprobation of the whole of humanity.”²⁴ It would be an error, however, to infer from this anything like altruism on Hyndman’s part; for underlying such criticism and protestation was the decidedly less magnanimous reality of his pervasive bigotry. Indeed, above all else Hyndman conceived British intentions in South Africa as “part of a great project for the constitution of an Anglo-Hebraic Empire in Africa,” chiefly because Rhodes’ company was financed by Jewish financial capital and his business partner was Jewish, the potential for which caused no small amount of handwringing amongst Hyndman and his cadre of anti-Semites.²⁵ So motivated, the Marxian SDF remained committed anti-Imperialists—a stance it shared with J. Keir Hardie’s Independent Labor Party (ILP).

As with the SDF, the ILP—which spent the latter part of the 1890s developing an attitude toward international matters largely derived from a synthesis of Marxist sources and left-wing “Little England” liberalism²⁶—condemned as tyrannical Britain’s grasping imperial

²⁴ Jean Jaures, “Madness,” *Justice* (December 2, 1899): 6.

²⁵ Bill Baker, *The SDF and the Boer War* (London: The Communist Party of Great Britain, 1975), 4. As Claeys explains, Hyndman’s controversial “Jewish conspiracy” hypothesis originated during Britain’s invasion of Egypt in 1882. In describing the causes of the South African War, Hyndman wrote in *Justice* that “the Jew capitalists have been specially prominent in this nefarious business, and it is the Jew-owned yellow press which has been specially virulent in exciting the jingo mob here.” See: G. Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 154.

²⁶ That is, a non-revolutionary centrist Marxist position which, in the vein of Hobson, repudiated financial imperialism while at the same time propounding English nationalistic sentiment. Still, the ILP seems not to have adopted a “foreign policy” as such, preferring instead to accept a general attitude toward affairs international. As explained in the *ILP News* (1897): “The ILP does not possess any set of opinions on foreign affairs that can be called a foreign policy, except in so far as it claims that the nature of democracy is such that if the power of the people were to become real, the unnatural monarch-made national barriers would break down without losing for us those special national characteristics that are

machinations in the South African interior. Indeed, as early as July 1899 the National Administrative Council (NAC) of the ILP protested the manner in which the government was conducting negotiations with the Transvaal, which the council argued were designed to do little more than provoke war “in the interests of unscrupulous exploiters.”²⁷ By January 1900, the jingoes got their way and Britain found itself once again enmeshed in a war, only this time amidst the vastness of the South African *veldt*. J. Keir Hardie, now fully embarked on a pro-Boer, anti-imperialist propaganda campaign, harshly rebuked the imperial government in his speeches and, in an article that ran in the January 6 edition of the *Labour Leader*, moved to position the ILP in opposition to the hawks in Whitehall and Cape Town, writing that “As Socialists, our sympathies are bound to be with the Boers. Their Republican form of government bespeaks freedom, and is thus hateful to tyrants, whilst their methods of production for use are much nearer our ideal than any form of exploitation for profit.”²⁸

Some three months later, the NAC took its cue from Hardie and denounced the unsavory actions of “Big Englanders” like Chamberlain, Milner, and Salisbury. Remit in hand, the council proposed the following resolution for the First Annual Conference of the Labor Representation Committee (LRC): “This Congress, believing the harrowing war in South Africa to be mainly due to the corrupt agitation of the Transvaal mine-owners, having for its object the acquisition of monopolies and a cheap supply of coloured and European labour, protests against the destruction of the two Republics as being contrary to all our ideals of national political justice, and

valuable.” See: Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics*, 219-221; A. Morgan, *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 26; McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 280-306; Pelling, *Origins of the Labour Party*, 145-168.

²⁷ Independent Labour Party, *Report of the Ninth Annual Conference of the Independent Labour Party, April 8th and 9th 1901* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1901), 4.

²⁸ Keir Hardie, “A Capitalist’s War,” *Labour Leader*, January 6, 1900. As quoted in Preben Kaarsholm, “Pro-Boers,” in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, Volume I: History and Politics*, ed. Raphael Samuel (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), 110-126.

respectfully invites the Government to endeavor to terminate hostilities by offering to submit to arbitration....”²⁹

The ILP’s unabashed pro-Boer, anti-imperial sentiment (“We are...dead against any further extension of the British Empire” the *ILP News* trumpeted dogmatically³⁰) stands in stark contrast to the posture of the foreign policy neophyte Fabians, who reconciled themselves with the government’s cause by framing the British Empire as the fulcrum of a social-imperial paradigm. They were not, however, British socialism’s only martially-inspired apostates; for Robert Blatchford, the founder and editor of the exceptionally popular socialist publication *Clarion*, had likewise come to terms with the idea that the empire, gently massaged by the oiled and responsible hands of appropriately-designated ideologues, could be an entirely appropriate vehicle for the fulfilment of socialism’s aims. To this end, in the weeks following the start of the South African War, *Clarion* unveiled a strategy that, with cloying voguishness, recalled the Fabians: a marriage of socialism and imperialism. The blissful outcome of this ideological coupling was pointedly expressed in an article that appeared in the November 11, 1899, issue of *Clarion*: “The distinction between Socialist Imperialism and the other sort is that our aim is, not to filch from our neighbours, but to benefit them; not to increase international rancor by taking advantage of weaker States, but to promote the fraternisation of the peoples by extending to all the advantages we ourselves enjoy ... To develop the world’s blessings for the world’s benefit, to work unceasingly for the prosperity of the human race even more than for the glorification of our own nation—that is the Imperialism of Socialism.”³¹

²⁹ Independent Labour Party, *Report of the Ninth Annual Conference of the Independent Labour Party, April 8th and 9th 1901*, 12. The report of 1901 outlines numerous agenda items added by the ILP NAC in advance of the first LRC meeting.

³⁰ *ILP News* (March 1900): 3.

³¹ *Clarion*, November 11, 1899. As quoted in Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics*, 176.

As stimulating as such pronouncements of harmony undoubtedly were, at best they produced an ambivalent honeymoon—and at worst one that was thoroughly disappointing to the newlyweds. For “Numquan,” the pseudonym under which Blatchford wrote for *Clarion*, did not necessarily approve of the empire; indeed, before 1898 he in fact seems to have been a keenly anti-imperialist Little Englander.³² What prompted Blatchford’s somewhat head-scratching *volte-face* was the outbreak of the South African War, which evidently provoked in him an acknowledgement of the *reality* of the British Empire: it was *there*, and regardless of anything else, whatever formless, unknown and unknowable ocean of chaos its seawalls were holding back, whatever inundation it kept at bay, was reason enough to justify not only its maintenance, but also its extension. Thus, for Blatchford, this unquantifiable variable made the abrogation of the empire far too “dangerous.”³³ Britain and the British were encumbered with Leviathan and the only rational choice was to perpetuate it; for in its absence, *le deluge*.

The Fabians and Labor: Beginnings and Distractions

For all the vitriol and bitterness that stalked the debate surrounding the South African War like some loquacious predator alert to the faintest shift in allegiance, the war was nonetheless a boon to the British socialists, whose visibility in affairs international unexpectedly surged. This was especially the case for the Fabians, whose “new birth pang with a foreign

³² Having culled an impressive array of quotes from pre-war *Clarion* articles that express Blatchford’s anti-imperialism, Claey’s *Imperial Sceptics* provides an impressive contrarian’s perspective on Blatchford’s later imperialist fervor. At that same time, it should be noted that Blatchford seems also to have recognized the validity of anti-war claims. Indeed, as he wrote in the October 28, 1899 issue of *Clarion*: “Mr. Chamberlain’s conduct of the negotiations may be open to criticism, there has doubtless been some unholy financial intrigue on the Rand and many of the British ‘Jingo’ papers have uttered a good deal of pernicious folly but...the real cause of the present war is the ignorance and the bumptiousness of the Boers.” See: Claey’s, *Imperial Sceptics*, 172-180; *Clarion*, October 28, 1899.

³³ *Clarion*, September 30, 1904. As quoted in Claey’s, *Imperial Sceptics*, 180.

policy” roused in the breasts of its membership an intense interest in foreign affairs hitherto largely absent.³⁴ Soon, along with Fabianism, the Fabians brought this heightened awareness with them to London’s Memorial Hall where, in conjunction with the ILP and the SDF, and against the backdrop of a deepening sense of economic depression,³⁵ they were invited to discuss the formation of a working-class political party alongside the TUC.³⁶ Yet the Fabians’ card for this particular dance had been punched once before—when the ILP proposed electoral cooperation between themselves, the TUC, and the Fabians back in 1896—and it was a sloppy, acrimonious affair that ended with feet aching on both sides.³⁷ Exigency, however, tends to alter circumstances, and for the majority of the trade union leaders, who to a man were Gladstonian Liberals (i.e. Little Englanders), the outbreak of the South African War did precisely that. Staggered by the sudden collapse of Liberal opposition to the war and the subsequent rise of the Liberal Imperialists in Parliament—with whom the trades unionists could not agree—the TUC unexpectedly found itself being drawn to the same conclusion as most of the socialists: that the “war had been brought about by unscrupulous financial interests.”³⁸

Thus it was that on February 27, 1900, 129 delegates representing over half a million trade unionists along with a disparate assemblage of British socialists of varying shades of radicalism converged on Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, “that cathedral of

³⁴ Laurence, *Bernard Shaw Collected Letters, 1898-1910*, 119.

³⁵ Martin Hewitt, ed., *The Victorian World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 35.

³⁶ The conference took place over the course of two days, starting February 27, 1900.

³⁷ In 1896, the potential for trades union-British Socialist electoral cooperation was thwarted by Fabian particularity. As we have seen, when the ILP proposed electoral cooperation between themselves, the TUC, and the Fabians, the Fabian executive hedged against outright alliance by publishing *A Campaign for Labor*, a tract on electoral strategy that effectively alienated both independent labor and the trades unions. That this did not put paid any further consideration of Fabian collaboration with the advocates of a working-class party testifies not only to the tolerance and common sense of the bulk of the Labor movement, but also the caustic domestic political reality inspired by the South African War. See: Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 89-94.

³⁸ Pelling, *Origins of the Labour Party*, 206-207; Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party, 1880-1945*, 28-29.

Nonconformity.”³⁹ There, in an atmosphere of “mutual reconciliation” and guided by an agreed-upon schema⁴⁰ for their deliberations, it was decided to form the Labor Representation Committee (LRC), the purpose of which was to establish, “a distinct Labour group in Parliament, who shall have their own whips, and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to cooperate with any party which for the time being may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interests of labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party opposing measures having an opposite tendency.”⁴¹

Pelling understandably considers this the most important resolution promulgated during the two-day conference.⁴² Yet for all its significance as a foundational tenet of the soon-to-be Labor Party, the statement was anything but new, particularly to the Fabians, who had proposed almost precisely the same programmatic collaborative design in *A Plan of Campaign for Labor*. Published in 1896, the Bernard Shaw-Webb-penned tract outlined an electoral strategy that called for the formation of an “independent Labor...party in Parliament,” a plan the Fabians framed in terms virtually identical to those proposed at the foundational meeting of the LRC. For example, it was argued in *A Plan of Campaign for Labor* that relations between labor, the “Social-Democratic party,” and the “Trade Unions need not be otherwise than entirely friendly, provided only all the political societies work loyally for increasing the representation of Labor in

³⁹ *Clarion*, March 3, 1900. As quoted in Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage Books, 2011), 1.

⁴⁰ The schematic was the product of an earlier meeting of a small group of representatives from the TUC, the SDF, the Fabians, and the ILP. It embodied three essential points: the absolute independence of working-class candidates in Parliament, absolute loyalty to the decisions of the conference, and financial autonomy. See: *ILP News*, February 1900.

⁴¹ *Report of the First Annual Conference of the Labour Representation Committee*, February 1, 1901, LSE FSA Labour Party Relations [henceforth L] 1/1. Initially, the LRC had no policy, but rather a function: organizing Labor candidatures. This differed from the role of the earlier Labor Electoral Association and the Labor Representation League in that the candidates promoted by the LRC were somehow to be independent of the Liberal Party. As discussed in McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 307-345.

⁴² Pelling, *Origins of the Labour Party*, 209.

Parliament.” Furthermore, among the trio of resolutions that guided the conference’s deliberations was the guarantee of candidates’ “financial autonomy”—or, as the Fabians had proposed, “A thorough Labor candidature ought not to cost the candidate a single farthing.”⁴³

It could be argued, of course, that the cooperative nature of these resolutions is, in fact, commonsensical, especially in light of the hoped-for outcome of the London conference; so considered, any similarity between the LRC’s foundational tenets and the Fabians’ treatise is rendered a mere product of circumstance. Such sentiment is, however, problematic; for it presupposes collaborative inevitability amongst and between these groups—particularly the trade unions and independent labor—in the face of a historical landscape littered with failed attempts at association.⁴⁴ Moreover, it ignores collaboration between the former Fabian J. Ramsay MacDonald⁴⁵—who, along with J. Keir Hardie, was responsible for devising the ILP’s contribution to the conference—and Pease, the secretary of the Fabian Society, in the months leading up to the conference. In that correspondence, dating from November 1899, MacDonald outlined some of the principles the ILP proposed to advance at the London meeting and solicited Pease’s feedback.⁴⁶ Thereafter, both men kept in constant contact regarding the committee’s work, with MacDonald, then Secretary of the LRC, occasionally consulting Pease on special

⁴³ *ILP News*, February 1900, 6; *A Campaign for Labor* (London: The Fabian Society, 1894), 23-24 and 29.

⁴⁴ Indeed, not every trade union participated in the London Conference, for the conservative cotton and coal unions did not send delegates. In the end, there was absolutely no certainty that in 1900 the trade unions and independent labor—divided as they were between unionized and non-unionized, left- and right-wing—would eventually collaborate to the point of near-coalescence, particularly from the standpoint of their political agendas, which independent labor had long-hoped to dominate.

⁴⁵ MacDonald resigned in April 1899 because of the society’s referendum on the South African War.

⁴⁶ As proposed by MacDonald, the three points of the scheme were: “1. That the candidates be run by Trade Union, Socialist and other labour bodies and have no connection with either Liberal or Tory parties. 2. That each party run its own candidates and find its own money. 3. That a joint committee of the organizations running candidates should be the political committee of the combined forces.” MacDonald to Pease, November 29, 1899. As quoted in Pelling, *Origins of the Labour Party*, 207.

points, such as the creation of a Labor Members' Maintenance Fund—a fund originally proposed in 1894 in the Fabian tract “To Your Tents, O Israel!,” itself the basis of *A Plan of Campaign for Labor*.⁴⁷ Thus, of all the groups interested in electoral collaboration and the formation of a truly working-class political party who contributed to the foundation of the LRC, the significance of the Fabian role is irrefutable—albeit one which manifested itself in a characteristically rhetorical fashion.

For all this, the Fabians, who as founding members of the LRC and, subsequently, the British Labor Party, enjoyed a seat on the Executive Committee⁴⁸ (eventually Labor's National Executive Committee, or NEC), were utterly non-nonplussed by these developments. After all, as McBriar points out, four years had lapsed since the publication of *A Plan of Campaign for Labor* and, in the intervening period, the society's executive had justifiably lost much of its enthusiasm for the endeavor.⁴⁹ Pease himself, who for years served conscientiously—if unimaginatively—as the society's member on the LRC executive as well as the Fabian delegate to the annual conference, characterized the Fabians' attitude toward the new body as one of

⁴⁷ Originally proposed in “To Your Tents, O Israel!” as “A subscription of a penny a week for a year from every member of a trade union in the country....” On January 11, 1901, the Fabian executive minuted the following resolution to be proposed by S. G. Hobson at the LRC: “That this Conference expresses general approval of the scheme for a Labour Members' Maintenance Guarantee Fund, as framed by the Fabian Society, and instructs the Executive Committee officially to assist in its formation by all suitable means.” Ultimately, the Fabian proposal was modified to an annual subscription of a penny and finally passed at the 1903 Annual Meeting of the LRC. See: *A Plan of Campaign for Labour*, 21; Minutes, FS, November 17, 1899-June 26, 1903, January 11, 1901, LSE FSA C/8.

⁴⁸ An executive committee of twelve was formed, and it was decided that it should include one member elected by the Fabian Society. Given their membership constituted the lion's share of the LRC, the trades unions represented their majority stake on the executive with seven seats; followed by the ILP and the SDF with two seats apiece; and then the Fabians, with one.

⁴⁹ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 311. It has been suggested by Norman MacKenzie that Fabian Tract 70, *Report on Fabian Policy and Resolutions*, which the society published in 1896, represents something of a rejection of the cooperative sensibility endorsed in *A Plan of Campaign for Labor*. However, Part VI “Fabian Compromise” of Tract 70, which states that “The Fabian Society, having learnt from experience that Socialists cannot have their own way in everything any more than other people, recognizes that in a Democratic community compromise is a necessary condition of political progress,” seems to argue against MacKenzie. See: MacKenzie, *The Fabians*, 231-232.

“benevolent passivity.”⁵⁰ Testifying to this general sense of indifference is the fact that the Fabians did not put forward any new resolutions until Labor’s Newport Conference—which was convened a full decade later, in 1910.⁵¹

In the meantime, the Fabians’ chrysalis of ambivalence in relation to the nascent Labor movement, some of whose upstarts almost immediately turned colicky and recalcitrant,⁵² did nothing to insulate them from the political fortunes of the Liberal Party, which had been riven following the khaki election of 1900. Defeated and shunted into opposition by the coalition of Lord Salisbury’s Conservatives and Chamberlain’s Liberal-Unionists, the now-fractured Liberal Party responded by swiftly cannibalizing itself.⁵³ Mistaking this as the ideal opportunity to permeate the Liberal Party and thus massage the government’s domestic reform program, the Fabians tacked into the strong headwinds blowing from the direction of Westminster only to find themselves wrecked once again on the shoals of Lord Rosebery’s political indeterminacy.⁵⁴ In

⁵⁰ In his *History of the Fabian Society* (p. 82), Pease described his tenure on the LRC as a “little comedy.” Others occasionally stood in for Pease, including Bernard Shaw and SG Hobson. Minutes, FS, November 17, 1899-June 26, 1903, June 26, 1903, LSE FSA C/8.

⁵¹ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 314.

⁵² Little more than a month after the foundational LRC meeting on March 26, the NAC of the ILP was in the unenviable position of defending itself against accusations of “treachery” by the SDF, which soon abandoned the LRC. Independent Labour Party, *Report of the Eighth Annual Conference of the Independent Labour Party*, April 16 and 17, 1900 (London: ILP Office, 1900), 7.

⁵³ Following the election, the Liberal Party’s leadership fell to a pair of Gladstonian “Little Englanders,” Henry Campbell-Bannerman and David Lloyd George—much to the dismay of the Liberal-Imperialist arm of the party.

⁵⁴ It is a testament to the fluidity of the Fabian political agenda and program of permeation that in a letter to Beatrice Webb, Bernard Shaw acknowledged Rosebery’s considerable flaws, going so far as to suggest the inevitable failure of a Rosebery government (“Roseberyites will be at one another’s throats on the first Stock Exchange, Trade Union or fiscal question that arises”), while at the same time convincing the Fabian “Old Gang” to launch an ill-timed foray into Liberal politics *backing* Rosebery. Beatrice’s glee at the political intrigue surrounding efforts to resurrect Rosebery as a national leader notwithstanding, it was Bernard Shaw’s nagging insistence coupled with his flowery blandishments that resulted in “Lord Rosebery’s Escape from Houndsditch,” an article written by Sidney Webb that, in the name of Webb’s “national efficiency” pet project, lionized Rosebery and needlessly antagonized the only men in the Liberal Party with any prospect of leading a reformist government. It was a colossal miscalculation. See: Laurence, *Bernard Shaw Collected Letters, 1898-1910*, 232-235.

March 1902, Beatrice Webb vented her spleen at Rosebery and his cliquish acolytes, in whom the Fabians had vested and lost so much of their political capital: “Asquith is deplorably ‘slack,’” she wrote, adding that “Grey is a mere dilettante, Haldane plays at political intrigue,” while the frustratingly evanescent Rosebery,⁵⁵ who had “no care for or knowledge of economic and social evils, lives and moves...in the plutocratic atmosphere, shares to the full the fears and prejudices of his class.” Irritated, she concluded somewhat redundantly that Rosebery was “a bad colleague.”⁵⁶

The political outlook did indeed look bleak for the Fabians, particularly considering two developments: first, labor had run two successful candidatures in the 1900 election.⁵⁷ This was

⁵⁵ Herbert Henry (H. H.) Asquith, attorney, Liberal parliamentarian, imperialist, and long-time associate of the Webbs. He served in the House of Commons until 1895, when the election brought to power the Conservative Party, then under Lord Salisbury. Asquith was consigned to the “political wilderness” for the next decade—until, that is, the collapse of Arthur Balfour’s Conservative-led government in 1905/6 brought the Liberal Party once again to power. Soon after his return, Asquith was named to the cabinet as Chancellor of the Exchequer and, in 1908, succeeded Henry Campbell-Bannerman as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in which capacity he served until 1916. See: H. C. G. Matthew, “Asquith, Herbert Henry, First Earl of Asquith and Oxford (1852-1928),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/30/101030483/> (accessed June 24, 2017).

Edward Grey, like Asquith, was a Liberal politician who fell from power in the election of 1895. Following the upheaval of Balfour’s Conservative regime, Grey was named Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He served under Asquith until 1916, when the Liberal ministry collapsed. See: Viscount Grey, *Twenty-Five Years* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), 1-21.

Richard Haldane was a longtime ally of Asquith and Grey, and was likewise a Liberal parliamentarian and imperialist (i.e. “Limp”). He served as Secretary of War in Asquith’s cabinet until 1912, when he became Lord Chancellor, in which capacity he acted until his alleged German sympathies prompted his resignation in 1915. See: John Shepherd and Keith Laybourn, *Britain’s First Labour Government* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 41-67.

Archibald Primrose, whose political oscillations were the source of so much Fabian grief. The Lord Rosebery was a Liberal statesman who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1894 to 1895. From 1896, he served as the effective head of the Liberal Imperialist (“Limp”) faction of the Liberal Party, marshalling the talents of men like Asquith, Haldane, and Grey. Unlike those figures, however, he did not enjoy a return to power in 1905/6. In fact, he was a wholly negative critic of both the Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith regimes. See: Elie Halevy, *Imperialism and the Rise of Labour, 1895-1905* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1961), 99-110; Robert Crewe Milnes, *Rosebery, Volume II* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1931), 50-55.

⁵⁶ BWTD, January 2, 1901-February 10, 1911, March 19, 1902, LSE FSA PASS/1.

⁵⁷ Most notably including J. Keir Hardie.

a disquieting indicator, for labor—from whom the Fabians seemed to be abstaining—were gaining ground politically while at the same time the society’s favored Liberals were losing it. And while the passage of the Fabian-influenced Education Acts of 1902-3 marked a proper legislative boon for the society generally and Sidney Webb’s policy of permeation specifically,⁵⁸ it was soon overshadowed by Chamberlain, who resigned from the government in 1903 and launched his crusade for tariff reform with “savage persistence.”⁵⁹

Chamberlain’s enormously popular campaign framed a worrisome discourse for the Fabians, as Sidney Webb recognized. “The irruption of this new steamboat into political waters,” Webb noted, “will make a swell that is calculated to affect the smallest cockboat, and we must be careful.”⁶⁰ Indeed, for the Fabian Society, the tariff reform movement dredged up all the old questions concerning their position relative to the antipodean poles of free trade and protectionism—and, by extension, the *empire*—recalling the circumstances that irrevocably split the society in 1900. Having survived the ideological quagmire engendered by the South African War, Chamberlain’s tariff reform movement scraped open all the old wounds—and the society unhappily found itself in the same querulous position for the second time in its near-twenty-year history.

⁵⁸ The personal and political intrigues that lay at the back of the Education Acts of 1902-3 were enormously complex, commingling a bitterly divided Liberal Party with a Fabian Society bereft of a common ground. For Sidney Webb, at root the issue turned on his notion of “national efficiency”—that is, the most efficient means by which the betterment of society could be achieved through things like collectivism. Applied to education, Webb argued that the efficiency of education could be maximized by eliminating school boards, with their cumbersome system of irregular elections, and placing elementary and secondary education in the hands of local and county municipal councils. That education was largely the domain of religious institutions made the subject agonizingly thorny. Detailed expositions of the Fabians’ contribution to the Education Acts can be found in MacKenzie, *The Fabians*; Michalos and Poff, *Bernard Shaw and the Webbs*; McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, among others.

⁵⁹ BWTD, January 2, 1901-February 10, 1911, June 17, 1904, LSE FSA PASS/1.

⁶⁰ MacKenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume II*, 185.

As divided over free trade and protectionism as it had been over empire, the Fabians again responded ambiguously, this time fully cognizant of the potential for internal strife, with the Bernard Shaw-penned tract *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question*. As with *Fabianism and the Empire*, Bernard Shaw invoked the vague notion of an “alternative policy”—a third way, which, in this case, was the centuries-old-but-still-controversial bounty system, “which does not raise prices, and might be used to hasten the development, within the Empire, of supplies of food and raw material to replace those which our present alien purveyors will soon want for their home market”—while harshly criticizing the “nincompoop” Chamberlainites and the “obstinate” free traders and—for good measure—upbraiding the working-class for “failing to strike out for itself.”⁶¹ In the end, *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question* represents a sort of negative ideological response to the controversy, heavily critiquing the positions of all the other parties involved in the tariff reform debate and hewing closely to the tenets of Fabianism—especially collectivism and state interference as a means of “subordinating” commercial enterprise to “national interests,” thus ensuring the “intelligent direction of the imperial economy”⁶²—while not actually promulgating an official Fabian policy. Perhaps this was the very point of Bernard Shaw’s rhetorical legerdemain, since it saved the society from cleaving itself in two for the second time in three years.

⁶¹ Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question*, 35-38. It is worth noting that Labor leaders—those of the ILP and those of the Labor Party—were firmly attached to the doctrines of free trade. Their acknowledged affinity for Free Trade was mitigated in Shaw’s tract in two instances: firstly, Labor’s belief that free trade was not, in itself, sufficient to ensure England’s prosperity suggested a relative openness to an “alternative policy,” a fact that softened the edges around the Shavian rhetoric. And, secondly, the Fabians themselves were hopelessly split over free trade and protectionism. To come down too hard on either side risked a repeat of the cleavage occasioned by the South African War, the very thing the Fabian executive wished to avoid.

⁶² Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question*, 3.

Able to find and then navigate a middle ground between the internal contradictions provoked by a second, rather public and increasingly politicized debate surrounding the nature of the British Empire, the Fabian Society turned once more to what the executive considered their “proper business”: domestic reform.⁶³ Thus, until 1918, the Fabians were largely, although not exclusively, preoccupied with parochial affairs, working on the one hand to iron-out the practicalities of English Socialism while, on the other, working in partnership with the ILP to crystallize the ideological framework of the embryonic Labor Party (formerly the LRC).⁶⁴

The Fabians “On the Threshold”

By the time the Labor Party published its new constitution and its accompanying manifesto, *Labor and the New Social Order*, in 1918, the Fabians had effectively displaced the ILP, the hitherto senior intellectual partner in the association, and cemented the society’s position as the Cronus of Labor ideology.⁶⁵ The genesis of this conversion lay in events surrounding the First World War, which in 1914 not only opened a deep ideological chasm between independent labor and the Labor Party, but also fractured Labor’s erstwhile solidarity. Renowned for its pugnacious antiwar rhetoric, the ILP’s “extreme Pacifist Executive”⁶⁶

⁶³ Over the course of the ensuing decade, the society published work on everything from the ills of the sweating system (*Home Work and Sweating: Causes and Remedies*), the fate of electoral reform (*The Twentieth Century Reform Bill*), and a biography of Robert Owen to the motives underlying the women’s movement (*The Economic Foundations of the Women’s Movement*) and the future of the arts under a socialist regime (*Socialism and the Arts of Use*).

⁶⁴ The two were not mutually exclusive. Following the 1906 election, which witnessed the return of 29 Labor candidates, five of whom were Fabians, the society published *Socialism and Labor Policy*. In it, they schooled Labor on its policy priorities by contrasting the Socialist alternatives favored by the society—and the “average elector . . . who in the last resort must decide” the party’s future—with the policies of “historic and traditional Liberalism.” It was a by-now familiar drumbeat of things like Poor Law Reform, the right to work, and taxation, that great anathema of Liberalism (for, as noted in *Socialism and Labor Policy*, “To the Socialist the best of governments is that which spends the most”).

⁶⁵ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 343-345.

⁶⁶ Michalos and Poff, *Bernard Shaw and the Webbs*, 150

denounced in no uncertain terms the Labor executive's pro-war stance⁶⁷—a disagreement shared by the party's own pacifist wing, prompting the resignation of the likeminded Ramsay MacDonald, then secretary of Labor's Parliamentary Labor Party (PLP). Meanwhile, the majority of the Fabians⁶⁸ sympathized with the party executive and thus assiduously supported its wartime efforts.⁶⁹ Naturally, the Labor Party gravitated toward the similarly-disposed Fabians, who themselves had been orbiting Labor with increasing affinity since the election of 1906, which returned five Labor candidates who were also members of the Fabian Society. The outcome of the election marked the beginning of a years-long Fabian presence in Labor's PLP.⁷⁰

The figure primarily responsible for the wartime alteration in Fabian fortunes was Arthur Henderson, who replaced Ramsay MacDonald as Secretary of the PLP. A Fabian himself,⁷¹ Henderson recognized Sidney Webb's ability to formulate policy, draft reports, and to manage

⁶⁷ J. Keir Hardie declared, "Militarism and all that pertains to it is inimical to the cause of progress." He added later that "We are prepared to cooperate with our German friends in thwarting the malignant designs of the small group of interested scaremongers...." As quoted in Neil Hollander, *Elusive Dove: The Search for Peace During World War I* (Jefferson: McFarland Books, 2014), 74.

⁶⁸ A notable exception being Bernard Shaw who, in his correspondence to Beatrice Webb dated August 26, 1914, opposed war with Germany because Berlin was an effective counterbalance to the French. Three months and 35,000 words later, Bernard Shaw's "Common Sense about the War" appeared as a supplement in the Fabian-edited *New Statesman* defending his position. To no one's surprise, the press forthwith denounced Bernard Shaw as a traitor (to wit the ever-game Bernard Shaw wrote to the Austrian playwright Siegfried Trebitsch that "The story of my persecution is wildly wrong. I never was so popular in my life."). See: Michalos and Poff, *Bernard Shaw and the Webbs*, 143-147; Bernard Shaw to Trebitsch, June 9, 1915, Samuel A. Weiss, ed., *Bernard Shaw's Letters to Siegfried Trebitsch* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 186.

⁶⁹ At first and in keeping with the "spirit" of the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International, Labor opposed intervention, a stance that changed following Germany's invasion of Belgium on August 4, 1914.

⁷⁰ As McBriar notes, the number fell to four in the election of January 1910, but increased to eight when elections were held in December of that same year. In 1918, the number fell again; this time, to three. Fabian members of the PLP between 1906 and 1918 were: J. Keir Hardie, Philp Snowden, Will Crooks, Walter Hudson, and James O'Grady (1906); Hardie, Snowden, O'Grady, and Hudson (January 1910); Hardie, Snowden, O'Grady, Hudson, Crooks, George Lansbury, FW Goldstone, and Joseph Pointer (December 1910); Crooks, Ben Tillett, William Graham (1918). McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, fn. 314.

⁷¹ Since 1912. Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 131 and 168

committees—all of which were on display during Webb’s tenure on the War Emergency Committee (WEC).⁷² The WEC was an umbrella organization that brought together the various arms of the Labor Movement.⁷³ As a member of its executive, Webb was propelled into the very heart of the Labor Party’s wartime affairs. Early on, he was encouraged by J. S. Middleton, secretary of the WEC and assistant secretary of the Labor Party, to “formulate policies first on the impact of the war on the workers and then later on post-war reconstruction.”⁷⁴ This Sidney Webb did, and with electrifying effect became the chief architect behind the committee’s proposals.⁷⁵ Indeed, within a week he had prepared *The War and the Workers*, a guidebook intended for use throughout the country by local organizations like trades councils, trade union branches, and branches of socialist societies and designed to prevent war-related dislocation and distress.⁷⁶ Not coincidentally, the Fabian Society issued the pamphlet on behalf of the committee. Soon, Webb was inspiring the committee to act as a labor movement pressure group on everything from food prices to old age pensions and the supply and cost of coal.⁷⁷ As Beatrice Webb noted in a diary entry from September 1915, the work of the WEC “has laid down the policy for Labour and Socialist Movement during the war. Sidney, representing the Fabian Society, has been able to make himself useful by drafting the resolutions, pamphlets and

⁷² Also known, rather clumsily, as the Wartime Workers’ Emergency Committee (WWEC).

⁷³ Including the TUC, the Labor Party, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the Cooperative Movement (including the Cooperative Union and the Cooperative Wholesale Society), the Socialist societies (the SDF and the Fabian Society, among others), the Women’s Labor League, the London Trades Council, and even the National Union of Teachers (NUT). See: Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 162-163; Lisanne Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Fabian Socialists* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), 204-207.

⁷⁴ Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb*, 204-205.

⁷⁵ Royden Harrison, “The War Emergency Workers’ National Committee, 1914-1920,” in *Essays in Labour History 1886-1923*, eds. Asa Briggs and John Saville (Hamden: Archon Books, 1971), fn. 214. Harrison is quoting from J. S. Middleton’s essay “Webb and the Labour Party,” found in M. Cole, ed., *The Webbs and Their Work* (London: Frederick Muller, 1949).

⁷⁶ Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 168. The tract in question is 176.

⁷⁷ Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb*, 206.

leaflets that the Committee has issued. ... One result of [the Committee's] existence is that we personally have never been more intimate with all sections of the Labour Movement. ... It is interesting that in the new *Labour and Socialist Yearbook*, though Sidney has written more than anyone else, his name is nowhere mentioned. ... We can still be useful as the 'clerks' of the Labour Movement if we are content to take a back seat."⁷⁸

Sidney Webb had by this time taken the Fabian position on Labor's NEC which, as Middleton later pointed out, was "a position of immense advantage to Webb."⁷⁹ Indeed, it brought him into contact with Henderson who, by 1916, was not only the secretary of the PLP, but also its chairman and a member of Lloyd George's coalition wartime Cabinet.⁸⁰ Henderson himself possessed some "sterling qualities," Beatrice Webb noted. But although he was "a veritable rock of bourgeois respectability and control," she sneered that "he is personally most unattractive. I have never known a man of undoubted power with so little personal charm or magnetism."⁸¹

Notwithstanding Beatrice Webb's uncouth assessment, which seems not to have prevented her from inviting Henderson to dinner,⁸² it was under Henderson's guidance that a new Joint Committee on Post-War Reconstruction headed by the NEC was formed.⁸³ The WEC,

⁷⁸ BWTD, March 6, 1911-December 8, 1916, September 9, 1915, LSE FSA PASS/1. Margaret Cole discusses this passage in *The History of Fabian Socialism* (168f) and describes it as "cross," suggesting Beatrice Webb was unhappy with the arrangement. This is a curious reading, for the very same passage continues "If the young Intellectuals [referring here, at least in part, to the new generation of Fabians, including G. D. H. Cole, which was, at best, truculent toward the Fabian "Old Gang"] would serve as unpaid civil servants of the labour world and consent to remain unrecognized they could do very splendid work. But young men with vigorous opinions and healthy ambitions very naturally want to hear their own voices and see their own names."

⁷⁹ As quoted in Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb*, 208.

⁸⁰ At the end of 1916, the Lloyd George coalition replaced that of H. H. Asquith, which was held responsible for wartime losses.

⁸¹ BWTD, December 9, 1916-October 10, 1924, June 23, 1918, LSE FSA PASS/1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, September 9, 1915.

⁸³ Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb*, 209.

with Sidney Webb as its representative, was a member of the committee, which soon established a number of dedicated sub-committees to deal with areas of special concern related to Britain's post-war recovery, from unemployment and taxation to education, trades unions, and demobilization. In a collaborative masterstroke, the Webbs "arranged to have the research for the sub-committees carried out by the Fabian Research Department," which presaged a deepening ideological affinity between the Fabians and the Labor Party.⁸⁴ This was confirmed when, on July 1, 1918, the Fabian Research Department (FRD) moved into Labor headquarters and converted into the Labor Research Department (LRD), there to provide research and information under the heads of trade unions, cooperatives, trades councils, and labor parties.⁸⁵ The fact that Fabians acted either in the capacity of chairmen or secretaries to almost all the party's subsequently-created advisory committees further testifies to the breadth and depth of the Fabian-Labor entrenchment.⁸⁶

This chain of Fabian influence on the Labor Party culminated with the promulgation of Labor's new constitution and the accompanying policy statement, *Labour and the New Social Order*, drafted by Sidney Webb. Both documents bear the socialist commitment that was a hallmark of Webb's research⁸⁷ and, indeed, Fabianism, particularly as expressed in his

⁸⁴ Ibid. The Fabian Research Department was created by Beatrice Webb in 1913.

⁸⁵ Norman MacKenzie, ed., *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume III: Pilgrimage, 1912-1947*, 103; Dean E. McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition, 1931-1938* (London: G. Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1938), 79. The process of "translating" the FRD into the LRD was largely the work of Beatrice Webb. For the privilege, the Fabian Society paid £150/annum.

⁸⁶ For example, Sidney Webb served on Labor's Advisory Committee for Education, G. D. H. Cole chaired the Advisory Committee on Trade Unionism, and Beatrice Webb served on the Committee for Health and Unemployment Insurance. See: J. M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Politics in Britain 1912-18* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 232.

⁸⁷ Beatrice Webb was not optimistic about the outcome of this in April 1918, writing that "this new and, I fear, wholly undeserved reputation of the Labour Party is based on little more than [Sidney Webb's *Labour's War Aims* and *Labour and the New Social Order*]. He [Sidney] made the reputation of the Progressive Party of the LCC by his ideas and intellectual propaganda. Is he going to do likewise for the Labour Party? The analogy," she concluded, "is not comforting." See: MacKenzie, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Volume Three*, 305.

“Conscription of Wealth” campaign and “Labour After the War” program, and pledged Labor to the “universal” enforcement of a “national minimum,”⁸⁸ secured through “full employment at decent wages;” the “democratic control of industry” and the immediate nationalization of such industries as railways, roads, electricity, and mines; taxation based on the ability to pay, plus a capital levy or wealth tax to pay off the huge national debt that had accumulated during the war.

⁸⁹ Revolutionary as it may appear, it is somewhat ironic that a program designed to preserve the wartime state and the increased prominence of working-class demands—by definition, conservative goals since it would maintain the wartime *status quo*—should signal the acme of Fabian influence on the development of Labor Party policy for the next thirty years.

Yet, like the Labor Party itself, which following the war seemed poised to be considered a player in government for the first time, the Fabians too were tantalizingly close to the threshold. While it is true that in the period of reconstruction immediately following the war the amalgamated Fabian and Labor research departments produced little of note, an exception being Leonard Woolf’s study of imperialism, *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1919), politically the Fabians were buoyed by the sensational performance of Labor in the elections of 1922 and 1923. In 1922, Labor claimed slightly more than 29 per cent of the votes, an outcome which brought 10 Fabian-affiliated Labor parliamentarians to Westminster.⁹⁰ While a year later the confused

⁸⁸ An essential component of Fabian collectivism, the “national minimum” was a slogan coined by the Webbs in *Industrial Democracy* (1896). It represented a sort of umbrella term under which various Fabian-favored efficiency campaigns fell, including the extension of the factory acts, anti-sweating campaigns, demands for arbitration and an eight-hour working day, the extension of workers’ compensation, support for old age pensions, poor law reform, improved housing conditions, and the extension of educational facilities. In adopting national minimums for these, the lot of the underprivileged would be accordingly improved, thereby making the state and its industry more efficient. As discussed in McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 107-108.

⁸⁹ Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War*, 207-208; Thorpe, *A History of the Labour Party*, 39-40.

⁹⁰ Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 193; Thorpe, *A History of the Labour Party*, 47.

results of the election witnessed only a slight uptick in Labor representation,⁹¹ the number of Fabian-affiliated MPs—five of whom eventually became Cabinet members⁹²—doubled. Webb, who won a constituency seat (Seaham) for the first time, took “almost boyish pleasure in the adventure.”⁹³ Of his experience on the PLP that year, Beatrice Webb observed, “And yet Sidney’s life in the Parliamentary Labour Party is full of interest. The Parliamentary Labour Party is unlike either of the other political parties as I knew them through my brothers-in-law and friendly MPs. It is a closely-knit organization with a vivid internal life of its own. The leaders do not dominate, and in so far as they lead, they lead by perpetual consultation with the rank-and-file members.”⁹⁴

The bloom was still on the rose when, in January 1924, Conservative efforts to forge a coalition government collapsed and Labor was invited to form its first minority government.⁹⁵ The sudden arrival of Labor made very urgent Sidney Webb’s remarks in *The Labour Party on the Threshold*, his chairman’s address at the party’s annual conference in 1923. He stressed that Labor had to do more than convince the electorate that the Conservatives had failed to deal with major problems; instead, Labor had to prove that it could solve them by using the “principles that we preached.”⁹⁶ Those principles comprised an alternative program, encouraged by the difficult-to-quantify notion of “inevitable gradualness,” based fundamentally on the platform outlined in *Labour and the New Social Order*, Webb’s heavily-Fabianized 1918 policy document.⁹⁷ But this

⁹¹ Thorpe, *A History of the Labour Party*, 49-50.

⁹² Arthur Henderson, Sidney Webb, Sydney Olivier, Noel-Buxton, and C. B. Thomson.

⁹³ MacKenzie, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb*, 407.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 416.

⁹⁵ The Liberals, still very much a formidable force in British politics, made it abundantly clear that they would not support a Conservative regime. They therefore threw their weight behind Labor.

⁹⁶ Sidney Webb, *The Labour Party on the Threshold* (London: The Fabian Society, 1923), 4 and 11-12.

⁹⁷ Sidney Webb, *The Labour Party on the Threshold* (London: The Fabian Society, 1923), 4 and 11-12.

first Labor government did not get far with its program, for the impressive rhetoric of *Labour and the New Social Order* proved woefully inadequate in the face of ongoing, postwar domestic problems—such as exorbitant inflation, high levels of unemployment, and disappointing industrial performance—and a largely stagnant international context.⁹⁸ Together, these conditions made even socialism by gradualness impossible.⁹⁹ By the beginning of October 1924, it was clear that the government could not survive much longer: a combination of internal stresses, incapacity, frustration of its policies, and the growing opposition of both Conservatives and Liberals brought it down in November.¹⁰⁰

Scholars note that at this point, or perhaps a little before, the Fabian Society entered a period of “inertia” and “lethargy.”¹⁰¹ While this assessment is somewhat overdrawn—for the frequency and breadth of the society’s lectures (a particularly memorable series was “Untrodden Paths in Politics”), the putting forward of possible Labor candidates to run in local elections, the work of the New Fabian Group, and the publishing of tracts and treatises (mostly revisions, but some were new) proceeded at a respectable pace—there is nevertheless profound evidence that an ideological malaise had in fact settled amongst the “old-guard” Fabians by the 1920s. The most damning indication can be found in *Labour and the Nation*, the party’s new program, the drafting of which was “mainly” the work of the Fabian, R. H. Tawney.¹⁰² Put forward and agreed at the 1928 annual conference, the manifesto drew heavily on Webb’s *Labour and the New Social Order*. But unlike that treatise, which had the benefit of framing a legislative

⁹⁸ Thorpe, *A History of the Labour Party*, 57.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁰ MacKenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume III*, 216.

¹⁰¹ Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 194; Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 142-143 and 154-157.

¹⁰² The outlining of the program was the work of Ramsay MacDonald, George Lansbury*, F. O. Roberts, T. C. Cramp*, Herbert Morrison*, Ellen Wilkinson*, Oswald Mosley*, C. Trevelyan, and Arthur Henderson*. At least six of whom (marked with asterisks) were Fabians.

program, *Labour and the Nation* was little more than a set of principles wrapped in outdated socialist platitudes.¹⁰³ It was, as Tawney later wrote, “a glittering forest of Christmas trees, with presents for everyone.”¹⁰⁴ Indeed, having read confidential drafts in advance, Sidney Webb stressed to Beatrice Webb in a letter dated February 24, 1928 that “I don’t think it will be any improvement on *Labour and the New Social Order*!”¹⁰⁵ Of course, he was right; and soon, the more radical elements to the party’s left attacked *Labour and the Nation* for its imprecision and lack of commitment. Troublingly, it seemed that the Fabian Society was not only stuck, but had regressed; arguing for the same unworkable solutions in increasingly rhetorical terms.¹⁰⁶ Very soon, much sooner than perhaps anyone could have imagined, the flaws of the Fabian design were realized, with disastrous consequences for the Labor Party.

The New Fabian Research Bureau¹⁰⁷ and the Next Generation of Fabians

¹⁰³ For example, the Labor Party was “the political organ created to express the needs and voice the aspirations of all who share in the labour which is the lot of mankind...the force which sustains society is not passive property but creative effort...[and] the Labour Party *since it holds that creed is a Socialist Party*...[it aims] without violence...[by] scientific knowledge...[at the] deliberate establishment...of a social order...to secure...the largest possible measure of economic welfare and personal freedom.” See: The Labour Party, *Labour and the Nation* (London: The Labour Party, 1927), 5.

¹⁰⁴ R. H. Tawney, *The Webbs in Perspective* (London: Athlone Press, 1953), 57.

¹⁰⁵ MacKenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume III*, 296-297.

¹⁰⁶ As Foote has noted, what *Labour and the Nation* proposed was a “variety of palliatives,” from higher direct taxes (a familiar drumbeat if ever there was one) to enlarged powers for certain agencies, which were devoid of the political strategy necessary to make them even remotely realizable. This sense of disconnect was made worse by the document’s jarringly discordant tone which, although uplifting, would have been better suited to a text on existentialism. Foote, *The Labour Party’s Political Thought*, 124.

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth Durbin’s *New Jerusalems: The Labour Party and the Economics of Democratic Socialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) constitutes the best, if somewhat muddled, “history” of the NFRB in the 1930s.

Labor had wed itself to *Labour and the Nation* by the time it unexpectedly lurched into government in 1929. Given the rhetorical DNA of Labor's plan, most of the cabinet were befittingly Fabians (or at the very least associates of Fabians), as were 21 out of the 54 members of the PLP.¹⁰⁸ The density of Fabian permeation is further evidenced by the 1931 *Labour Yearbook*, which reveals Fabians in both upper groups of the party as well as serving in advisory capacities, including: Basil Hall, Defense; A. E. Davies and J. M. Kenworthy, Finance; R. H. Tawney and Barbara Drake, Education; Barbara Ayrton Gould, Home; C. R. Buxton and Leonard Woolf, International; Josiah Wedgwood, Land; Arthur Henderson, Jr., Legal; Herbert Morrison, Local Government; Somerville Hastings and G. P. Blizard, Health; G. W. Thomson, Science; and C. T. Cramp, Transport.¹⁰⁹

Yet, the second Labor government could have been packed stem to stern with Fabians for all the difference it would have made, for the government was quickly overtaken by a worldwide economic crisis for which it was clearly unprepared.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the economic upheaval prompted by the Wall Street crash in October 1929 plunged Britain into a severe economic crisis. Since at least 1928, British export orders had been falling, a trend accelerated by the problems which beset the US economy the following year. The deterioration of the old staple industries¹¹¹ intensified, unemployment continued to rise, and the balance of trade worsened. Across Britain, the number of registered unemployed workers rose from 1,534,000 in January 1930 to 2,783,000 in July 1931.¹¹² These troubling circumstances converged on the minority Labour government,

¹⁰⁸ In total, 47 of the 99 Fabians who stood were elected. Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 157.

¹⁰⁹ *Labour Yearbook of 1931*, 9.

¹¹⁰ Even Beatrice Webb had her doubts early on. Less than two months into Labor's second tenure, she noted in her diary that she anticipated the "fall of the Labour Government some 18 months hence." BWTD, May 30, 1929-December 25, 1931, July 28, 1929, LSE FSA PASS/1.

¹¹¹ Especially mining, shipbuilding, and textiles.

¹¹² Ramsay MacDonald summed up the new and unprecedented nature of depression-era unemployment in Britain by posing this rhetorical question in his address to the 1930 party conference:

which during the 1929 election ran a campaign that concentrated heavily on the plight of the unemployed (one of the party's more popular slogans was "The Works Are Closed! But the Ballot Box Is Open!"), and stripped the government of its vague rhetorical veneer, laying bare the deep chasm between the party's nationalistic grandiloquence (grounded as it was in "old guard" Fabianism) and the reality of Britain's political and economic decay.¹¹³

The nuance of the government's spectacular collapse in 1931 has been debated copiously elsewhere and therefore need not detain us here. Indeed, for our purposes the critical aspect of the government's downfall is not to be found in the event itself, but rather in its aftermath, which witnessed Labor's electoral decimation.¹¹⁴ The upshot of this defeat was a series of parallel, yet complementary, developments that turned out to be crucial to the future of the Labor Party. First, the party, which had been stunned by the "betrayal" of its prime minister, Ramsay

"Is there a man or a woman here who does not know that the unemployment which started last October and November is an unemployment of a totally different nature from that which we faced in the last general election...." The Labour Party, *Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party* (London: The Labour Party, 1930), 180. For the unemployment statistics rendered here, see: *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, December 1930 and 1931.

¹¹³ David Howell, *The Lost Left: Three Studies in Socialism and Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 247.

¹¹⁴ The PLP was ravaged, going from 288/7 MPs in 1929 to just 53/2 in 1931. Pugh, *Speak for Britain!*, 247.

MacDonald,¹¹⁵ pivoted left to reinvent itself ideologically.¹¹⁶ As part of its rehabilitation, judicious watchwords and catchphrases like “socialism by gradualism,” which had populated the elaborate programs of the earlier Labor regimes, were jettisoned in favor of more concrete agenda. Here, again, the Fabians played a decisive role. For the NEC, under the guiding hand of George Lansbury, himself a Fabian, established an eight-man policy committee effectively dominated by the moderate, Cambridge-educated Fabian Hugh Dalton.¹¹⁷ Equipped with a remit to “put the flesh on the bones of the party’s future vision,” the policy committee created a quartet of subcommittees responsible for the development of Labor policy on everything from finance and trade (chaired by Dalton himself) to the reorganization of industry. These groups included a mixture of trade unionists and various coopted experts and party intellectuals, such as the noted

¹¹⁵ MacDonald’s decision following Labor’s defeat in 1931 to leave the party and continue as Prime Minister of the National Government has become Labor Party folklore. Depending on who you read, it is characterized either as “the greatest betrayal in the political history of this country” (Clement Attlee’s unforgiving assessment) or the appropriately realist response to the economic crisis (as Reginald Bassett and Matthew Worley would have it). See: Clement Attlee, *As It Happened* (London: Heinemann, 1954).

Regardless, the fact remains that precisely because of the party’s “unpleasant” experiences with MacDonald, it enplaced a series of safeguards designed to make future Labor Prime Ministers and their Cabinets “more responsible to the Parliamentary Party”—this, as opposed to ignoring it, as had been the case under MacDonald. As McHenry explains, while “Final responsibility for Ministerial appointments [continued] to rest with the Prime Minister, who is leader of the Party” he was to be “advised and consulted by the Secretary of the Labour Party and three elected members representing the Parliamentary Party [this to prevent a Prime Minister from surrounding himself with an oligarchy devoid of such encumbrances].” Further, the “Prime Minister is to be controlled by majority decisions of the Cabinet.... Dissolution [of the government] may be ordered only by the decision of both the Cabinet and the Parliamentary Labour Party. ... The relationship of the Government with the Parliamentary Party, which was a sore point in 1929-31, is to be maintained by a liaison Minister and the Chief Whip, who are to attend the meetings of the Parliamentary Party’s consultative committee.” McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition*, 269-277.

¹¹⁶ Paul Corthorn, *In the Shadow of Dictators: The British Left in the 1930s* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 3; Jonathan Davis, “Labour’s Political Thought: The Soviet Influence on the Interwar Years,” in *British Labour Party and the Wider World: Domestic Politics, Internationalism, and Foreign Policy*, eds. Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2012), 74.

¹¹⁷ Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2005), 151; Ingrid Rima, *Development of Economic Analysis* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 433. The perpetually acerbic Beatrice Webb referred to Dalton as the “time-serving manipulator of the National Executive of the Labour Party at Transport House.” See: BWTD, January 1, 1935-December 27, 1937, April 16, 1937, LSE FAS PASS/1.

Fabians Harold Laski and F. W. Pethick-Lawrence.¹¹⁸ The subsequent investigations of the policy committee, its multifarious subcommittees, and even the PLP depended not only on the research and reports of Labor's own research department, under the headship of the Fabian Arthur Greenwood at the time,¹¹⁹ but also on the work of an extra-parliamentary section, the New Fabian Research Bureau (NFRB), which was founded by G. D. H. Cole in 1931.¹²⁰

Created with the “enthusiastic endorsement”¹²¹ of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the NFRB was the implicit acknowledgement of the ideological complacency into which the Fabian Society had sunk, resulting in such wordy and unworkable policies as those found in *Labour and the Nation*.¹²² The NFRB¹²³ was the product of a new generation of intellectuals who not only eschewed the kind of direct political involvement to which the Fabian Society had become prone, but also considered the old Fabian Basis “obsolete” and “unintelligible.”¹²⁴ Indeed, where

¹¹⁸ Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 121-122.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 151.

¹²⁰ G. D. H. Cole, who eventually became the chairman of the Fabian Society when the NFRB amalgamated with it, served alongside R. H. Tawney on the party's Economic Advisory Committee (EAC) from 1929. See: Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 158.

¹²¹ Neil Riddell, “‘The Age of Cole’? G. D. H. Cole and the British Labour Movement, 1929-1933,” *The Historical Journal* 38, no. 4 (December 1995): 948.

¹²² “Complacency” is perhaps too genteel a term, for it seemed even to Beatrice Webb that the society had done worse than outlive its usefulness; it verged on “senility.” In a gloomy state of mind, she remarked that the jubilee year of 1934 seemed like a good time for “winding up the Society.” “The Fabian Society,” Webb noted in her diary, “becomes every year more respectable and seedy; made up of ageing females, or stray foreigners and a few younger folk who come for the bank holiday. ... There are of course a large per cent of important persons still members; not only the survivors of the historic group (G[eorge] B[ernard] S[haw], [Sydney] Olivier and ourselves) but also younger men like Laski, Cole, Stafford Cripps, etc. But the society itself does little or nothing else but run the autumn course (which is getting stale), the summer school and a few book boxes.” BWTD, January 4, 1932-December 29, 1934, August 24, 1933, LSE FSA PASS/1.

¹²³ It must be kept in mind that the NFRB and the Fabian Society were not mutually exclusive bodies. In fact, many members of the Fabian Society proper were New Fabians as well, an overlap that caused no small amount of confusion (then as now). What primarily differentiated the two groups was the NFRB's rigid apolitical stance. The Bureau's research and reports could be used by a political party toward whatever ends desired, but the Bureau—unlike the Fabian Society—did not itself endorse candidates, put its own members forward for office, or propose resolutions at party conferences.

¹²⁴ Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 246. The Fabian Basis was first promulgated in 1886. It was subsequently amended in 1887, 1919, 1939, and 1959. One of the more objectionably vague sections of the earlier Basis was the third paragraph of the 1919 revision, which reads: “The Society accordingly

its predecessor had been disposed to increasingly nebulous policy formulations, the NFRB offered detailed policy blueprints and “ways forward” to Labor. Tellingly, in the mere seven years of its existence, the Bureau managed to produce some 42 research pamphlets, seven books, and volumes of memoranda—an output that shamed the traditionalists of the Fabian Society.¹²⁵ In its *Aims and Methods*, the NFRB positioned itself thusly: “The Bureau does not promise immediate results. It is setting out on a programme of research meant to be spread over a considerable period of time, and it is setting out to do its work patiently ... conscious that what the Labour movement needs above all is the constant expansion and adaption of policy in the light of changing conditions, on a basis of accurate research and collection of available experience.”¹²⁶

Almost immediately after its founding, the Bureau became affiliated with the Labor Party—a process initiated in part by Arthur Henderson who, while still leader of the party in 1931, wrote to Cole encouraging cooperation between the New Fabians and Labor.¹²⁷ The election of Clement Attlee as the Bureau’s first chairman in June 1931 signaled the potential for a deepening of this affinity, for Attlee soon became the party’s deputy leader—a development

works for the extinction of private property in land, with equitable consideration of established expectations, and due provision for the tenure of the home and the homestead; for the transfer to the community, by constitutional methods, of all such industries as can be conducted socially; and for the establishment, as the governing consideration in the regulation of production, distribution and service, of the common good instead of private profit.” Just how this was to be accomplished precisely was anyone’s guess—hence the New Fabians’ criticism.

¹²⁵ Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 36-37. In contrast, the Fabian Society proper produced only three tracts, all in 1938.

¹²⁶ As quoted in Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 226.

¹²⁷ While acting as president and chair of the World Disarmament Conference at Geneva in 1932, Henderson (who had initially been invited to the conference in his capacity as Foreign Secretary of the now-defunct Labor Government) wrote to Cole explaining that, “it is clear...that we would greatly benefit by working out for ourselves a more clearly defined programme of action which we should seek to apply. I think we cannot do too much constructive thinking on those lines, and the more that you and your group can get done in that direction, the better for the Party.”

which effectively guaranteed the NFRB considerable publicity within the PLP.¹²⁸ Furthering this process of entrenchment was Cole himself, who, along with other like-minded literati, formed the House of Commons Group, which acted as a sort of connective tissue between the NFRB, parliamentary leaders, and individual members of Labor's National Executive.¹²⁹

Thus, when the NFRB sent a delegation to study socialism in Russia in 1932, the machinery of a reinvigorated Fabianism was well-positioned to influence anew the Labor Party.¹³⁰ Before long the relationship bore fruit, for among the membership of the Bureau's mission was Hugh Dalton, arguably the dominant figure on the party's policy committee. As part of the wider delegation, the trip provided Dalton with the opportunity to gather information on the nature of "planning" in the Soviet Union which, unlike Britain, had escaped the ravages of depression-era unemployment.¹³¹ Upon his return from Russia, Dalton immediately began using the lessons he learned to influence Labor's thought on economic policy. In point of fact, it is from this point forward that the word "planning" took a central place in Dalton's vocabulary—as indeed it did in the Fabian lexicon.¹³² Indeed, so convinced had he become as to the efficacy of "the principle of economic planning along socialist lines" that when Dalton drafted *For Socialism and Peace*,¹³³ the program adopted by the party at its annual conference in 1934, it

¹²⁸ Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 139.

¹²⁹ Renamed the "Friday Group." See: Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy, and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 462.

¹³⁰ Upon its return, the NFRB delegation produced *Twelve Studies in Soviet Russia* (London: V. Gollancz, 1933).

¹³¹ Dalton wrote that most Soviet citizens looked better fed than unemployed miners in England. He noted that, "People [in Russia], I was told, were 'paying a tremendous price for rapid industrialization.' But in Durham they were paying a tremendous price for nothing at all—except unemployment." As quoted in Davis, "Labour's Political Thought," 76.

¹³² Davis, "Labour's Political Thought," 76.

¹³³ New Fabian influence is evident throughout the manifesto, including the proposed nationalization of the Bank of England and the creation of a National Investment Board (NIB) to "regulate industrial development." The NIB was the heart of Dalton's model of a planned economy. However, it was by no means certain that Dalton's NFRB-informed *For Socialism and Peace* would

emphasized the creation of a planned national economy as a necessary precursor in the move away from capitalist enterprise, called for policies of social provision (in education, health, and housing, among others), and the use of surpluses created by “social effort...for the good of all”—the very same basic framework which lay at the heart of Fabianism.¹³⁴ This triumph of Dalton’s vision of technocratic socialism was fueled by the NEC, which earlier took the decisive step of inviting the New Fabians into direct cooperation with its Policy Committee.¹³⁵

So it was that from 1934 onwards, notions of economic planning and assertive references to socialism began more readily to characterize party—and Fabian—policy; the vagaries which had been symptomatic of MacDonaldism were replaced by the “practical socialism” of a new generation of Fabians—men like Dalton, Herbert Morrison (whom Beatrice Webb glowingly referred to as “a Fabian of Fabians—a direct disciple of Sidney Webb’s”¹³⁶), and Clement Attlee (whose election as leader of the PLP in 1935 prompted Beatrice Webb to unflatteringly describe

emerge from the Conference as the Party’s new program. Indeed, Dalton’s treatise had considerable competition in the form of the Socialist League’s *Forward to Socialism*, itself the product of another group of Labor’s left-wing thinkers, including Stafford Cripps and Frank Horrabin. What ultimately led to the adoption of *For Socialism and Peace* was a debate that erupted over the foreign policy section titled *War and Peace*, which had been shaped by the Fabian Arthur Henderson. The controversy stemmed from enacting “thoroughgoing” socialism at home in the face of wartime threats, particularly those posed by Adolf Hitler. The Socialist League argued that the British Labor Party “must learn the lesson of Germany and Austria—the lesson that compromise and subordination of socialist purpose and practice to electoral and tactical calculations end in defeat.” Thus, for the Socialist League, prioritizing the exigencies of war over a socialist agenda at home, as proposed in *War and Peace*, inevitably led to defeat. Henderson responded to these objections by pointing out that the Soviet Union had joined the League of Nations, evidence that even they “recognized that it may sometimes be necessary to cooperate with capitalist states [and thus delay socialism at home] for the preservation of peace.” With the support of fellow Fabians like Clement Attlee and Herbert Morrison, the tide was turned decisively in favor of Dalton’s manifesto.

See: The Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace: The Labour Party’s Programme of Action* (London: The Labour Party, 1934), 14-15; Daniel Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130; Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 152; Jose Harris, “Labour’s Political and Social Thought,” in *Labour’s First Century*, eds. Duncan Tanner, Pat Thane, and Nick Tiratsoo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 24; Corthorn, *In the Shadow of the Dictators*, 35-39.

¹³⁴ As quoted in Ben Pimlott, *Hugh Dalton: A Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), 211.

¹³⁵ Riddell, “‘The Age of Cole’?,” 956.

¹³⁶ BWTD, January 4, 1932-December 29, 1934, March 14, 1933, LSE FSA PASS/1.

as a “somewhat diminutive and meaningless figure to represent the British Labor Movement in the House of Commons!”¹³⁷). Yet the small PLP—which had been catastrophically reduced following the election of 1931—was largely ineffective until 1935, when the outcome of the general election brought about a moderate recovery by Labor.¹³⁸ Indeed, the return of “known” Labor politicians¹³⁹ as well as many experienced PLP and NEC members brought much-needed stability and competence to the parliamentary party, with New Fabians being well-represented in both. The PLP, for example, now counted among its ranks Dalton, Morrison, Pethick-Lawrence, and Attlee, who replaced Lansbury as the leader of the parliamentary party. Meanwhile, Dalton and Morrison were elected to the party’s executive.¹⁴⁰

As this cadre of like-minded New Fabian intellectuals gradually penetrated the upper echelons of Labor, Dalton published in 1935 *Practical Socialism for Britain*. Although not an official party program, *Practical Socialism* brought together the work Labor and the New Fabians had been engaged in since 1932 and pointed the way forward by providing Labor with the soon-to-be-realized long-term framework of its social reform agenda, the ideological basis of which was undeniably New Fabian.¹⁴¹ Yet, with its defiant “pragmatism,” *Practical Socialism*

¹³⁷ BWTD, January 1, 1935-December 27, 1937, November 27, 1935, LSE FSA PASS/1.

¹³⁸ Labor gained 100 seats, taking its total to 154.

¹³⁹ Including, for example, Dalton, Morrison, J. R. Clynes, Albert Alexander, Thomas Johnston, and Emmanuel Shinwell.

¹⁴⁰ Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 181-182.

¹⁴¹ It would take rather more space than the current study allows to draw out all the points of comparison and parallels. However, a few are worth mentioning if only to appreciate the correspondence: as in *For Socialism and Peace*, Dalton advocated the nationalization of the Bank of England and the creation of the NIB (pp. 212-214); mined the NFRB’s *Twelve Studies in Society Russia* to provide a framework on the “objects of planning” (p. 249); used Herbert Morrison’s *Socialisation and Transport* to support a section on the socialization of industry (p. 313); quoted liberally from R. H. Tawney’s *The School Leaving Age and Juvenile Unemployment* (p. 322) and Barbara Drake’s *Starvation in the Midst of Plenty, a New Plan for the State Feeding of School Children* to support his arguments regarding the movement toward social equality (p. 325) (not coincidentally, both Tawney and Drake served on Labor’s Advisory Committee on Education); and borrowed directly the ideas on peace proposed in the NFRB pamphlet *Labor’s Foreign Policy* (p. 375).

also managed to accomplish something else, as Pimlott has observed; for it “revived” “nuts-and-bolts Fabianism” by divesting it of the sentimental rhetoric to which it had been inclined since the 1920s and, through ideas such as national planning, restored to it a broad-based appeal in an age of hardship.¹⁴² Meanwhile, changes were afoot within the NFRB itself. Originally dominated by G. D. H. Cole, its provocative founder, initiative within the Bureau soon passed to the less-controversial intellectual triumvirate of Hugh Gaitskell, Evan Durbin, and Douglas Jay.¹⁴³ In 1936, this younger generation of New Fabians was coopted by Dalton to serve on the NEC’s Finance and Trade Policy Subcommittee and create a “center-left version of technocratic

¹⁴² Ben Pimlott, “Dalton, (Edward) Hugh Neale,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32697?docPos=1> (accessed August 20, 2016).

¹⁴³ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, 112; Nick Ellison, “Consensus Here, Consensus There...But Not Consensus Everywhere: The Labour Party, Equality, and Social Policy in the 1950s,” in *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945-1964*, eds. Harriet Jones and Michael Kandiah (London: Palgrave, 1996), 22.

Gaitskell, a German-speaking economist, spent the Second World War as a civil servant, working first at the Ministry of Economic Warfare and then at the Board of Trade under Hugh Dalton—who, as we have seen, was the “chief architect” of Labor’s nationalization policies and long-term planning strategy during the 1930s. Like Dalton before him, Gaitskell served as Chancellor of the Exchequer during the Attlee regime (from 1950). In 1955, he replaced Attlee as the Leader of the Labor Party. See: Keith Laybourn, “Hugh (Todd Naylor) Gaitskell,” in *Fifty Key Figures in Twentieth Century British Politics*, 106-110.

Durbin, like Gaitskell, was an economist. One of the “most influential” British thinkers of the 1940s, Durbin was a staunch advocate of democratic socialism, which he published a book about (*The Politics of Democratic Socialism*) in 1940. Much like his Fabian cohort, he believed that democracy and socialism were inextricably linked, and, again in the vein of his like-minded Fabian colleagues, rejected Marxism. As an economist, he is chiefly remembered today for his emphasis on central economic planning and his ardent belief that the state should have “supreme economic authority.” See: Matt Beech and Kevin Hickson, “Evan Durbin,” in *Labour’s Thinkers: The Intellectual Roots of Labour, from Tawney to Gordon Brown* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 77-100.

In the literature, Jay is very often mentioned alongside Gaitskell and Durbin. Like them, Jay was an economist. In the 1930s, he wrote a highly influential economic treatise on depression called *The Socialist Case* (1937) which, as Hickson and Beech note, proved pivotal in Labor’s deliberations on such topics as deficit spending. Elected to his first constituency seat in 1946, he served as Economic Secretary to the Treasury from 1947 to 1950 and Financial Secretary to the Treasury from 1950-1951. See: Beech and Hickson, *Labour’s Thinkers*, 11; Noel Thompson, *Political Economy and the Labour Party: The Economics of Democratic Socialism, 1884-2005* (London: Routledge, 1996), 100.

socialism which regarded public ownership and planning as essential preconditions for social reform.”¹⁴⁴

Hence, by the time Dalton assumed the chairmanship of the party’s annual conference in October 1936, the struts and armatures necessary to support Labor’s ideological evolution were in place and the machinery to launch it well and truly primed. Effectively unencumbered, Dalton presided over the formulation and preparation of Labor’s new policy statement, which it promulgated in *Labour’s Immediate Programme* (alt. Labor’s Short Programme).¹⁴⁵ Rooted firmly in the social reform agenda developed by Dalton in *Practical Socialism* and, by extension, the work of the New Fabians, Labor’s new manifesto committed the party to a program of “measures of Socialism and Social Amelioration,” a rubric which rolled up under its expansive umbrella a quartet of measures aimed at reconstruction, including finance, land, transport, and energy; and a corresponding set of “great benefits,” including “abundant food, good wages, leisure, and security.”¹⁴⁶ For all this, however, it was a remarkably moderate manifesto, a quality which clearly reflects Dalton’s judiciousness. Indeed, while *Labour’s Immediate Programme* presented the party’s “plans to bring real prosperity and peace to all,” it stopped far short of articulating anything like a too-radical agenda. For example, the earlier rhetoric surrounding nationalization which virtually suffused *For Socialism and Peace* was softened in favor of a vague policy designed to direct the “commanding heights” of the economy.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, very little was said about constitutional reform, deficit financing (Keynesianism remained a contentious issue within the party), or even planning. Nevertheless, the specificity and

¹⁴⁴ Riddell, ““The Age of Cole’?,”” 956.

¹⁴⁵ McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition*, 264; James E. Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion: War, State, and Society in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1991), 113-114.

¹⁴⁶ The Labour Party, *Labour’s Immediate Programme* (London: Labour Publications Department, 1937), 1.

¹⁴⁷ Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion*, 113-114.

practicality of *Labour's Immediate Programme* constituted a major advance for Labor as a party of reform and would, in time, form the “bedrock” of the work of Attlee’s postwar Labor regime.¹⁴⁸

“A Marriage Arranged”: Amalgamation and the Revival of the Fabian Society

The following resolution was agreed at an extraordinary meeting of the Fabian Society executive on June 18, 1934: “The Fabian Society does not undertake the publication of pamphlets upon specific issues of policy, since this function is already performed in the research stage by the New Fabian Research Bureau and in the definitive stage by the Labour Party.”¹⁴⁹

With one sentence, the society effectively gutted itself, resigning into the hands of the NFRB the prestigious, clout-generating function which had propelled the Fabians into the inner circles of Britain’s political elite. Now “elderly” and “comatose,”¹⁵⁰ the Fabian Society was content to act as little more than a purveyor of “socialist books and pamphlets” and an arranger of lecture series and summer schools designed to “re-state...the fundamental principles” upon which the “British Socialist Commonwealth” must be built. It was noted, however, that should a “specifically Fabian approach to particular problems emerge” in the course of said restatement, “it may be advisable to consider its development and arrange for subsequent publication.”¹⁵¹ Thus, the society’s new *raison d’être*, as approved by the executive, confirmed its own intellectual feebleness.

Yet beneath the banality of the society’s subsequent proceedings and the perfunctory revision of tracts and pamphlets increasingly at risk of becoming outdated, there stirred a

¹⁴⁸ Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 87.

¹⁴⁹ Minutes, FS, September 27, 1933–November 25, 1937, June 18, 1934, LSE FSA C/18.

¹⁵⁰ Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 245.

¹⁵¹ Minutes, FS, September 27, 1933–November 25, 1937, June 18, 1934, LSE FSA C/18.

movement to stave off this officially-sanctioned decline into obsolescence. Indeed, barely seven months after the extraordinary meeting, the journalist, Fabian, and New Fabian Ivor Thomas¹⁵² motioned that the society's executive appoint a small subcommittee to "consider relations between the Society and the New Fabian Research Bureau and to make recommendations for closer working arrangements."¹⁵³ Later that same year, G. D. H. Cole was invited to speak on "What socialist planning means" at the Fabian-sponsored autumn lectures, New Fabians were appointed to society subcommittees (Barbara Drake and Harold Laski, for example, sat on the Publications Subcommittee), and the society and the NFRB published tracts jointly (for example, Colin Clarke's *A Socialist Budget*).¹⁵⁴ Yet when amalgamation was initially broached by the society in 1935, the Bureau declined; for at the time it was trying to organize an investigation of Nazi Germany similar to that which had produced *Twelve Studies in Socialist Russia* (a project that included a parallel volume of essays)¹⁵⁵ and merger would have complicated the scheme.¹⁵⁶ A year later, the Webbs' exploration of union was rebuffed by the society's long-serving general secretary, F. W. Galton, who objected for fear of losing his job.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² And MP from 1942.

¹⁵³ Minutes, FS, September 27, 1933-November 25, 1937, February 28, 1935, LSE FSA C/18.

¹⁵⁴ See, in the first and second instances, Minutes, FS, September 27, 1933-November 25, 1937, June 13, 1935; in the final instance, Minutes, FS, September 27, 1933-November 25, 1937, April 11, 1935, LSE FSA C/18.

¹⁵⁵ Pugh, *Agitate Educate, Organize*, 179.

¹⁵⁶ The Bureau's leaders seem to have been reticent about the Fabian Society generally. When, for example, rooms came available at the Dalton Street headquarters of the society, a proposal was sent to the Bureau inviting its members to occupy them. At the time, the society, which was slipping deeper and deeper into insolvency, would have welcomed the additional income generated from the rent. Yet the NFRB which seems initially to have agreed, later refused—albeit not in the form of an outright rejection. Rather, the Fabian Society executive received a polite—if vague—letter from R. H. Tawney "intimating that [the NFRB] do not now wish to rent rooms here." Minutes, FS, September 27, 1933-November 25, 1937, March 26, 1937, LSE FSA C/18.

¹⁵⁷ Galton had conscientiously served the society, never missing a meeting since his appointment in 1920.

The way was finally cleared of encumbrances in 1938 when, on January 10, the officers of the NFRB “plumped” for amalgamation.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, contending that union brought with it not only greater prestige but also more income, even Cole reasoned in favor of a merger. But as founder of the extra-parliamentary organ which had assumed the Fabian Society’s high-profile research mantle, Cole had to be persuaded that the new body should assume the Fabian name. After all, would not such a move give the impression that the Bureau had been taken over by the society?¹⁵⁹ In the end, two conditions convinced Cole that adopting the “Fabian Society” was indeed the best way forward: firstly, name recognition. Seedy and aged though it may have become, it was undeniable that the Fabian Society’s reputation brought with it a certain cachet which the NFRB totally lacked. Secondly, and rather more pragmatically, Cole was aware that there were large and non-transferable legacies tied to the Fabian Society. Changing the name of the society meant sacrificing future solvency, a decision no one was willing to make.

When the merger was finally approved—having been agreed by a vote of 78 to 0 (with four abstentions) by the Fabian Society in December of 1938—the revitalized society not only retained its name, but its long-standing and highly-fruitful affiliation with the Labor Party.¹⁶⁰ Yet to accomplish all this, significant concessions had to be made to Cole and the NFRB, including the laying out and adoption of a new set of rules that jettisoned the old Fabian Basis¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 179.

¹⁵⁹ It is worth noting that Cole was not the only member of the NFRB with misgivings. Indeed, at a meeting of the Bureau’s executive on November 25, 1938, it was evident that the membership needed reassurance that the merger would not destroy the principles upon which the NFRB had been founded. Subsequently, Cole promised that, although the amalgamated society would be affiliated with the Labor Party, through “a self-denying ordinance necessary for the preservation of its objectivity of research and catholicity of membership, [the Fabian Society would] refrain from advancing at Labour Party Conferences any proposition of its own, and [would] aim rather at informing and influencing Labour and Socialist opinion by means of its publications and discussions than at directly sponsoring any particular project.” This eventually became Rule 3 of the society’s constitution, the so-called “self-denying ordinance.” As quoted in Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 181. See below for more details.

¹⁶⁰ Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 180.

¹⁶¹ The new Fabian “Basis” was approved on June 16, 1939.

and contained, controversially, a “Self-Denying Ordinance” or “Rule 3.”¹⁶² The ordinance read as follows: “No resolution of a political character expressing an opinion or calling for action, other than in relation to the running of the Society itself, shall be put forward in the name of the Society. Delegates to conferences of the Labour Party, or any other conference, shall be appointed by the Executive Committee without any mandatory instructions.”¹⁶³

In effect, Cole and the NFRB made amalgamation contingent upon reasserting the primacy of the Fabian Society’s research function. Given her history as the founder of the Fabian Research Department (FRD) and her own fraught relationship with Labor politics as ciphred through Sidney, Beatrice Webb understandably defended the New Fabians’ position, even going so far as to argue in her welcoming message, which appeared in the February 1939 issue of *Fabian News*, that “The plain truth is that research and active propaganda of immediate proposals are uncongenial companions: the one insists on an open mind, the other prefers a closed one. If Fabians want to influence the immediate policy of the Parliamentary Labour Party, they can fall back on their local Labour Party or their trade union.”¹⁶⁴

With that, the “contract of marriage” between the Fabians and the Bureau was sealed. The immediate outcome of this conjugation was a revitalized and progressive Fabian Society chaired by Cole and presided over by Beatrice Webb in the newly-created post of honorary

¹⁶² The ordinance seems to have caught Sidney Webb by surprise. In a letter to the society’s treasurer A. Emil Davies dated December 6, 1938, Webb wrote: “There seems to have been some mistake as to the terms in the last paragraph of Paragraph 3, which says that no resolution of a political character shall be put forward in the name of the society. The intention is that such resolution ought to take the form of pamphlets, such as most of those to which the Society is committed, giving reasons for such propositions, and supplying arguments in support of them.” MacKenzie, *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Volume III*, 425-426.

¹⁶³ Final Draft of the Revised Rules of the Fabian Society agreed between the Fabian Society and the New Fabian Research Bureau Sub-Committees, Minutes, FS, January 20, 1938-December 15, 1938, October 6, 1938, LSE FSA C/19.

¹⁶⁴ As quoted in Cole, *The History of Fabian Socialism*, 248.

president.¹⁶⁵ By then entering her eighty-second year, Webb held the position just long enough to safeguard the continuation of the Fabian Society in its reconstituted form and then, in June 1941, withdrew. Thus, one era ended and another began.

Conclusion

When the constitution of the revitalized Fabian Society was approved in June 1939, nearly four decades had passed since the meeting of the LRC at Memorial Hall in London. Since that time, the fortunes of the Fabian Society had oscillated in accordance with the vagaries of the Labor Party and the vertiginous character of contemporary British politics. That the society managed not only to survive these tumultuous circumstances, but also to outlive so many members of its Victorian cohort is testament to its ability to stay relevant—sometimes at great cost to itself.

For all this, however, the Fabian Society was not permitted to wallow overlong in connubial bliss. Indeed, the honeymoon did not outlast the summer of 1939; for on September 4, 1939, less than four months after the promulgation of the society's new constitution and a day after Britain declared war on Germany, the Fabian Finance and General Purposes Committee convened an emergency meeting.¹⁶⁶ At the meeting, it was agreed that, with the onset of the Second World War, "the Society should draw up a new programme beginning with work on war aims etc, watching and criticising war legislation, orders in council, etc. It was recommended

¹⁶⁵ Almost immediately, the Fabian Society set to work reorganizing itself. On January 16, 1939, the NFRB agreed to give up its premises and move in to the Fabian Society's headquarters on Dalton Street by June 30 of that year. Additionally, the executive called for the formation of several committees, including most significantly (given the society's revitalized scope) a Research Committee. Chaired by Margaret Cole, the committee's membership included such intellectual luminaries as Evan Durbin, Leonard Woolf, Hugh Gaitskell, and Barbara Drake.

¹⁶⁶ Attended by all members of the executive able to do so, including G. D. H. Cole.

that the Executive Committee should suspend all committees and sections and should delegate powers of action between meetings to the officers, who should organize research and other activities. ... It was recommended that cooperation on suitable work take place with the Labour Party, the Haldane Society, PEP, UDC, and LRD. It was decided to offer the Society's services to the Labour Party for research work during the war."¹⁶⁷

In truth, the onset of war was a boon to the Fabian Society for, as we have seen, the society always functioned best when it had a clear purpose. Absent an overarching context heavily informed by some sort of exigency—be it the South African War or the First World War—precision of purpose proved to be frustratingly elusive, circumstances which, in retrospect, activated the Fabians' less successful rhetorical proclivities. Thus, as it had in 1923/4, the Fabian Society found itself on a threshold—poised somewhere between realizing fully its potential or fading into obscurity. But unlike the last time, when the Fabians slipped from the precipice and descended into a period of “seedy” indolence, 1939 was different. This time, the Fabian Society crossed the threshold and did so with remarkable effect.

¹⁶⁷ Minutes, FS, January 16, 1939-June 29, 1946, September 4, 1939, LSE FSA C/20.

CHAPTER 3: 1929-1944

From *Imperial Trusteeship* to *Mass Education in African Society*: A Study of Fabian Perspectives and Influence on Colonial Development Policy through the Second World War

*This country is under a Conservative Government, pledged up to the hilt to the defence of capitalist interests. ... While men's minds are keyed up by suspense, the chance is ours to organize and redirect the democratic forces.*¹

– G. D. H. Cole

Introduction

In putting its research functions at the disposal of the Labor Party during the Second World War, the reconstituted Fabian Society skirted the jagged edge of its self-denying ordinance. A threshold mandated as part of G. D. H. Cole's amalgamation concessions, it is hard to imagine an arrangement less propitious to ensuring Fabian neutrality. While it is certainly true that in principle the society remained impartial, refraining from making policy proposals or pronouncements in the name of the society itself, in practice certain of its bureau effectively ignored the ordinance. This was especially true of the Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB), which was established in late-1940 and chaired by the Fabian and Labor MP Arthur Creech Jones. The ostensible remit of the FCB was to act as an objective research clearinghouse for colonial information and research, a framework which necessarily obliged the creation of a network that connected the Bureau both to governmental and non-governmental bodies. Over time, the processes inherent in collecting, analyzing, and sharing information managed to deepen the

¹ G. D. H. Cole, *The War on the Home Front* (London: The Fabian Society, 1939), 8 and 16.

nascent Bureau's relationship with Labor, an almost organic development naturally encouraged by the Fabian Society's long-standing relationship with the party.

Having been dazed by the one-two punch of the collapse of its second ministry and subsequent defection of Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald, the Labor Party was sent reeling to the ropes of government as His Majesty's Opposition in 1931. There, mired in the economic crises stimulated by the Great Depression and buffeted by the concomitant economic blowback suffered by its working-class constituency, the party licked its wounds, choosing to focus on its favored domestic-policy agenda while adopting a default, paternalistic approach toward the colonial empire. This largely benign position prevented Labor from developing anything like a long-term imperial vision. Yet, this is not to say that the party was explicitly neglectful, at least at the level of policy formulation; indeed, rather the opposite is true, for the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions (ACIQ) produced two notable treatises on the subject, one in 1933 (*The Colonial Empire*²) and another in 1936 (*The Demand for Colonial Equality of Economic Opportunity*³). That these were largely ignored by the annual party conferences, however, has led some scholars, including Barbara Bush and Stephen Howe,⁴ to bemoan the party's thorough, near decade-long muteness on matters imperial.

This torpor was interrupted with the establishment of the FCB, which remained wedded to the society's self-denying ordinance only until Labor issued *The Old World and the New Society: An Interim Report of the National Executive of the British Labour Party on the*

² *The Colonial Empire* (London: The Labour Party, 1933), Labour Party Archive, Labour History Archive and Study Centre [henceforth, LPA LHASC].

³ *The Demand for Colonial Equality of Economic Opportunity* (London: The Labour Party Publications Department, 1936).

⁴ Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Britain and Africa, 1919-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 250; Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 52.

Problems of Reconstruction in 1941.⁵ Meant to guide deliberations at the party's 1942 annual conference, *The Old World and the New Society* included eight sections detailing everything from the party's position on appeasement to its policies on social security. Of special interest to the Bureau was the section on "Imperial Questions," the basis of which was the work of the Fabian Leonard Woolf, who had spent the previous two years devising and adapting policies as a member of the ACIQ. But by the time *The Old World and the New Society* was published, "Imperial Questions" had been defanged by the Labor Party executive. Gone now were the Fabians' more ardent initiatives and pointedly anti-white settler language, prompting the FCB to issue a long and painstaking rebuke to the National Executive Committee (NEC). This admonishment, Patricia Pugh concludes justifiably, signaled the Bureau's abrogation of the society's self-denying ordinance in regard to party policy statements.⁶ Henceforth, the FCB was an active and unambiguous partner in Labor's colonial policy formulations.⁷

⁵ *The Old World and the New Society: An Interim Report of the National Executive of the British Labour Party on the Problems of Reconstruction*, LPA LHASC, J. S. Middleton Papers [henceforth JSM], G-L.

⁶ Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 192.

⁷ In practical terms, the FCB's work was "rather different" from that of the society proper. According to Margaret Cole, a long-serving member of the society and the FCB, as well as the wife of G. D. H. Cole, the Bureau was "more self-contained" than any of the parent society's other bureaus. Broadly-speaking, this meant that while the FCB perpetuated certain functions of the parent society, such as bringing together "Socialists of experience and knowledge in discussion and conference, by setting up committees of inquiry...and by publishing books and pamphlets," and it was funded, in part, by a small grant from the parent body, the Bureau's specialization in colonial affairs, its separate membership subscription base (from which the majority of its operating funds derived), and subsequent direct grants from the Trade Union Council and the Labor Party acted to partially sequester the FCB from the society. The impact of this sequestration was to a degree mitigated by two things: first, several members of the Bureau's executive served simultaneously on the same administrative organ of the parent society. For example, between 1944 and 1945, the following members of the FCB sat on the Fabian Society executive: Creech Jones, Margaret Cole, Lord Faringdon, Susan Lawrence, and Woolf. Doing so doubtless helped ensure the Bureau's work remained consistent with the society's overarching premise and intent. Second, membership in the society necessarily and justifiably presupposes a degree of ideological congruence amongst and between those who belong, notwithstanding individual proclivity, peccadillo, and interest. See: Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 282; Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 222; *Fabian Society 61st Annual Report (Draft)*, March 1944, LPA LHASC, JSM, International

Yet, throughout the early twentieth century, the Fabians were no less subject to the vicissitudes of Britain's colonial enterprise than the Labor Party—or, indeed, Whitehall—was itself. From the debate surrounding imperial trusteeship and paternalism to the practical translation of the empire's fraught colonial development regime, the society strove to reconcile the reality of colonialism with indigenous interests, in the end formulating a positivist vision of colonial policy that framed trusteeship as the vehicle for the political, economic, and social progress of colonial peoples. As we shall see, along the way, the Fabians worked in tandem with, and independently of, colonial officials to forge certain policy initiatives, notably *Mass Education in African Society* (1944) and the *Model Cooperative Societies Ordinance* (1946). Encumbered with such ideas as the gradual extension of democracy and the improvement of the machinery of democratic government through such elements as education, as well as the expansion of government powers in a way that yielded “positive government action” as a means of promoting social and economic equality⁸ through the establishment and regulation of local cooperatives, both initiatives harkened back to Fabianism's vision of development-based progress. In the final analysis, the success of these initiatives reflects not only the ability of the Fabians to extend their influence beyond the confines of the Labor Party, but also hints at the complex of idealism and pragmatism which underlay the society's evolving socialist ethos.

This chapter examines the evolution of Fabian thought regarding colonial development policy in the period between the onset of the Great Depression and the end of the Second World War. During this time, the Fabians jettisoned Chamberlainite trusteeship as a cog in their ideological wheelhouse in favor of an alternative vision of trusteeship primed by Sydney Olivier.

Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949; *Fabian Society 62nd Annual Report (Draft)*, March 1945, LPA LHASC, JSM, International Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949.

⁸ McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, 25.

With its emphasis on indigenous African interests, Olivier's work framed key discursive elements of subsequent Fabian colonial development theory for the next 25 years. This evolution of Fabian thought coincided with a revolution in official development policy, for 1929 marks the passage of Britain's Colonial Development Act (CDA). Although economic exigency prompted a retrofit of the CDA, ultimately bending the machinery of colonial development toward the fulfillment of metropolitan needs, it nonetheless signaled an important change in the "official mind" at Westminster. Indeed, a precedent had been set, and it was the CDA's legislative successor, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CDWA), which, a decade later, provided vital political impetus for Fabian colonial development designs. As such, included herein is an examination of the degree to which Fabian thought manifested official policy under the Conservative-dominated wartime Coalition Government. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the sterling crisis of 1947 and its impact on the postwar colonial development drive. Necessarily, this chapter introduces and explores the work of the FCB, the organ of the Fabian Society which, under the chairmanship of Creech Jones, was responsible for researching, devising, and pursuing departures in official colonial development policy.

The Fabians and "Trusteeship": Evolving Perspectives on Empire

At the turn of the twentieth century, the cardinal principle of the British Empire's colonial development regime was "trusteeship,"⁹ the developmental parameters of which were

⁹ The eventual framework of "development-through-trusteeship" was derived in part from the work of late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth-century French social theorist and "founding socialist" Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon. Informed by the destabilizing effects of the Industrial Revolution, Saint-Simonian development philosophy argued for development as the means by which stability could be achieved amidst the destructive effects of "progress." As the Saint-Simonians saw it, the necessary vehicle for this restoration of order was "an organization of material work"—that is, "trusteeship," whereby those individuals with the capacity to utilize land, labor, and capital in the interests of society were "entrusted" with the responsibility to do so. As imagined by the Saint-Simonians, the system worked something like

sketched by Chamberlain during his time as the Secretary of State for the Colonies.¹⁰ An “ardent imperial spokesman,” Chamberlain saw the “colonies as being in the condition of underdeveloped estates, and estates which never [could] be developed without imperial assistance.”¹¹ For Chamberlain, Britain was not some absentee landlord neglectful of the maintenance and improvement of his manor. Rather, Britain was an imperial trustee, an active partner possessed of a sacred duty to develop the massive agricultural estate which had been “entrusted” to it. Thus, if the endgame of colonial development was to make the colonies more productive and self-sufficient in order to promote the economic well-being of the metropole, as Chamberlain’s vision of social-imperial trusteeship held,¹² they could no longer be subject to the

this: banks (and their bankers) were to be “fitted for trusteeship through the creation of a ‘general system of banks’ headed by a central government bank.” These banks, according to Iggers, would act as the “depository of all the riches, of all the total fund of production, and all the instruments of work.” The destructive effects of progress would in turn, be “tamed through reform of the banking system and the personal morality of the banker.” This idea formed the basis of the Saint-Simonian “social scheme,” which offered an anti-*laissez-faire* vision of the future in which industry and capitalism worked toward the constructive, stability-inducing betterment of mankind. See: Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton, “The Invention of Development,” in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (London: Routledge, 1995), 32-33; Peter W. Preston, *Development Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), 40; G. Iggers, *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition, First Year 1828-1829* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 103-110 as quoted in Cowen and Shenton, *The Invention of Development*.

¹⁰ Stephen Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914-1940* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1984), 11.

¹¹ Joseph Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 22; Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, 11. Bernard Porter has observed in his book *The Lion’s Share: A History of British Imperialism, 1850-2011* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 1975) that the management of the imperial “estate” was a favorite analogy of Chamberlain’s.

¹² In theory, the social-imperial paradigm—be it Chamberlain’s, the Fabians’, the Roseberyites’, or even the Conservatives’—formed a sort of trade-based continuum that improved the living standards and conditions of the British working class. In practice, Chamberlain’s conception worked something like this: London needed to import a staple product—wheat, for example. The City, at the center of a global network of exchange, was not lacking for options, including Argentine wheat and wheat from the American Midwest. The choice, however, was far from simple, for investing in the American or Argentine wheat industries could in no way be construed as an investment in the empire—rather the opposite was true. Fortunately, there was an ideal solution for the empire’s wheat-quandary, and it came in the form of an Imperial Dominion: Canada. By the system of “imperial preference” consummated as part of Chamberlain’s imperial estates doctrine, London could guarantee favorable terms of trade with Canada that ensured, and possibly even boosted, imperial production of wheat. In return, Canada bought its earthenware, china, glassware, cutlery, or other finished products from the metropole’s manufacturing

laissez-faire vagaries of nineteenth-century imperialism.¹³ Rather, dependencies like Africa and the West Indies required a more “constructive imperialism,” obliging a minimum of state-directed improvements in things like infrastructure, agriculture, veterinary services, and education to “unlock” their untapped wealth and resources.¹⁴ To this end, the CO retrofitted the struts and armatures of Britain’s colonial development regime to support Chamberlain’s new “imperial estates doctrine” and its associated scheme of “imperial preference.”

For a time, at least, the Fabian Society shared this view; in fact, in *Fabianism and the Empire*, the society had expressed views that were “practically identical to that upheld by Mr. Chamberlain.”¹⁵ This position remained static even in the years immediately following the debate over free trade and protectionism, which briefly imperiled the society’s fragile postwar recrudescence. Yet cosseted as they were in a swathe of post-tariff reform insularity, one thing about Chamberlain’s system was impossible for the Fabians to ignore: the operation of trusteeship within the rubric of the imperial estates doctrine rendered the interests of the indigenous peoples of the colonies “wholly subservient” to those of British capitalism.¹⁶ One need look no further than Kenya, where the impoverishment of Africans at the hands of speculative European landlords and the large numbers of “native” producers forced into wage

centers. Thus, a self-perpetuating system was formed, one that kept the prices of foreign goods artificially elevated through the regulatory mechanism of a tariff (hence, Chamberlain’s Tariff Reform “crusade”) while at the same time sustaining higher levels of employment within the empire’s industrial and agricultural sectors.

For fuller discussions on social-imperialism and its variants, see: Peter J. Cain and Anthony G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914* (New York: Longman Group, 1993), 204-213; Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 1-17 and 89-118.

¹³ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, 23.

¹⁴ Joseph M. Hodge and Gerald Hodl, “Introduction,” in *Developing Africa: Concepts and Practices in Twentieth Century Colonialism*, eds. Joseph M. Hodge, Gerald Hodl, and Martina Kopf (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 6.

¹⁵ Sydney Olivier, “Liberalism and the Fabians,” *The Daily News*, December 17, 1901, 4. As quoted in Francis Lee, *Fabianism and Colonialism: The Life and Political Thought of Lord Sydney Olivier* (London: Defiant Books, 1988), 105.

¹⁶ Cowen and Shenton, “Origin,” 152 and 156.

labor to achieve minimal subsistence attested to the corrosive advance of capitalism, to witness how colonial policy had “diseased and disordered” African communities.¹⁷ Indeed, soon after Chamberlain left office, Lord Elgin, the Liberal Secretary of State, found himself in the position of trying to constrain “the evils of unrestricted speculation in land” in Kenya, with decidedly mixed results.¹⁸

Indeed, by the 1920s, this system of exploitative paternalism had become entrenched, frustrating even the efforts of the CO to assert the “unassailable” paramountcy of African interests as part of the principle of trusteeship.¹⁹ So it was that, throughout the decade, the fortunes of trusteeship waxed and waned according to the caprice of the administration. In 1923, for example, the Devonshire Declaration not only upheld the paramount importance of African interests in the face of immigrant settlement, but also rejected outright “the grant of responsible self-government” to Britain’s African dependencies.²⁰ Some four years later, however, the white paper on “Future policy in regard to Eastern Africa,” written by then Colonial Secretary L. S. Amery, argued in favor of extending the responsibility for native trusteeship to immigrant settlers, a step expressly forbidden by Devonshire,²¹ while at the same time suggesting the

¹⁷ Cowen and Shenton, “Origin,” 152 and 156.

¹⁸ In office from 1905-1908, Elgin’s seems an unhappy tenure in the post-Chamberlain CO, having to impose a regime of professionalism over a cabinet department whose rank-and-file showed a thoroughly impertinent attitude toward Crown representatives. Described as arrogant and contentious, the Chamberlain ministry seems to have garnered much ill-will at Westminster and Whitehall, more so as Elgin found himself called to deal with indigenous land tenure problems in Kenya, a matter which, through 1908, consumed a disproportionate amount of Elgin’s attention. Ultimately, Elgin “rejected” the application European land tenure forms in Africa. See: Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, 292; Ronald Hyam, *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office, 1905-1908: The Watershed of the Empire-Commonwealth* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1968), 486 and 420.

¹⁹ As articulated in *Indians in Kenya*, Cmnd. 1922 (July 1923). Alternatively, the “Devonshire Declaration” or the “Kenya White Paper.”

²⁰ “Future Policy in Regard to Eastern Africa,” UK National Archives, Kew, Cabinet Papers [henceforth NA CAB] 24/187/41, 3.

²¹ The white paper argued that the immigrant settlers’ “claim to share progressively in the responsibilities of government ... cannot be limited to the representation of their own community

possibility of a “Closer Union”²² of Britain’s East African colonies and the creation of what Priscilla Shilaro describes as a “grand Dominion of East Africa, comprising Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, and possibly Rhodesia and Nyasaland.”²³ These suppositions, reflective of Amery’s belief that European migration and settlement in the colonies was the motive-force for colonial development and, thus, a precondition for indigenous advance,²⁴ framed the remit of the Hilton Young Commission, which was launched in 1927 to investigate and make recommendations on associating immigrant communities “more closely in the responsibilities and trusteeship of Government” so that they might help determine how the development of “native” communities could “best be progressively applied in the political as well as the economic sphere.”²⁵ In 1929, the commission’s findings were published in its *Report on Closer Union of the Dependencies in British East and Central Africa*, which essentially rejected Amery’s proposals by reverting colonial policy back to the declaration of 1923.²⁶

As the CO struggled to arrive at a consistent development policy, the Fabians’ own paradigm of trusteeship underwent an overhaul. The change was largely the result of the influence of leading Fabian Sydney Olivier, who, during his tenure as a colonial official in

interests.” As such, their “share in the trusteeship for the progress and welfare of the natives must be developed.” “Future Policy in Regard to Eastern Africa,” NA CAB 24/187/41, 3-5.

²² N. J. Westcott, “Closer Union and the Future of East Africa, 1939-1948: A Case Study in the ‘Official Mind of Imperialism’,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 10, no. 1 (October 1981): 67.

²³ “Future Policy in Regard to Eastern Africa,” NA CAB 24/187/41, 3; John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds., *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1896-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 510; Priscilla M. Shilaro, “A Failed Eldorado: British Trusteeship, Luyia Land Rights and the Kakamega Gold Rush, 1930-52” (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2000), 40.

²⁴ Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 126.

²⁵ “Future Policy in Regard to Eastern Africa,” NA CAB 24/187/41, 4-5.

²⁶ As quoted from the *Report*, the Commission held the view that, “the paramountcy of native interests is to be interpreted in the sense that the creation and preservation of a field for the full development of native life is a first charge on any territory, and that the Government, having created this field, has the duty to devote all available resources to assisting natives to develop within.” “The Hilton-Young and Wilson Reports on East Africa,” *Bulletin of International News* 6, no. 10 (Nov. 21, 1929): 270.

Jamaica between 1900 and 1913, set the tone for a particular “Fabian conception” of colonialism.²⁷ A long-time student of Comtean social theory,²⁸ Olivier saw in Auguste Comte’s

²⁷ Olivier served as a colonial official in Jamaica between 1901 and 1913, including governor from 1907-1913. During his tenure, Olivier worked to “extend peasant proprietorship” by “de-nationalising Crown land” for alienation to small-holders—a peasantization scheme whose spirit lay in the Fabian tract *Capital and Land*, which Olivier penned in 1888. As Cowen and Shenton have observed, a “favourite theme of Olivier’s and, not coincidentally of the emerging Fabian critique of British colonial rule in Africa, was to contrast the beneficent colonialism of the West Indies and West Africa with the maleficent implantation of settler and large-scale production in Kenya and Southern Africa.” Later, Olivier became Lord Olivier and Secretary of State for India. Cowen and Shenton, “Origin,” 153.

²⁸ As a theory of human development, “positivism” originated with the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Henri-Claude de Saint Simon’s secretary and principal ideological successor. Comte argued that the Saint-Simonian paradigm of development (the model which eventually lay at the back of Chamberlainite trusteeship) had, in fact, failed to reconcile progress with order; for progress remained imperfect—relentless, inconstant, and chaotic and had not, therefore, brought about the “constructive order” promised by the Saint-Simonian model. Thus, development-based “improvement” had reached an impasse. The solution, Comte believed, was philosophical; hence, positivism, the character of which is generally defined as being altruistic, or the putting of “the social above the personal.”

As outlined in Comte’s “Law of Three Stages,” positivism was the third and final stage of human development. Briefly, Comte reasoned that human society developed through a trio of “mentally conceived” stages, each of which was defined by the means and methods humans used to understand and rationalize the world around them: the Theological Stage, the Metaphysical Stage, and the Positive Stage. In the Theological Stage, human development is subject to and entirely dependent upon the caprice of personified deities—as expressed, for instance, in animistic, polytheistic, and monotheistic belief systems. The Metaphysical Stage is a sort of “abstractified” extension of this first stage. Lastly, the Positive Stage (alt. the Scientific Stage), in which human development is understood/explained by way of observation, experiment, and comparison. Unlike the earlier, supernatural stages, the Positive Stage relies on the scientific method and objective thought to explain the natural world and correct for its imperfections.

Considered within the context of development, it is in the Positive Stage that humanity acquires the intellectual capacity necessary to “tame progress” through order so that it might achieve the kind of altruistic, mature, morality-based “progressive development” required for “improvement.” In the end, what this Comtean model of development effectively did was bring together the Saint-Simonian banker-trustees with Comte’s “high priests of positivism”—scientists and sociologists—as the new agents of “collective development.”

The Comtean model of social theory was pivotal in the formation of the Fabians’ own vision of social trusteeship. However, the Fabians’ version differed from that of Comte in that it “rejected the role of the banker as a social trustee.” Indeed, in keeping with their own theory of rent, the Fabians saw bankers as just another active and “knowingly self-interested” (rather than altruistic) party that received “rents”—in the form of things like interest—in much the same way landlords received rents from land. Inasmuch as landlords could “not be depended upon to fulfill their social obligation to make land productive and at the same time keep labor employed without destitution,” bankers could likewise not be trusted to act impartially. The Fabians therefore fell back upon state officials who did have the “potential to be positively enlightened” or “permeated” by Fabian thought. Thus, in the Fabian vision of social trusteeship, bankers were replaced state officials as the new priests of positivism imagined by Comte.

For the best source on Comtean Positivism, see: A Comte (trans.), *A General View of Positivism* (Aberdeen: A. King & Co, 1865). For notable—if esoteric—renderings on the connections between Saint-Simonian trusteeship and Comtean Positivism and British and Fabian colonial development

doctrine of positivism the means by which development could not only correct the depredations of Chamberlainite trusteeship—which critics held promoted capitalist interests as the “chief function of the State”²⁹—but also lead to social, political, and economic improvement in the colonies. This positivist assessment of development’s potential formed the basis of “Fabian Trusteeship,” which in effect redefined Bernard Shaw’s “privilege” of inclusion in the empire by converting social obligation—such as the protection of colonial subjects from the ravages of the market—into a regime of progressive development arranged and ordered by altruistic state officials (or “trustees”).³⁰ Thus, for Olivier, and a growing body of Fabians, including Leonard Woolf, Graham Wallas, and, eventually, Sidney Webb, the question confronting imperial Britain was no longer if it would remain the “centre and nucleus” of a global empire characterized by “Responsible Government,” as Bernard Shaw had postulated in *Fabianism and the Empire*, but whether or not the “State can be changed from an instrument of economic exploitation into an instrument of good government and progress.”³¹

Leonard Woolf—publisher and close friend of Olivier and, arguably, the Fabian nearest to him ideologically³²—developed this theme in *Empire and Commerce in Africa*. Published by the Labor Research Department in 1919, which had recently been amalgamated with the research arm of the Fabian Society, Woolf argued that Britain’s position in Africa was “merely that of trustee for the native population and that its only duty was to promote the interests...of the Africans.”³³ This benign sense of trusteeship was to be guided by a bundle of principles that

policies, see Cowen and Shenton, “The Invention of Development” in *Power of Development*, 27-43; Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*.

²⁹ Leonard Woolf, *Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1920), 9 and 352-353.

³⁰ Cowen and Shenton, “Origin,” 156-157.

³¹ Woolf, *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, 358.

³² This ideological affinity is explored in Lee’s *Fabianism and Colonialism*, 170-197.

³³ Woolf, *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, 362.

included the protection of native land rights and the use of revenue derived from the land to support native development, measures that constituted an early roadmap toward eventual self-government. Later, Woolf extended versions of these principles to Labor's colonial policy formulations when, as secretary of the Imperial Affairs Sub-Committee³⁴ (later renamed the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions), he drafted, along with its chairman, the Fabian C. R. Buxton, *The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy* (1926), the party's first comprehensive colonial policy statement.³⁵

As Labor's policy crystallized around a nucleus of Fabian-approved doctrine, Sydney (now Lord) Olivier launched a broadside against Amery's White Paper in the House of Lords. The principle of trusteeship as expressed in the Devonshire Declaration, he observed, represented a "distinct and acceptable departure" from the earlier Chamberlainite policy which regarded "Imperial Dominions as undeveloped estates of the sovereign nation."³⁶ Amery's white paper, with its controversial reliance and the "fallacy"³⁷ of benevolent immigrant trusteeship *vis-à-vis* native affairs, threatened to wreck this and, in the process, destroy "the confidence of African

³⁴ Mary Davis, "Labour, Race and Empire: The Trades Union Congress and Colonial Policy, 1945-51," in *The British Labour Movement and Imperialism*, eds. Billy Frank, Craig Horner, and David Stewart (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 91.

³⁵ Helen Carr, "Virginia Woolf: Empire and Race," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 200.

Labor had earlier toyed with colonial issues. For example, in its 1922 election manifesto, *Labour's Call to the People*, the party included a section entitled "Freedom in the Empire" which recommended independence for Egypt and home rule for India and Ireland. However, *Empire in Africa* represents the party's first wide-ranging effort at addressing colonialism in the African context, a novelty touted by the document ("Labour," it announced, "has hitherto naturally given little detailed attention to the Empire"). See: Robert G. Gregory, *Sidney Webb and East Africa: Labor's Experiment with the Doctrine of Native Paramountcy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 83; Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 113.

³⁶ Sydney Olivier, *White Capital and Coloured Labour* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), 358.

³⁷ Lord Olivier, Speech to the House of Lords, March 13, 1929, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 73, col. 481.

natives in the British government.”³⁸ When in early 1929 the Hilton Young Commission delivered to Parliament its findings affirming³⁹ but vaguely the imperial government’s principles of trusteeship as outlined in 1923, its imprecision only fueled Olivier’s frustration, who complained that it was “not enough” to simply adopt the principles of trusteeship and to reiterate their adoption in white papers.⁴⁰

For Olivier, this war of words over trusteeship climaxed in the tract *Imperial Trusteeship*, which the Fabian Society published in 1929. Hewing closely to Labor’s colonial policy as formulated in Woolf and Buxton’s *Empire in Africa* and partially informed by the Hilton Young Commission’s report, the Olivier-penned treatise proposed a framework of state-run social trusteeship that scuttled Chamberlainite policy. Based on Devonshire’s ostensible “dictum that native interests are to be paramount,”⁴¹ Olivier’s model delinked European landlordism and its

³⁸ Lord Olivier, Speech to the House of Lords, December 7, 1927, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 69, cols. 551-600.

³⁹ Great Britain, *Report on Closer Union of the Dependencies in British East and Central Africa*, Cmnd. 3234 (1929). The report assigned the following meaning to the “Paramountcy of native interests”: “first, to define what are the essential native interests; secondly, to settle what are the conditions which must be created and preserved in order to give those interests a fair field in which to start and an adequate measure of protection and assistance for their development, and, thirdly, to allow nothing to interfere with these conditions. Subject to these requirements, the Government must do all in its power to help the immigrant communities.” *Report*, 41.

⁴⁰ Lord Olivier, Speech to the House of Lords, March 13, 1929, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 73, col. 480-481.

⁴¹ Despite Olivier’s grandiloquence, the declaration’s doctrine of “native” paramountcy was hardly the manifestation of humanitarian magnanimity his rhetoric implied. Indeed, at the time the Devonshire Declaration was promulgated, African paramountcy was little more than a political expedient, the means by which the simmering tensions which had characterized relations between the Indian immigrant population in Kenya and the colony’s white settler population since 1919 could be defused.

Kenya’s “Indian question” had, since the First World War, pivoted on four issues: Indians demanded 1) the right to obtain land in the European “white highlands;” 2) the “same political rights as those granted to the settlers after the war;” 3) an end to both commercial and residential segregation in the colony’s urban areas; and 4) the right of Indians to “immigrate freely” to Kenya. After three years of haggling, the India Office and the CO put forward in 1922 the Wood-Winterton plan (so named after the plan’s leading architects, Stuart Edward Wood, under-secretary of state at the CO, and his opposite at the India Office, Lord Winterton), which sought to strike a balance between the two parties. On one hand, the Wood-Winterton formula rejected the notion of Indian immigrants obtaining land in the highlands, a preclusion which effectively left the area exclusively in the hands of white settlers; on the other hand, it adopted Indian demands for an “end to urban residential and commercial segregation.” In the immediate

concomitant scourges from the health and longevity of the empire by ensuring adherence to the “just and equal principles of British Imperial rule which prior to the Imperial development period were assumed [to be] axiomatic.”⁴² In effect, Olivier—and, by extension, the Fabian Society itself—argued that a return to the humanitarian precepts of “justice, liberty and equality of civic privilege”⁴³ that characterized Britain’s “Old Empire”⁴⁴ was the necessary bridge between the contemporary rhetoric of trusteeship and its reality.

term, however, such ameliorative efforts amounted to naught, for changing political fortunes in London coupled with European intransigence in Kenya to forestall resolution. Until, that is, early the following year, when considerations over African rights interposed and presented officials with “a clever and convenient way out of a serious imperial problem.”

On the surface, at least, the two sets of issues seem poles apart—and yet, a swathe of fiscal common ground existed between them. For the very same year that the Wood-Winterton plan was being formulated, it dawned on the CO that the economic policy of Governor Sir Edward Northey (in office, 1919-1922), based entirely on European production for export, posed two very real dangers: first, the bankruptcy of the colony; second, rising levels of African dissent. The ramifications of these developments were all-too-vividly realized in the form of intensifying African nationalism and its concomitant scourge, rebelliousness, as embodied by the work of Harry Thuku and the East African Association; “by the complaints of British capitalists;” and by the protestations of British humanitarians. Pressurized seemingly from every angle, the CO did the only realistic thing it could to help ventilate these frustrations: in 1922, it committed itself to measures “for encouraging native agriculture and industry.”

The decision to do so had a ripple effect on the controversy surrounding the Indian question. For the revivification of African production for export required not only greater assistance to African agriculture and increased provision of services to the reserves (thereby defusing an increasingly volatile political situation between the colony and its African subjects), but also the presence of Indian traders who would “provide the means for getting African product to the world market.” Hence, there could be, as Maxon observes, “no question of a complete stoppage of Indian immigration, nor could there be a complete denial of Indian claims for equal rights.” As a result, driven by economic necessity, the Devonshire Declaration included language that guaranteed the paramountcy of African interests. Despite this, however, the officials at Whitehall went to some lengths to assure the white settler population that African production for export was meant to complement, not supplant, European production. Framed accordingly, Olivier’s allusion back to Devonshire’s dictum is, at best, the sincerest form of rhetorical flummery. See: Robert M. Maxon, “The Devonshire Declaration: The Myth of Missionary Intervention,” *History of Africa* 18 (1991), 259-270.

⁴² Sydney Olivier, *Imperial Trusteeship* (London: The Fabian Society, 1929), 4-5 and 13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁴ Cowen and Shenton, “Origin,” 156. As explained by the authors, Olivier contrasted Britain’s “third Empire,” which was created by the partition and subsequent colonization of Africa, with the “Old Empires” of white settlement, such as North America. Olivier argued that there had been two motives behind the creation of this third Empire: first, “to secure minerals and materials which might have fallen into the hands of foreign powers” and, second, “to protect Africans from the ‘destruction and exploitation’ which they would have received at the hands of others.” Olivier saw these motives as being consistent with the principles and practices of the evolving old empires, which had incorporated humanitarian precepts into the imperial transition from mercantilism to self-government. But the

By this time, the Fabians had never been closer to realizing their vision of social trusteeship. For in the summer of 1929, the newly-installed Labor government, equipped with *Empire in Africa*, initiated a series of policy changes seemingly calculated to consummate the Fabian design: first, the founder Fabian Sidney Webb, who chaired Labor's Imperial Affairs Sub-Committee from 1918-1921,⁴⁵ was elevated to a peerage (the Lord Passfield), an appointment accompanied by his installation as Secretary of State for the Colonies;⁴⁶ a month later, Parliament passed the long-gestating CDA, which set aside funds for "aiding and developing agriculture and industry" in the colonies.⁴⁷ Taken together, this cascade of good fortune suggested that the stars in the constellation of Fabian Trusteeship had well and truly—if unexpectedly—aligned. "Fabians to the Rescue!" *The Clarion* boldly proclaimed.⁴⁸

Events, however, soon conspired to disillusion the Fabians—and the first sign of difficulty came from an unexpected source: Sidney Webb himself. In June 1930,⁴⁹ Webb issued his *Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa* which, although it upheld the paramountcy of

practices of the "third Empire" had departed from the precepts "under the pressure of intensified capitalist competition," with the result being the exploitation of Africans.

⁴⁵ Gregory, *Sidney Webb and East Africa*, 81-83.

⁴⁶ Given his ideological proclivities, Webb was an understandably reluctant lord. He accepted the seals of the CO only because the Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald was himself mired in a constitutional quandary. In a rush to fill the cabinet, MacDonald failed to comply with the constitutional requirement that the government have at least two Secretaries of State in the Lords. While he hoped to appoint his favorite, J. H. Thomas, to the post of Secretary of State for the Colonies—which Thomas had held in 1924—this was not to be, for Thomas had a rather large family; with the king reluctant to increase the number of hereditary peers in the Lords (which, of course, Thomas' offspring certainly risked), MacDonald was forced to seek out an alternative, hence the childless Sidney Webb, who reluctantly gave up his plans for retirement to accommodate the prime minister. See: Gregory, *Sidney Webb and East Africa*, 77.

⁴⁷ Colonial Development Act of 1929, 20 Geo. 5, c. 5.

⁴⁸ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/20-21/5/enacted>. Accessed on September 10, 2016.

⁴⁹ *The Clarion* 11 (November 1930), 311.

⁴⁹ Webb's *Memorandum* was completed in November 1929. It was not published until the following June because the Cabinet was divided over certain demands of the European settlers, which Webb wanted to concede as part of a package deal. An excellent discussion of the nuance of Webb's position can be found in Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1975), 174.

native interests as embedded in the Devonshire Declaration,⁵⁰ in abeyance since 1924,⁵¹ also sought to reconcile native paramountcy with Amery's proposal to extend trusteeship to immigrant settlers by promoting the "fiction" that being mindful of settler interests was "in no way inconsistent" with the ideal—a notion which was conceptually anathema to the bulk of the Fabians.⁵² Insult was added to injury when, in April 1931, Webb, literally cornered⁵³ by the anti-colonialists Woolf and Buxton who pressed him to implement the policies as outlined in *Empire in Africa*, balked after more than an hour of inflamed argument.⁵⁴ Decades later, Woolf characterized Webb's behavior at the meeting as the "pig-headed"⁵⁵ conduct of "a common or garden imperialist Conservative"⁵⁶ and admitted that at the time he feared—rather outlandishly—that Webb had succumbed to the blandishments and prevarications of Sir Edward

⁵⁰ Labor had earlier been forced by members of its radical wing, including Buxton and Josiah Wedgewood, to reaffirm the party position in a debate before the House of Commons, during which a resolution was moved that:

The Native population of our dependencies should not be exploited as a source of low-grade labour; no governmental pressure should be used to provide wage-labour for employers; due care should be taken of Native social well-being; the Native demand for land should be adequately and satisfactorily met and their rights therein properly safeguarded; where the Native population is not yet fitted for self-Government direct imperial control of Native policy should be fully maintained; Native self-governing should be fostered; and franchise and legal rights should be based upon the principle of equality for all without regard to race or colour. (James Marley, Speech to the House of Commons, December 11, 1929, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 233, cols. 581-582.)

⁵¹ Shilaro, "A Failed Eldorado: British Trusteeship, Luyia Land Rights and the Kakamega Gold Rush, 1930-52," 40.

⁵² Ronald Hyam, "Bureaucracy and 'Trusteeship' in Colonial Empire" in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 269. The so-called "Dual Policy" which, as outlined in Amery's white paper, called for the "complementary development of non-native and native production" and its progressive application in both the political and economic spheres.

⁵³ Unable to secure a committee room at Westminster, Webb, Buxton, and Woolf were forced to sit in the vacant House of Lords. Once there, Woolf and Buxton spent the better part of an hour berating Webb to get him to budge. Leonard Woolf, personal interview, June 14, 1954, London. As quoted in Gregory, *Sidney Webb and East Africa*, 92; Leonard Woolf, *Downhill all the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919 to 1939* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967), 236-238.

⁵⁴ Woolf, Personal Interview, June 14, 1954, London. As quoted in Gregory, *Sidney Webb*, 92.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁵⁶ Woolf, *Downhill all the Way*, 236-237.

Grigg, the pro-settler governor of Kenya. Woolf's harsh critique seems to have failed to take into consideration two things: first, Webb was no Grigg acolyte. In fact, Webb was eager and committed to ensuring the security of African land rights in Kenya. Indeed, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, Webb made revisions to the draft bill of the long-gestating *Native Lands Trust Ordinance* that were designed not only to fairly compensate Africans whose land was alienated, but, in the event of alienation for public purposes, to ensure that suitable contiguous land be appended to the reserves from whence the land came. Second, unlike his predecessor at Whitehall, Webb was fully prepared to bypass the legislative morass fostered by Nairobi's intransigent administration and the settler-dominated LegCo by issuing an Order in Council, which would legislate in accordance with the Secretary of State's revisions and, in bearing the weight of the King of England, suffer none of the vicissitudes of colonial obduracy.⁵⁷ Doubtless, the basis of Woolf's critique lay in fundamental differences at the back of the two men's ideological predispositions: whereas Woolf's Fabianism was of the militant variety—a temperament he shared with the likes of Buxton and, to some extent, Olivier—Webb's was and always had been of the gradualist bent, one which made him loath to pursue anything like an immediate (what Webb saw as “radical”) departure in colonial policy such as that being suggested by Woolf and Buxton.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The best and, to my knowledge, only examination of the conflict between Webb and Grigg over the *Native Lands Trust Ordinance* is Priscilla M. Shilaro, *A Failed Eldorado: Colonial Capitalism, Rural Industrialization, African Land Rights in Kenya, and the Kakamega Gold Rush, 1930-1952* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008). My exposition here is derived from pp. 13-58.

⁵⁸ Gregory, *Sidney Webb and East Africa*, 86. According to Gregory, Webb had by this time become convinced that the party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions (ACIQ), which had produced the research on *The Empire in Africa*, had fallen into the hands of militant radicals, such as Woolf, Buxton, Norman Leys, and Josiah Wedgewood.

Yet, even had Webb been receptive to Woolf's and Buxton's appeals, the economic slump that gripped Britain in the wake of the First World War⁵⁹ all but ensured that government efforts to develop the colonies along the lines favored by the society's more radical elements would be shaped by depression and spiraling unemployment at home, rather than concern over the inequalities of capitalism abroad.⁶⁰ Thus, when it was passed in 1929 amid growing anxiety about the upcoming election becoming a referendum on the government's handling of the economy, the CDA targeted the improvement of colonial agriculture and industry to promote "commerce with or industry in the United Kingdom" as part of a "scheme to solve our own unemployment problem."⁶¹ In the end, the reality of contemporary global financial trends

⁵⁹ World War I eroded the economic stability of Great Britain's economy. While it is true that the country had financed its war effort largely through foreign asset sales, Britain nevertheless realized a "net loss of £300 million of foreign investments and, together with the loss of material assets through enemy action, such divestiture reduced British investment abroad by approximately 20 percent." The consequent loss of foreign earnings "left the country much more dependent upon exports and therefore vulnerable to any sudden economic downturn in world markets." Moreover, World War I "permanently" eroded Britain's international trading position because of major disruptions in trade routes and losses in shipping. As Matthijs observes, it was not until 1934 that "Britain again reached the level of national output that was attained in 1918." Indeed, while average GDP growth over the period 1919-1933 was -.03 percent, unemployment remained at "historically high levels" until 1939, averaging just over 10 percent. See: Matthias Matthijs, *Ideas and Economic Crises in Britain from Attlee to Blair (1945-2005)* (London: Routledge, 2011), 44-45.

⁶⁰ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, 171. Some idea as to the scope of the problem can be gleaned from a statement made by Lord Arnold, the Paymaster-General, who reported on the fiscal parameters of the unemployment crisis to the Lords on July 22, 1929: "As your Lordships are aware the Unemployment Insurance Fund has accumulated a large deficit in recent years. The deficiency now amounts to about £36,500,000, whereas the legal limit of borrowing for the Fund is only £40,000,000. It is therefore clear that there is not much margin still remaining.... At the present time, unhappily, the number of unemployed is nearly 1,150,000." Lord Arnold, Speech to the House of Lords, July 22, 1929, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 75, cols. 155-157.

⁶¹ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, 187; Malcolm MacDonald, Speech to the House of Commons, May 21, 1940, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 361, col. 45.

Even had circumstances been ideal in 1929/30, the CDA was anything but a silver bullet for the empire's mounting colonial development concerns. First, the act was chronically underfunded; there was comparatively little money available from outside sources for colonial development apart from the £1 million annually from the Colonial Development Fund (CDF) which was established in 1929. Second, it was burdened with what can only be described as Sisyphean logistical complexities; the CO and the colonial governments had to coordinate development plans based on the trade situations in each of the colonies. In the end, the CDA's importance lies not so much in terms of projects it directly funded, but

intersected with the symbiosis of the colonial-metropolitan economy not only to doom Labor's second minority government, but to trump the idyll of Fabian Trusteeship. The Fabians would have to wait some 15 years to once again be so positioned.

The Colonial Development Crucible: The Crisis of the West Indies, Hailey's *African Survey*, and the CDWA, 1934-1941

In the decade before Parliament marked the passage the CDWA of 1940, the operation of Britain's colonial development machinery was increasingly subject to Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary criticism—a trend that prompted Sir Edward Grigg to complain in the Commons, “The attack on our position in Africa is not, in my opinion, coming from Africans or from anybody outside ourselves. It is coming from within our own ranks. ... If that kind of propaganda goes on it will undermine the peace of the Colonial Empire, not because of its effects on Africa, but because of its great effect upon ourselves.”⁶²

Indeed, as R. D. Pearce has observed, parliamentary debates at the end of the 1930s reveal not only an atmosphere of widespread discontent with the colonial policy *status quo*, but also a readiness to “censure past mistakes in moral terms.”⁶³ Figures such as the Fabian PJ Noel-Baker, Sir Richard Acland, and Captain Peter MacDonald argued, respectively, for a reorganization of colonial policy, called for “violent” changes in policy, and expressed confusion over the CO's long-term policy.

rather insofar as it marked the beginnings of Britain's system of planned development. Sir William McLean, Review of Development, 1930-1950, nd, BLUO, Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 332, Papers of Arthur Creech Jones [henceforth ACJ] 48/1.

⁶² Edward Grigg, Speech to the House of Commons, July 25, 1935, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 304, col. 2069.

⁶³ R. D. Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy, 1938-1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), 18.

Dissatisfaction manifested itself much more ominously beyond the British archipelago, however, as events in the West Indies proved. When the Great Depression spread across the empire in the 1930s, economic suffering in the Caribbean sugar island chain was amongst the most severe. Indeed, following the effective collapse of the global sugar market, conditions were so abysmal that Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Vincent, British Guiana, and Trinidad and Tobago were the scene of a series of violent disturbances and labor riots,⁶⁴ events which scandalized those in Britain who took an interest in colonial affairs. As the *Times* reported, “Recent events in the West Indies have shaken the complacency with which most people in this country have been accustomed to regard the Colonial Empire...they have created an uneasy suspicion that economic and social improvements may be just as badly needed in other parts as well.”⁶⁵

Amidst reports of growing casualties in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, where policemen were being burned to death by rioters,⁶⁶ the CO dispatched the Moyne Commission⁶⁷ to investigate the social and economic conditions of the island chain and make recommendations. Meanwhile, in the Commons, parliamentarians heaped scorn on Britain’s “deplorable”⁶⁸ record in the West Indies: David Lloyd George was “perfectly appalled at the conditions” and felt ashamed that this “slummy empire” had been so long tolerated; Creech Jones argued that the riots had “rudely shocked our own complacency in Colonial administration;” and Aneurin Bevan

⁶⁴ Other flashpoints included: a strike in the Northern Rhodesian copper mines (1935), disturbances on sugar estates in Mauritius (1937), and a cocoa delay in the Gold Coast and Nigeria by peasant farmers protesting low prices (1937).

⁶⁵ *Times*, June 11, 1938.

⁶⁶ O. Nigel Bolland, *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-1939* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1995), 150; S. Basdeo, *Labour Organisation and Labour Reform in Trinidad 1919-1939* (St. Augustine: University of the West Indies, n. d.), 111-113.

⁶⁷ The West India Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Walter Guinness, 1st Baron Moyne.

⁶⁸ Lord Olivier, Speech to the House of Lords, February 23, 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 107. Cols. 830-831.

asserted that the boast about Britain being a good colonizer was baseless: “We are obviously incompetent,” he remarked. “This House of Commons...is entirely not to be trusted with the stewardship of these areas.”⁶⁹

When the findings of the Moyne Commission were delivered in December 1939, a dire inventory that revealed disease, malnutrition, and illegitimacy on an unprecedented scale, they confirmed Bevan in his stark assessment.⁷⁰ In fact, so horrendous were the commission’s conclusions that it was agreed not to release them for public consumption for fear that they would be used by Joseph Goebbels and his cadre of Nazi propagandists to undermine Britain’s position in the colonies during the Second World War.⁷¹ And yet in terms of colonial development policy, the events in the West Indies were, as Parker has observed, a “watershed,” a veritable “canary in the imperial coal mine” that triggered colonial reforms financed by the metropole on a scale that dwarfed the 1929 CDA.⁷² As Lord Moyne confirmed in a speech broadcast from London and received in Jamaica on February 20, 1940: “To-day there have been two events of far-reaching importance not only to the West Indies but to the Colonial Empire as a whole. One is the publication of the recommendations of the West India Royal Commission...and the other is the announcement by the Government of a new development

⁶⁹ As quoted in Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, 17-18.

⁷⁰ Typhoid, yaws, and tropical diseases were rampant; in one Jamaican parish, for example, 74 percent of the tested population was found to be infected with hookworm. The rate of infant mortality in some islands neared 300 per 1,000 live births. Literacy, while higher than in much of the empire, barely exceeded 50 percent, and it was estimated that a third of the population had never seen the inside of a school. See: Jason C. Parker, *Brother’s Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 23.

⁷¹ Viscount Bledisloe, Speech to the House of Lords, March 20, 1940, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 115, cols. 988-989.

⁷² Parker, *Brother’s Keeper*, 23.

policy for the Colonies...That policy is based on the same principles which led the West India Royal Commission quite independently to their most important recommendations.”⁷³

As Moyne delivered his address, the findings of Lord Hailey’s *African Survey* (1938) were being digested at Whitehall.⁷⁴ A monumental research project running to some eighteen-hundred pages in length, the *Survey* provided a compendium of British knowledge about the entire continent of Africa, with emphasis on agricultural, environmental, and social issues. The *Survey*’s findings, which gave officials an “expert’s view” of local conditions, were dismal and doubtless uncomfortably familiar in the wake of the Moyne Commission’s revelations.⁷⁵ Yet, it was more than a canvass of the bleak contemporary context in Britain’s African colonies; rather, Hailey’s study was a progressive treatise that offered a framework for an improved colonial future—one that called for a Colonial Research Fund (CRF) to support development schemes.⁷⁶

⁷³ “Lord Moyne Tells of Findings of Royal Commission,” *The Daily Gleaner*, February 21, 1940.

⁷⁴ There is some debate surrounding the impetus which underlay Hailey’s *Survey*. Some scholars, such as Pearce, take Lord Lothian at his word when he wrote in the *Survey*’s Foreword that the project had been inspired “directly” by General Jan Smuts’ Rhodes’ Memorial Lecture, which the South African general delivered at Oxford in 1929. Pearce’s assessment is broadly shared by Helen Tilley, who writes that the “conception” of the *Survey* “emerged from a series of lectures held at Oxford University in the autumn of 1929” to coincide with Smuts’ lecture. Others, like John W. Cell, have adopted a contrarian’s view and argue that the genesis of the *Survey* lay not at all with Smuts’ address but rather was the product of a long “germination” process. This process reflected currents of colonial development philosophy that had been circulating since the early interwar years. To a point, Cell is undoubtedly correct, since nothing—including development philosophy—is born in a vacuum. Yet, the fact remains that Hailey did not take issue with Lothian’s assessment of the origin of the *Survey*. While it may not have been its basis, clearly the director of the survey saw the Smuts lecture as a catalyst—a perspective Cell does not seem to consider. See: Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, 42-69; Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 69-114; John Cell, “Lord Hailey and the Making of the African Survey,” in *African Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 353 (October 1989): 481-505.

⁷⁵ Joanna Lewis, *Empire State-Building: War & Welfare in Kenya 1925-52* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 43.

⁷⁶ Lord Hailey, *An African Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 1629. The *Survey* suggested, and the CO agreed, that research funding should be set at £500,000 per annum. Clarke observes that the CRF was the product of both long-standing interest at the CO in the creation of research institutes “across the Colonial Empire”—a trend discernible in the CO’s increasing willingness to consult specialists and experts in everything from colonial agriculture and health to welfare and education—and “an attempt to initiate a vigorous and constructive programme of change for the colonies” at the beginning of World War II. Ultimately, the inclusion of a “substantial research fund for African development” in the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 seems to have originated with a

Coupled with the overt fear in the metropole that if left unaltered conditions in Africa would prompt violence to match or even exceed that witnessed in the West Indies, the way ahead at the CO was now clear; it therefore put in the hands of Secretary of State Malcolm MacDonald a memorandum to take to the cabinet.

Presented to the cabinet by MacDonald, the memorandum put forward three reasons why a more progressive colonial policy was essential:

1. A series of strikes and disturbances in the West Indies, Mauritius and elsewhere had brought home to people that all was not well in the economic or social field of these Colonies. This impression was confirmed by such reports as Major Orde Browne, my Labour Adviser, on his visit to the West Indies. Also, the Report of the Committee on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire brought home to people how low is the standard of living in almost every part of the Colonial Empire and how great the volume of preventable ill health and inefficiency.
2. Lord Hailey in his great 'Survey of Africa' published at the beginning of this year emphasized that 'the present is possibly the most formative and therefore the most critical period of African history'. He brought home to the public the fact that the lines our policy took now might mold the future of the whole continent.
3. The 'Colonial question' as an international problem focused attention on Colonial matters. Foreign Governments have been quick to take note of talk about our 'slum Empire'. They have alleged that we are neglecting our vast possessions, that they impose a strain on our resources that we are unable to stand and that there should be some redistribution of Colonial territories. These arguments, it may be noted, are not confined to our present enemy but were heard from Italy and from Poland. In the face of the evidence which I have mentioned above, public opinion here and in the world generally, particularly perhaps America, has felt that there was at least some justification for these suggestions.⁷⁷

Eight months later, on May 21, 1940, Parliament marked the passage of the CDWA, which not only included Hailey's CRF, to be administered by a Colonial Research Advisory

series of meetings between MacDonald and Hailey in 1938 and 1939. For more on the CRF, see: Sabine Clarke, "A Technocratic Imperial State? The Colonial Office and Scientific Research, 1940-1960," *Twentieth Century British History* 40, no. 4 (2007): 453-480.

⁷⁷ Michael Havinden and David Meredith, *Colonialism and Development: Britain and its Tropical Colonies, 1850-1960* (London: Routledge, 1993), 200-201.

Committee (CRAC),⁷⁸ itself an adjunct to the CO, but legislated social welfare and economic development as essential tenets of British trusteeship—a wide-ranging framework that compassed everything from agriculture and housing to health and education. In the Commons that day, Creech Jones, no doubt alive to the parallels it shared with the Fabian vision of social trusteeship, noted with satisfaction that the philosophy which motivated the CDWA departed significantly from that which underlay the 1929 CDA, which was “more concerned with finding employment in this country than with Colonial development and the well-being of the Colonial peoples....”⁷⁹

In the immediate term, however, the CDWA amounted to little more than ink on paper. Shepherded through Parliament under Neville Chamberlain’s National Government in the months before his ministry collapsed and in the wake of the outbreak of the Second World War, it fell to Winston Churchill’s Conservative-dominated Coalition Government to instigate the CDWA. The war, however, suppressed all but the most urgent of colonial development needs, as the Fabian and Labor MP R. W. Sorensen discovered when he inquired if the CO would consider expanding existing development plans to include a ten-year program of social, political, and economic development. In his response, George Hall, the Colonial Under-Secretary of State, demurred; explaining that “wartime conditions” made it infeasible to embark on many of the types of development which the CDWA was designed to promote. Although Hall blunted this assessment by adding that the CO would in time coordinate the formulation of a comprehensive development program with the colonial governments as soon as it was

⁷⁸ The body of leading British scientists charged with allocating CRF funds. See: Clarke, “A Technocratic Imperial State?,” 463.

⁷⁹ Arthur Creech Jones, Speech to the House of Commons, May 21, 1940, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 361, col. 55.

“practicable” to do so,⁸⁰ his remarks were consistent with restrictions emplaced in September 1940, when the colonial governments were told that Britain “could not afford development schemes which did not bear a direct relation to the war effort unless ‘the scheme was of such urgency and importance as to justify the expenditure...in present circumstances’.”⁸¹ While a number of development projects were authorized in the period between 1940 and 1943, the expenditure, which amounted to £3.6 million, was a fraction of the total amount authorized for the period (£13,750,000).⁸² This, however, was the extent to which the CO was willing to commit itself in the period immediately following the passage of the CDWA and in some ways it reflected a more generalized sense of ambiguity which emanated both from Westminster and Whitehall during the early war years.

Indeed, despite its wartime rhetoric of unity—which included the suspension of “normal politics,” such as elections, for the duration of the war—the Coalition government was, in fact, riven along ideological fault lines. The breach was evident as early as 1941-42, when debate erupted over the Beveridge Report.⁸³ While Labor came out quickly in favor of the report’s recommendations, even pressing for its implementation, the plan provoked considerable

⁸⁰ George Hall, Speech to the House of Commons, November 13, 1940, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 365, cols. 1709-1710.

⁸¹ Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, 218.

⁸² Of the total amount approved, agricultural and forestry schemes and projects related to veterinary services accounted for 45 percent; “social amenities” (i.e. education, health, housing, etc.) accounted for 36 percent, and “transport and communications” 19 percent. Between 1943 and 1945, however, development-related expenditure increased substantially, from £4.1 million in 1943-1944 to £15.9 million between 1944 and 1945. For a list of the projects and pound allocations between 1940 and 1945, see Havinden and Meredith, *Colonial Development*, 218-224.

⁸³ Published in December 1942, the Beveridge Report identified the five obstacles on Britain’s road to postwar reconstruction—want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness—and proposed a series of widespread reforms to the system of social welfare to address them. The Beveridge Report is widely considered the point of genesis of the modern British Welfare State. See: Virginia A. Noble, *Inside the Welfare State: Foundations of Policy and Practice in Post-War Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 3; Anne Sander, “Beveridge, Lord William Henry,” in *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*, eds. Helmut K. Anheier, Stefan Toepler, and Regina List (New York: Springer Science and Business Media, 2010), 63.

resistance from Conservatives both in and out of government. Endorsement soon turned into a highly partisan issue, with Conservatives seemingly unwilling to embrace the report while Labor was perceived as being strongly in support of it. The rift that opened between them became a breeding ground for partisan restiveness, as Conservative backbenchers resentful of Labor's influence in the Coalition denounced everything from coal rationing to perceived left-wing efforts at perpetuating "unnecessary official control" over things like trade and industry, employment, and even the private lives of Britons after the war.⁸⁴ This steady erosion of political comity was not limited to the Conservatives; indeed, at Labor's annual conference of 1942, the ever-controversial Aneurin Bevan tabled a resolution to terminate the truce with the Conservatives altogether. It was only narrowly defeated.⁸⁵ This growing tendency toward inter-party dissonance was intensified by a profound change in the military fortunes of the Allies. For the same year that Bevan introduced his motion, advance of German forces was checked in both Stalingrad and North Africa, a turning of the tide on the battlefield that fundamentally altered the working relationship of the Coalition partners at Westminster, and not for the better. No longer hamstrung by an intense fear that disagreement would unsettle the Coalition and, by extension, dampen the war effort, the parties were unshackled from their restraints, prompting the introduction of a tranche of controversial resolutions that, unsurprisingly, nurtured the growing sense of political alienation.⁸⁶

To be sure, these were worrisome fissures, but they remained bridgeable—at least until the Conservatives realized that they, as the majority stakeholders in the coalition, would be

⁸⁴ Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London: Pimlico, 1994), 230-232.

⁸⁵ Controversial or not, the resolution represents a clear sign of growing discontent with the Coalition in certain quarters of the party. Bevan's resolution was defeated, 1.275 million votes to 1.209 million. He tabled the motion again in 1943. See: Pugh, *Speak for Britain!*, 264.

⁸⁶ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, 231-237.

identified with its policies, including those of the left-wing “progressives” and postwar “planners.” In circumstances where over-identification with such antithetical policies as family allowances and universal health risked alienating its base, an estrangement that effectively torched Conservative hopes of governing postwar Britain, the political calculus presented a stark solution, one made all the bleaker as the war dragged on and the Coalition partners gradually salted the swathe of common ground that lay between them.⁸⁷ Left only with those subjects on which they disagreed, Churchill was prompted to “Warn Against Premature Pledges” in a BBC broadcast on March 21, 1943. “First of all,” the prime minister began, “we must beware of attempts to over-persuade or even coerce His Majesty’s Government to bind themselves or their unknown successors in conditions which no one can foresee and which may be years ahead, to impose great new expenditures on the State without any relation to the circumstances which might prevail at that time to make them pledge themselves to particular schemes without relation to other extremely important aspects of our post-war needs.”⁸⁸

It was, in short, a caustic and uncertain time and it was debatable that efforts to reform the colonies as articulated in the CDWA would in fact be fulfilled—precisely the outcome the Fabians were keen to safeguard. Thus, considering the “virtual suspension” of the CDWA, the society undertook to exert pressure on Whitehall to ensure its operation.⁸⁹ The instrument for

⁸⁷ Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion*, 138.

⁸⁸ Robert Rhodes James, ed., *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897-1963: Volume VII, 1943-1949* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), 6756.

⁸⁹ Minutes, FS, January 12, 1939-July 26, 1948, January 30, 1941, LSE FSA C/26. Along with the CRAC, the CDW Advisory Committee provided the necessary organizational framework for CO control over the development regime. At the end of the war, the work of the CRAC was augmented by several new advisory bodies meant to “assess research priorities and advise the secretary of state on the provision of funding.” These included: the Colonial Social Science Research Council, the Colonial Agriculture, Animal Health and Forestry Research Committee, the Colonial Medical Research Committee, and the Colonial Economic Research Committee. See: Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 202-203.

doing so was the FCB, the founding chairman of which was the Labor MP and future Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones.

The Fabian Colonial Bureau under Arthur Creech Jones: Labor's Nestor in a Wartime Coalition Government

In February of 1939, the Fabian Norman Leys was busy beaver-ing away on a revision of Labor's colonial policy. As he sifted through the juggernaut of Britain's eclectic schematic of colonial governance, a thought occurred to him, prompting a note to Leonard Woolf. "The problem," Leys wrote, "is how to ensure that these...steps will in fact be taken within a month of the next L[abour] G[overnment]'s taking office." A champion grudge-holder, Woolf responded that getting the "Labour Government when it is sitting there in power to implement its promises" was the "real difficulty, as we found, with Passfield."⁹⁰ Four months later, Leys rendered a politely damning verdict: "The Labour Government of 1929-31," he declared, "left scarcely a mark on Africa."⁹¹ Ironically, this very evanescence birthed an enduring corollary, for following the demise of the government in 1931, Labor's leadership, subject to suspicion and resentment in the wake of Ramsay MacDonald's defection and subsequent expulsion,⁹² lapsed into near total "silence" on colonial reform."⁹³ Indeed, while it is true that the ACIQ produced a number of reports, most notably its policy statements of 1933 (*The Colonial Empire*) and 1936 (*The*

⁹⁰ Leonard Woolf to Norman Leys, February 22, 1939, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 21/1.

⁹¹ Norman Leys, "The Labour Party's Colonial Policy," ACIQ, February 1939, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 46/5.

⁹² Lewis Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference: A Study in the Politics of Intra-Party Democracy* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 19.

⁹³ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 52. Until the mid-1930s, as Barbara Bush notes, critics of colonialism were "voices in the wilderness." Indeed, the "mainstream" Labor Movement was arguably as committed to imperialism as the Conservative Party. This, coupled with a broad-based ignorance of African affairs amongst Britons, generated a climate of apathy that made challenging imperial orthodoxy largely fruitless. See: Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, 250.

Demand for Colonial Equality of Economic Opportunity), these were largely ignored by the party.⁹⁴ In the absence of any clear sense of direction in matters colonial, Labor defaulted to a position of paternalistic trusteeship towards Africa that was designed, on the one hand, to prevent capitalism from exploiting vulnerable people while, on the other, ensuring that Britain acted as a guardian of native rights.⁹⁵ This policy had the effect of ossifying, rather than advancing, native interests, a state of affairs which persisted until the establishment in 1940 of the FCB, which soon was positioned to carry forward its CDWA campaign within a framework of Fabian-favored social trusteeship.

At its inaugural meeting on October 26, 1940, chaired by Creech Jones, the Bureau enumerated a scope of work that positioned it as a “clearinghouse for colonial information and research.”⁹⁶ To build the necessary consultative network, the FCB drew on the well-established Fabian tactic of permeation by launching an aggressive campaign designed to connect its nascent investigative machinery not only to the CO,⁹⁷ but to the Labor Party and to a consortium of non-governmental agencies as well. In its early stages, this aggregation of private institutions included the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the Institute of Education’s Colonial Department Library at the University of London, the West Indies Parliamentary Committee,⁹⁸ the think-tank Political and Economic Planning (PEP), and the League for Coloured Peoples—all of whom shared a broad swathe of ideological territory with the FCB.⁹⁹ This, of course, raised the

⁹⁴ Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World, Volume 1: Evolution of Labour’s Foreign Policy, 1900-51* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 148.

⁹⁵ Pugh, *Speak for Britain!*, 227.

⁹⁶ Minutes, FS, January 12, 1939-July 26, 1948, October 26, 1940, LSE FSA C/26.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, November 1940, LSE FSA C/26. Initially, at least, the two most important connections were Creech Jones’ membership on the CO’s Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies and the CO’s Public Relations Officer, Mr. Sabine, who provided the FCB with relevant Ministry of Information News Bulletins.

⁹⁸ Absorbed by the FCB in 1942/3.

⁹⁹ Minutes, FS, January 12, 1939-July 26, 1948, October 26, 1940, LSE FSA C/26.

specter of overlap, and its concomitant Moloch, inefficiency; it was therefore agreed that a member from each group should sit on the Bureau's Advisory Committee.¹⁰⁰

Once the committee was established, and its constituent elements coopted, it remained to elaborate the apparatus of outreach, beginning with what the committee identified as one of the Bureau's "most important lines of work." That is, the raising of questions on colonial affairs before the House. It was to this end that Creech Jones vigorously applied himself, meeting with and enlisting a panel of like-minded MPs to ask questions in Parliament relating to colonial affairs.¹⁰¹ Having ensured that matters of interest to the Bureau remained part of the legislative ferment by feeding questions to friendly parliamentarians, it was decided to augment the Bureau's efforts by having members of the advisory committee, including the Labor MP John Parker, Frank Horrabin, Dr. Rita Hinden, Leonard Woolf, Wilfred Benson, W. Arthur Lewis, Prof. W. M. MacMillan, and Dr. Julian Huxley, exercise their personal influence with the press by giving interviews and contributing articles relating to colonial affairs.¹⁰² In so doing, the Bureau secured an important means of "publicity for its work."¹⁰³ To this end, Horrabin's leftist-socialist journal *Empire*,¹⁰⁴ which he offered to the FCB in early 1941,¹⁰⁵ proved especially effective.

¹⁰⁰ Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 192.

¹⁰¹ Including, *inter alia*: F. W. Pethick-Lawrence, Major J. Milner, Lord Snell, Lord Noel-Buxton, David Adams, Commander R. Fletcher, Ben Riley, George Mathers, Reverend R. W. Sorensen, James Barr, Wilfred Paling, and Lord Faringdon.

¹⁰² Minutes, FS, January 12, 1939-July 26, 1948, November 1940, LSE FSA C/26. The list of weeklies, biweeklies, and monthlies subject to the Fabian tactic of permeation grew over time, but included, at least initially, the *Daily Herald*, the *New Statesman*, the *Manchester Guardian*, *The Economist*, *Reynolds News*, and the *Evening Standard*.

¹⁰³ Minutes, FS, January 12, 1939-July 26, 1948, October 26, 1940, LSE FSA C/26.

¹⁰⁴ BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 44/2. *Empire* was co-founded in 1938 by Horrabin, Leonard Barnes, and Leys.

¹⁰⁵ The Bureau assumed the publication in May 1941. From the outset, the FCB was pleased with *Empire*, noting in the Fabian Society's Annual Report of 1942 that, "A fairly satisfactory circulation is being built up and the paper is widely quoted, particularly in the colonial press." *Fabian Society* 59th

And yet it would be some time before the Bureau promulgated its position in relation to the colonial empire. Indeed, it was not until its weekend conference on *The Colonies, the War and the Future*, which the Fabians convened at St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, in July 1941, that the Bureau openly defined its attitude. During the conference, speeches were presented on a variety of topics, including the obstacles of establishing a sound colonial economy against the backdrop of war and colonial-level intransigence, as well as on the benefits of educating colonial peoples. Appropriately enough, however, it fell to Creech Jones to make the declaration of policy in his chairman's address. In an interesting twist on the Chamberlainite metaphor, Creech Jones described the colonies as Britain's "neglected estates" and evoked the essence of Fabian social trusteeship when he spoke of the "government's and the public's responsibility to ensure that in future (the colonies) were justly treated," and argued that it was "incumbent upon Fabians interested in colonial affairs to insist on (the CDWA's) good intentions being fulfilled and that money voted in Parliament be spent for the benefit of the colonial peoples, not for that of white entrepreneurs."¹⁰⁶

In the meantime, the process of connecting the Bureau's web-like research network to the Labor Party's policy-making machinery proceeded apace. For by 1941, Labor was already in the habit of consulting the Fabian Society as it formulated its initiatives, even going so far as to coopt certain members of the FCB, including Sorensen, Wilfred Benson, Woolf, and Leys, to draft and revise the party's policy proposals—a process which all but abrogated the newly-reconstituted society's self-denying ordinance. This was an especially fruitful enterprise in the early 1940s, for it was primarily Woolf, Leys, and Benson who worked alongside their fellow

Annual Report (Draft), March 1942, LPA LHASC, JSM, International Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949.

¹⁰⁶ Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 192; *Fabian Society 59th Annual Report (Draft)*, March 1942, LPA LHASC, JSM, International Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949.

Fabians Sir John Maynard¹⁰⁷ and Creech Jones on the ACIQ to thrash out Labor's embryonic colonial policy.¹⁰⁸

To get some sense of the emerging dynamic between the party and the FCB, we need look no further than the "Imperial Questions" section of Labor's *The Old World and the New Society: An Interim Report of the National Executive of the British Labour Party on the Problems of Reconstruction*. Published in advance of the annual party conference of 1942, the intent of the report was to establish a baseline for Labor's postwar reconstruction regime, prefiguring in many ways the later domestic implications of the "Beveridge boom."¹⁰⁹ As the following excerpts demonstrate, the "Imperial Questions" section of the *The Old World and the New Society* was a near word-for-word reproduction of Woolf's commentary on the color bar, which he developed at some length for the ACIQ in 1941.

Woolf: The colour bar policy is a negation of the idea of colonial administration as a trust in the interest of native inhabitants. ... The Labour Party is absolutely opposed to the colour bar in every shape and form. Wherever it exists in territories for which Parliament is responsible the laws and administrative practices upon which it rests must be immediately abolished, and Governors of colonial territories should be instructed to see that every kind of legal or administrative discrimination (whether by disabilities or privileges) on the ground of race, colour, or religion must cease. Furthermore, Parliament should refuse to resign its responsibility for and control over any territory in Africa unless it is assured that the colour bar will not be introduced there in any form. ... The colour bar system is, however, so insidious and can take so many forms that a

¹⁰⁷ Not to be confused with Sir John Maynard Keynes, Maynard was a Fabian socialist and former administrator in the Punjab. He died in 1943. See: Sybil Oldfield, ed., *Afterwords: Letters on the Death of Virginia Woolf* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 126.

¹⁰⁸ The Fabian-allied contingent on the ACIQ was extensive, including besides Creech Jones, Leys, Maynard, and Woolf, Leonard Barnes, John Dugdale, MP, Buxton, Horrabin, Lord Olivier, Lord Faringdon, Prof. W. M. MacMillan, Margery Perham, and John Parker, MP.

¹⁰⁹ *Fabian Society 60th Annual Report 1943 (Draft)*, March 1943, LPA LHASC JSM, International Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949. The Fabian Society and the Beveridge Committee interacted both directly and indirectly. In 1942, for example, the society's Social Security Sub-Committee gave evidence to the committee. Included in the Fabian testimony as the "only" complete scheme for social security which fit within the committee's "realistic" budgetary estimates. Additionally, part of the society's written evidence to the committee later appeared in the second volume of the Beveridge Report. Tangentially, although he remained a Liberal, Sir William Beveridge, the chairman of the committee which produced the eponymous report, often took part in Fabian lecture series, covering a range of topics including "Freedom from Idleness" in 1941.

general renunciation of it by governments Is not enough, and specific instructions on specific measures to be taken against it should be given to all colonial governments.¹¹⁰

Labour's *Interim Report*: The Labour Party is absolutely opposed to the colour bar in every shape or form. ... In other words, the interests of those (native) inhabitants are and must remain paramount, and to those interests Parliament is the trustee. ... The negation of this policy for which the Party stands is the policy of the colour bar, the object and effect of which are to ensure, by law, administration and every other available means that the native inhabitant is given a different and subordinate status, civil and social, from that of the European. It is in Africa that the colour bar as a 'native policy' can be seen in its most undisguised form, but it does, less evilly but more insidiously, affect British colonial policy in other continents. The Labour Party is absolutely opposed to the colour bar in every shape and form. It maintains therefore that in territories which Parliament is responsible the laws and administrative practices upon which the colour bar rests should be abolished and colonial crimination (whether by disabilities or privileges), on the grounds of race, colour, or religion, should cease. ... It follows that in all colonial territories in which white settlers are in a minority, Parliament must remain trustee of the native interests, and the Labour Party cannot therefore agree to any conferment of responsible government upon any territory or union of territories which would involve delegation of its duties to a legislative body in which native races were in a minority.¹¹¹

The fact that the section on "Imperial Questions" comprises little more than one full page in the 32-page report exposes two things about the Labor Party of the early 1940s: first, it is clear that Labor remained more confident in its ability to formulate initiatives concerning the party's long-privileged realm of domestic policy-making; and, second, borrowing so heavily from the Fabians in proportion to its declaration *vis-à-vis* matters imperial indicates the depth of the party's growing dependency on the FCB's research operation. This is not to say, however, that the Fabians themselves were entirely satisfied with the final iteration of Labor's postwar policy statement in 1942. Indeed, at a meeting of the society's International Bureau some four months after it was promulgated at the party's annual conference, Woolf criticized *The Old World and*

¹¹⁰ Draft Memorandum Formulating a Colonial Policy for the Labour Party after the War, September 1941, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 46/1.

¹¹¹ *The Old World and the New Society: A Report on the Problems of War and Peace Reconstruction*, LPA LHASC, JSM, G-L.

the New Society for being long on resolution, but short on content.¹¹² Moreover, such was the general sense of disappointment amongst the Fabians that the FCB felt compelled to issue a rejoinder, which it sent to the NEC under the heading “Note to the Labour Party Executive on the Imperial Section of the Party’s Interim Report.”¹¹³ Although the Bureau acknowledged that the report could not be amended *ex post facto*, it nevertheless went to some length making significant revisions to the whole of the “Imperial Section,” including pointed references to the preservation of native paramountcy in relation to the predatory interests of white settlers.

Notwithstanding the Bureau’s frustration over the final form of *The Old World and the New Society*, Fabian permeation continued to deepen the society’s philosophical presence in Labor’s colonial policy. At the annual conference of 1943, for example, Labor’s executive secured the party’s endorsement of the tract *The Colonies: The Labour Party’s Post-War Policy for the African and Pacific Colonies*.¹¹⁴ Originally drafted by Woolf in 1941, the pamphlet was prepared for publication in March 1943 by the party’s postwar Reconstruction Committee, then under the “guiding hand” of its leading member, Creech Jones.¹¹⁵ In many ways, *The Colonies* signifies a watershed moment in the advance of Fabian influence on Labour’s colonial policy; for as Goldsworthy explains, it represented the “first detailed policy statement—by any party” to take full account of the “new concepts of dynamic development and metropolitan financial responsibility” as embodied in the CDWA. Not only were there “specific proposals for long-

¹¹² “Labour’s International Reconstruction Policy: Politics Inseparable from Economics,” a speech by Leonard Woolf at a meeting of the Fabian International Bureau, in *The New Dawn*, September 12, 1942, LPA LHASC, JSM, G-L.

¹¹³ “Note to the Labour Party Executive on the Imperial Section of the Party’s Interim Report,” BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 46/1.

¹¹⁴ *The Colonies: The Labour Party’s Post-War Policy for the African and Pacific Colonies* (London: The Labour Party, 1943).

¹¹⁵ J. M. Lee and M. Petter, *The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy: Organisation and the Planning of a Metropolitan Initiative, 1939-1945* (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., 1982), 159.

term economic plans; for agriculture, mining, transport, controlled industrial growth, cooperation, and trade unionism; for an equitable redistribution of colonial wealth; for health and education services and the elimination of social and economic colour bars;" but there were also "specific proposals about ways and means, about the administration of development and the sources of finances."¹¹⁶ That Woolf's treatise on the *International Post-War Settlement*¹¹⁷ was approved by an overwhelming majority at the party's annual conference the following year demonstrably confirms this tendency toward Fabian entrenchment.¹¹⁸

Given this, it is little wonder that by the time Creech Jones assumed the chairmanship of the ACIQ in 1944, the FCB had become, unofficially, the research organization responsible for the creation of Labor's colonial policy.¹¹⁹ That the party's advisory committee included a sizable contingent of Fabians—a survey of the minutes between 1941 and 1944 reveals no fewer than 11 members of the FCB sat on the ACIQ at any given time—helps, in part, to explain this.¹²⁰ Despite this, however, no amount of policy-making on the part of the Fabians could help the society overcome one glaring problem: Labor was not in power. Indeed, it was but the minority partner in the wartime Coalition Government dominated by the Conservatives, circumstances no amount of rhetoric could tangibly alter. This, of course, raises an obvious question: Were the Fabians able to influence the Coalition Government's colonial development policy on a substantive level during the war? If so, how and in what ways?

¹¹⁶ Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 121.

¹¹⁷ Erroneously attributed to Hugh Dalton in Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy*.

¹¹⁸ *Fabian Society 62nd Annual Report (Draft)*, March 1945, LPA LHASC, JSM, International Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949. For Callaghan's attribution, see: *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History*, 157.

¹¹⁹ Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 194.

¹²⁰ Including Dr. Hinden, W. Arthur Lewis, Lord Faringdon, Sorensen, C. W. Greenidge, Wilfred Benson, Dugdale, and Margaret Wrong—along with Creech Jones, Leys, and Woolf.

What follows, then, are two case studies designed to assess Fabian influence on Britain's wartime colonial development policy. As discussed above, wartime conditions made it unlikely that the Coalition Government under Churchill would go too far in its embracement of colonial development, particularly as conceived within the costly rubric of the 1940 CDWA. When it became increasingly apparent that the Allies would win the war, political considerations over the shape of Britain's postwar administration assumed an urgency that prompted a swift recalculation of the cost-benefits equation which had hitherto stimulated the tenuous equanimity of the Coalition Government. The result, as we have seen, was an increasing sense of friction. Within such a context, there was no single path open for the Fabians to realize their aims *vis-à-vis* social trusteeship and colonial development. Indeed, having so recently amalgamated with the NFRB (1939), the society—let alone its philosophy—was itself very much in a state of flux. Nevertheless, in both of the following instances, the Fabians overcame these and various other obstacles to successfully give form to colonial thought.

From *Mass Education in African Society* to the *Model Cooperative Societies Ordinance*: Case Studies in Fabian Influence on Colonial Policy During the Second World War

The first case study examines the development of adult and mass education policy in Africa between 1925 and 1944, when the CO Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies (ACEC) published its report on *Mass Education in African Society*. The study takes as its point of departure the work of Arthur Creech Jones, member of the ACEC, chairman of the FCB, and future Secretary of State for the Colonies. The case study is important because it represents a particular and unique instance of Fabian influence during the war. It marks the influence exercised by a prominent Fabian who was already part of the authorized apparatus meant to

advise the CO on related matters. Moreover, the process reveals a central theme of Creech Jones' development ethos, which he carried forward as Secretary of State for the Colonies: mass education. The case study is, therefore, experientially distinct and should not be taken as necessarily representative of the oftentimes torturous path of Fabian influence on colonial policy during the war.

Adult and Mass Education Policy

One of only a handful of Fabian-affiliated Labor MPs elected to the House of Commons in 1935,¹²¹ Creech Jones immediately set about carving a niche for himself in Parliament, where early on his special interest in colonial education led to his cooption by the CO's Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies (ACEC).¹²² The ACEC, which functioned until 1961, was only the most recent bureaucratic think-tank launched to assess education policy in the colonies. For following the publication in 1922 of the Phelps-Stokes Commission¹²³ report *Education in Africa*, the CO launched the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa (ACNETA) with a remit to establish the basis of educational policy in Britain's African dependencies.¹²⁴ Toward that end, the ACNETA issued the white paper *Education Policy in*

¹²¹ A group which included John Parker, the general secretary of the Fabian Society.

¹²² The Nuffield Office and the Colonial Office, *African Education: A Study of Educational Policy and Practice in British Tropical Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 1.

¹²³ A body of American education experts who travelled all over Africa between 1920 and 1924, the remit of the Phelps-Stokes Commission was to conduct a review of education in all the African dependencies and write proposals for its adaptation to meet the needs of rural communities. One of the more significant of these "adaptations" was the translation of the American Jeanes Training Schools to East Africa. Having originated in the southern United States, a region which lacked a widespread, organized mass education movement, the Jeanes' emphasis on local-level, community-based education made it "more relevant" in the context of Britain's African dependencies than the mass education and adult literacy experiences of China, Turkey, or Russia. As discussed in: "Section C—Lessons from Experience," CO Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, *Mass Education in African Society*, Colonial No. 186 (London: HMSO, 1943), 51-57.

¹²⁴ L. P. Mair, *Welfare in the British Colonies* (London: The Royal Institute of Royal Affairs, 1944), 26. The activities of ANETA/ACEC as well as the reports and memoranda they produced have

British Tropical Africa in March 1925 which, as Hodge notes, put forward several “broad principles” as the basis of a “sound educational policy.” The “central tenet” of the new policy, largely the work of the humanitarian lobbyist and missionary J. H. Oldham, was the “adaptation” and development of education “along native lines.”¹²⁵ In theory, this meant that:

Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various people, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. Its aim should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture, the development of native industries, the improvement of health, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of true ideals of citizenship in service. It must include the raising up of capable, trustworthy, public-spirited leaders of the people, belonging to their own race.

To realize this, the white paper suggested the training up of native teachers and the establishment of a system of visiting instructors as a “means of improving village schools.” It advocated the use of vernacular languages and the preparation of vernacular textbooks. It also proposed the education of women and girls in hygiene, child welfare, domestic economy, and care of the home, since these were considered key to the improvement of public health. Furthermore, it laid stress on the importance of “discipline of work” and the development of habits of industry as part of the “foundation of character.” Lastly, the white paper acknowledged the need to train those required to fill administrative posts, to which end “higher education...in Africa must be increasingly opened for those who by character, ability and temperament show themselves fitted....”¹²⁶

been considered in U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *The Formulation of British Colonial Education Policy, 1929-1961: Final Report* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Research, 1969).

¹²⁵ Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 127 and 131.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

At the same time, however, the white paper put forward recommendations that were paternalistic and increasingly outmoded, including the endorsement of religious teaching to build “character” and official recognition of the place of Christian missions as “partners” in the provision of schooling in Africa.¹²⁷ Some four years later, the prominence of these Victorian archaisms, doubtless reflecting Oldham’s influence, was diminished by the CO when it reconstituted the ACNETA as the ACEC,¹²⁸ the functions of which not only expanded to serve all of Britain’s colonies, but also weakened missionary influence on the formulation of colonial education policy by instead coopting a raft of prominent British academics and experts.¹²⁹

When the ACEC’s *Memorandum on the Education of African Communities* was published in 1935, it represented both the outcome of ten years’ study and experiment in the application of the principles which had earlier been outlined as well as developments in the attitude toward education in Britain itself. It therefore stressed that school-based education in rural communities was most profitable when it not only targeted the young, but was incorporated into an overarching program designed to improve the “living forces of the society which the school is meant to serve.”¹³⁰ As Oldham remarked, “The main purpose...was to emphasize the

¹²⁷ Clive Whitehead, *Colonial Educators: The British Indian and Colonial Education Service 1858-1983* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 125.

¹²⁸ This is not to say that everyone at the CO was entirely convinced of the necessity—not to say the usefulness—of an educational advisory committee. According to William Ormsby-Gore, the chair of the ACEC and, eventually, Secretary of State for the Colonies, there was an internal drive by the CO’s civil servants in the early 1930s to get rid of all the advisory committees and advisors who were not members of the Home Civil Service Trade Union—a move attributable, in large part, to the fiscal exigency inspired by the Great Depression. The advisory committee’s dissolution was prevented only by the American Carnegie Corporation which, prompted by solicitations from J. H. Oldham, agreed to fund the ACEC to the tune of \$5,000 a year for a further six years. Letter from W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore to Dr. J. H. Oldham, September 1, 1931, as cited in *The Formulation of British Colonial Education Policy, 1929-1961: Final Report*, 14.

¹²⁹ Including Professor Reginald Coupland, Dr. Franklin Sibly, Dr. W. H. McLean, Dr. Sara Burnstall, Dr. W. W. Vaughan, and Professor Julian Huxley. See: Apollos Nwauwa, *Imperialism, Academe, and Nationalism: Britain and University Education for Africans, 1860-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 56.

¹³⁰ Mair, *Welfare in the British Colonies*, 27.

idea that, if the object of education in Africa was to advance backward communities, the best results would not be obtained if only the education of the young was considered; the community must be envisaged as a whole.”¹³¹ This holistic approach endorsed by Oldham, once again a leading architect of the policy, insisted on an interrelation between education and local environment, arguing that schools should act as progressive forces in terms of spreading new knowledge and skills while, at the same time, incentivizing interest in environmental improvement. Furthermore, it emphasized the importance of adult education—which was broached but inchoate in the 1925 memorandum¹³²—and recommended “the appointment of agents, European and African, who are specially trained to develop this type of education.”¹³³

Cumulatively, the work of the ACNETA and the ACEC in formulating colonial education policy constitutes something like a program of educative social betterment and embodies what has been described as the “pre-history” of Britain’s postwar community development regime.¹³⁴ Despite this, however, colonial education policy during the interwar period was fraught with much confusion of purpose and lack of resources¹³⁵ which, at the level of colonial

¹³¹ As quoted in Joseph M. Hodge, “Missionaries, Colonial ‘Experts’ and the Invention of ‘Community Development’ in Africa Between the Wars” (paper, Canadian Association of African Studies, Annual Conference, Bishop’s University, Sherbrooke, Quebec, June 1999), 11-12.

¹³² While *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa* suggested the enlargement of educational opportunities for adults as a means of avoiding “as far as possible, a breach in good tribal traditions by interesting the older people in the education of their children for the welfare of the community,” it also stressed the experimental nature of such an endeavor.

¹³³ *Memorandum on the Education of African Communities*, Colonial No. 103 (London: HMSO, 1935).

¹³⁴ Hodge, “Missionaries, Colonial ‘Experts’ and the Invention of ‘Community Development’ in Africa Between the Wars,” 10.

¹³⁵ Clive Whitehead, “The Historiography of British Imperial Education Policy, Part II: Africa and the Rest of the Colonial Empire,” *History of Education* 34, no. 4 (July 2005): 445. For excellent discussions on the mixed fortunes of colonial education during the interwar years, see: Stephen Ball, “Imperialism, Social Control and the Colonial Curriculum,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 15, no. 3 (1983): 237-263; for an African perspective, P. G. Okoth, “The Creation of a Dependent Culture,” in *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience*, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Routledge, 1993), 135-147.

administration, manifested educational practice characterized by “improvisation, vacillation, and sheer expediency.”¹³⁶

It is against this backdrop that Creech Jones joined the ACEC. A fervent supporter of the cause of adult education, he had already spent the better part of a decade serving as vice-chairman of the British Institute of Adult Education, a noteworthy tenure characterized by an emphasis on adult education as a “vital factor” in responsible democratic government.¹³⁷ He brought this sensibility with him to the ACEC, where he proved instrumental in promoting both adult and mass education as a means of encouraging equality in developing countries. For it was in these countries that the problem of education was especially acute: across the whole of British colonial Africa, for example, it was estimated in 1939 that only 12 per cent of school-age children received any sort of education. “It was because I appreciated all this,” Creech Jones later recalled, “that before the war when I was a member of the Colonial Secretary’s Education Advisory Committee I emphasized the importance of the subject until Sir Fred Clarke and Dr. Margaret Read produced their excellent memoranda on its place in Colonial development.”¹³⁸ The memorandum in question was *Mass Education in African Society* (1944).

It was in May 1940, some six months before chairing the inaugural meeting of the FCB, that Creech Jones first raised the subject of adult education at a gathering of the ACEC. During the meeting, he made it clear that the expansion of adult education was imperative since it provided indigenous people with the means to help them cope with rapid socioeconomic

¹³⁶ Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 133.

¹³⁷ Adult Education in Africa, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 36/1.

¹³⁸ Ibid. Clarke was the Director of the Institute of Education at the University of London until 1945. Read, a regular contributor to Fabian conferences and temporary head of the Institute of Education’s Colonial Department Library, was chiefly responsible for drafting the manual of guidance that accompanied *Mass Education in African Society*.

change.¹³⁹ He stressed, however, that adult education was not to be “confused with ‘fundamental’ education or attacks on illiteracy or with technical or trade instruction;” rather, it was intended to “raise the standards of a community and pave the way for interest and responsibility in the practice of local and national government” while encouraging “political democracy and voluntary movements,” from cooperatives to trade unions.¹⁴⁰

Creech Jones’ line of reasoning proved persuasive, for in 1941 the ACEC launched the Adult and Mass Education Subcommittee to survey education in the African colonies. The subcommittee, which counted among its membership the Fabians Margery Perham, Dr. Huxley, Margaret Wrong, and Prof. MacMillan,¹⁴¹ took two years to “consider the best approach to the problem of mass literacy and adult education...in the more backward dependencies, taking into account the emphasis which the Advisory Committee has laid...upon community education.”¹⁴² The result of the subcommittee’s investigation was *Mass Education in African Society*,¹⁴³ which advanced the idea that mass education could overcome “a narrow sectionalism, operating behind barriers which divide people from their fellows.” As Barbara Ingham and Paul Mosley have observed, this perspective embedded within the blueprint of the colonial education project the notion that it could help “build stronger and more accountable states that were less vulnerable to fragmentation and internecine conflict.”¹⁴⁴

When coupled with its successor, *Education for Citizenship in Africa* (1948), the two reports made education a key component of Britain’s progressive colonial development

¹³⁹ Whitehead, *Colonial Educators*, 232.

¹⁴⁰ “Adult Education in Africa,” BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 36/1.

¹⁴¹ All of whom were also members of the Fabian Colonial Bureau’s Advisory Committee.

¹⁴² *Mass Education in African Society*, 3-6.

¹⁴³ Presented to the ACEC in June 1943.

¹⁴⁴ Paul Mosley and Barbara Ingham, *Sir Arthur Lewis: A Biography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 50.

regime.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, recalling sentiments expressed by Lord Hailey at a 1939 meeting of the ACEC that mass education was to be a “popular type” of education “suitable” to the “community-oriented” conditions in Africa,¹⁴⁶ the initiative made a “direct appeal to the great majority of adults and adolescents in the community, so that they and their families will really benefit from it.” The essential focus was “upon the whole community as a unit to be educated” so that “people everywhere” might “be aware of, to understand and take part in, and ultimately to control the social and economic changes which are taking place among them, and which are being advocated for their welfare....”¹⁴⁷ And in a nod to the ACEC’s *Memorandum on the Education of African Communities* of 1935, the prime agent of education was identified as “mass education officers,” experts who, through the coordination of on-the-ground campaigns, would link local-level community projects with the wider plans of the colony.¹⁴⁸ Local need would, moreover, be assessed through surveys; contact would be made with “likely elements in the community who would support the campaign” (e.g. 4-H clubs and teachers’ associations); and a “curriculum” planned in relation to the main obstacles to progress in the area. If the figures responsible for mass education were its officers, their work, it was suggested, could be coordinated through a framework of like-minded Fabian-favored social trustees, such as trade unions and cooperatives. “We have only to look at the last hundred years of English history,” the Sub-committee for Adult and Mass Education observed, “to see how powerful an incentive to

¹⁴⁵ *Mass Education in African Society*, 3-6. Creech Jones felt that the two reports did a “remarkable” job of setting out the “spiritual and economic prerequisites of democracy...the methods and media which might be employed...the part which the schools, youth organisations, voluntary bodies, local government, press and information services and adult and community education can play” in facilitating development.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes of the Ninety-Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 68/1. This, as opposed to the “individual-oriented” educational context typical of Western European tradition.

¹⁴⁷ *Mass Education in African Society*, 13.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

mass education both cooperatives and the trade unions have turned out to be. English experience shows too how wide a view [cooperatives and trade unions] took of education, regarding it not only as literacy and improved technical skill but as involving a new outlook in both local and central government on citizenship.”¹⁴⁹

As the subcommittee worked to draft its memoranda, Creech Jones played a vital role not only in the formulation and shaping of community-level mass education policy, but also in its practice. In point of fact, he regularly corresponded with minor and major mass educators as well as administrators throughout the colonies.

For example, in late-summer 1942, C. A. Grossmith, the secretary of the Adult and Mass Education Subcommittee, wrote to Creech Jones inviting his feedback on the draft memorandum of *Mass Education in African Society* submitted by fellow-committeeman, Sir Fred Clarke. In his response, Creech Jones commended Clarke for having crafted “an excellent piece of work” that “was meaty...and covered the ground splendidly.” But in Creech Jones’ eyes, Clarke’s draft was flawed; it lacked inspiration and was too cerebral. “While my head had been satisfied,” he noted to Clarke, “I remained little moved. I wanted the argument to glow, to convince, to stir to action, to stimulate the imagination.” Although Creech Jones was evidently looking for something more visceral, he was nonetheless generous with substantive suggestions for improving the final draft of the memorandum. “You have made clear,” he began, “the relationship of adult education with other aspects of education, but I felt it was desirable to make clearer that education was a process which shoul[d] extend through life, that adult work was as necessary as other work – in some respects more so. ... You bring out the importance of community education, of the relation of adult education with the primary school and adolescents.

¹⁴⁹ *Mass Education in African Society*, 26; Mosley and Ingham, *Sir Arthur Lewis*, 49-51.

... But I felt that these connections, and the whole-ness of the problem called for a little more emphasis.”¹⁵⁰

While Creech Jones’ critique prompted polite acknowledgment from Clarke, who was “grateful” for his colleague’s candor, such banal acceptance proved a sharp contrast to the incendiary, carpet-biting harshness such policies were exposed to when they found their way into the hands of colonial officials in Africa.¹⁵¹ For instance, Zanzibar’s director of education condemned as “unrealistic” the plan outlined in *Mass Education in African Society*,¹⁵² while Sir Philip Mitchell, the governor of Kenya, launched into a pages-long diatribe against *Education for Citizenship in Africa*. The scheme, he argued with barely a modicum of professional restraint, was shrouded in “a mist of unreality,” aspiring to a citizenry and a “polity the pattern of which may be laid up in heaven but is hardly yet to be seen on earth. Colonial Governments,” Mitchell concluded, “beset by many and pressing real problems, must be excused if they decline to direct their energies to the preparation of their subjects for a state of society which never has existed on this earth, which there is certainly no prospect of establishing anywhere in Africa....”¹⁵³

While Mitchell’s sentiments echoed typical concerns over the nebulousness of Fabian-influenced policy initiatives, as we have seen, voices of dissent were not the only ones in the chorus of colonial officialdom. Others, such as Tom Askwith, Kenya’s future commissioner for social welfare, praised mass and adult education, arguing that it constituted an essential adjunct to Britain’s development regime, even crediting it with creating the “climate of understanding

¹⁵⁰ Notes on Professor Clarke’s Draft, n.d., BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/3.

¹⁵¹ Clarke to Creech Jones, September 3, 1942, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/3.

¹⁵² Note on CO Advisory Committee’s Report on *Mass Education in African Society*, March 4, 1944, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/1.

¹⁵³ *Education for Citizenship in Africa*, reply from Sir Philip Mitchell, May 19, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 36/1.

necessary to win the cooperation of the people.”¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Secretary of State for the Colonies Oliver Stanley confirmed the CO in its belief as to the efficacy of the project when he noted in the House of Commons that “a very successful campaign in mass education on lines similar to those suggested in (*Mass Education in African Society*) has been carried out in part of the Sierra Leone protectorate and that a grant made under the C.D.&W. Act is being made for its extension to a wider area.”¹⁵⁵ As we shall see, in time, that “wider area” became British Africa.

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The second and final case study is meant to contrast with the first and takes as its point of departure the work of the FCB’s Committee for the Study of Cooperation in the Colonies, which was formed in 1942. Unlike Creech Jones’ *curriculum vitae*, the Fabians who sat on this committee, while prominent, were not standing members of a similarly-tasked body housed within the CO. Rather, through research and agitation, the committee’s work came to the attention of the CO, which eventually invited it to help craft an ordinance governing cooperatives in the colonies—that is, the Model Cooperative Societies Ordinance of 1946, at the back of which lay the initial report of the Fabian Committee for the Study of Cooperation in the Colonies, which it produced in 1944.

The Model Cooperative Societies Ordinance

The idea that cooperation could enhance imperial development gained traction early, particularly in India, where recurrent famines and rural poverty combined with peasant

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¹⁵⁴ *Community Development: An Account of the Use of Traditional Organisations in the Promotion of Community Development in Kenya*, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 2234/1, Papers of T. G. Askwith [henceforth TGA].

¹⁵⁵ “The Colonies During 1944,” in *News from the Colonies*, BLUO MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 45/1.

indebtedness (itself the result of these conditions) to threaten the colony's putative stability,¹⁵⁶ hence the Cooperative Credit Societies Act of India (1904), Britain's first colonial cooperative measure. As formalized by that legislation, the colonial cooperative movement's marriage of low-cost development and self-sufficiency was arguably the quintessential Chamberlainite development scheme: the cooperatives funded themselves, increased production and profitability themselves, and, by virtue of the indigenous sociocultural framework that dictated interpersonal relationships among members and helped prevent indebtedness, were largely self-regulating.¹⁵⁷ Success in India brought with it similar and still-more-sweeping legislation in places like Ceylon (1911), Mauritius (1913), and Cyprus (1914).¹⁵⁸

Relatively cheap with limited administrative oversight and with the potential for a decent return on imperial investment, a full-fledged program of colonial cooperation was a politically attractive way to ensure the operation of the CDWA during the Second World War—and, in many respects, the thin end of the developmental wedge. The Fabians recognized this early on and, as part of their campaign to ensure the operation of the CDWA even in wartime,¹⁵⁹ the FCB formed its Committee for the Study of Cooperation in the Colonies in 1942.¹⁶⁰ Chaired by Lord Winster, the committee set to work with many prominent colonial cooperators, such as C. F. Strickland,¹⁶¹ author of *Cooperation for Africa* and an important contributor to the CO's 1930

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¹⁵⁶ Rita Rhodes, "British Cooperative History" (paper, the Swedish Project, Stockholm, November 20, 2009), 17-18.

¹⁵⁷ C. F. Strickland, "The Cooperative Movement in Africa," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 34, no. 134 (January 1935): 8.

¹⁵⁸ Cooperation in the Colonies, Protectorates and Mandated Territories, April 1930, NA CO 323/1102/3/40554.

¹⁵⁹ Minutes, FS, January 12, 1939-July 26, 1948, November 1940, LSE FSA C/26.

¹⁶⁰ The Fabian Society, *79th Annual Report 1962* (London: The Fabian Society, 1962), 19.

¹⁶¹ Strickland served for many years as registrar of cooperative societies in the Punjab. In 1925, he advised on cooperative development in Ceylon with W. K. H. Campbell, another noted expert on cooperatives. Following an extensive study in Nigeria in 1928, Strickland recommended the introduction of cooperatives there. A year later, he visited Singapore, where he studied the local cooperative movement and made recommendations regarding its future course. In the 1930s, Strickland carried out

Conference on Cooperation in the Colonies, Protectorates and Mandated Territories; H. Calvert, former registrar of cooperative societies in the Punjab; and A. Cavendish, former director of cooperation in Malaya, to develop a picture of the colonial cooperative enterprise.¹⁶² The committee's report, published in 1944, "roundly criticized"¹⁶³ past colonial cooperative policy and blamed the "failure to effect any adequate improvement" on the "*laissez-faire* [sic] attitude of British governments. Colonial policy," the report continued, "was less directed to promotion of colonial welfare and prosperity than to the maintenance of law and order so that trading companies might pursue . . . their business of securing a steady flow of raw materials to the wealthier industrial countries."¹⁶⁴ This state of affairs, coupled with the "lack of skilled direction," had the effect of perpetuating a system of "degrading colonial poverty."¹⁶⁵ The corrective here was development, as prescribed by the CDWA and as achieved through mechanisms of Fabian social trusteeship like cooperatives, an ideological and practical marriage Winster emphasized in a speech before the House of Lords in August, 1944. Winster noted that, "The Colonial Development Act, 1940, recognizes that the Colonies cannot build up reasonable standards of living while relying on their own resources. It recognizes that while they must be helped, the Colonies must also be encouraged to tackle these problems in their own way. To my

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investigations into the potential for cooperatives on behalf of the government of Palestine, in Malaya, and Africa. See: C. F. Strickland, "The Cooperative Movement in the East," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1931-1939)* 11, no. 6 (November 1932): 812; Jack Shaffer, *Historical Dictionary of the Cooperative Movement* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press Ltd., 1999), 374.

¹⁶² Fabian Colonial Bureau, *Cooperation in the Colonies: A Report from a Special Committee to the Fabian Colonial Bureau* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1945), front matter.

¹⁶³ L. J. Fredericks, "Free Enterprise and the Cooperative Movement in Malaysian Economic Development," *The Developing Economies* 12, no. 3 (1974): 229.

¹⁶⁴ Fabian Colonial Bureau, *Cooperation in the Colonies*, 21.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

mind cooperation is one [of the] most hopeful way[s] in which those problems can be tackled.”¹⁶⁶

That the “Colonial Secretary himself...stressed the importance of cooperatives”¹⁶⁷ encouraged the Bureau which instigated a campaign to persuade the CO to adopt a new “enlightened” cooperative approach.¹⁶⁸ Accordingly, the Committee presented its final report to Secretary of State Oliver Stanley by April 1944.¹⁶⁹ Although the report covered familiar cooperative territory, such as the need for the “appointment of specially trained staff,” its recommendations for the establishment of “separate Cooperative Departments inside the Colonial Office” and “in the separate colonies” and, most importantly, the “revision of Colonial Cooperative laws” represented a “pioneer piece of work on the scope and function of the Cooperative Movement in the Colonies.”¹⁷⁰ As it considered the Bureau’s findings, the CO, responding to a request from the government of Kenya,¹⁷¹ dispatched noted cooperative expert W. K. H. Campbell to explore the possibilities of developing the cooperative movement among Africans in East Africa.¹⁷²

In the meantime, the Fabians ratcheted up the pressure on the CO by peppering the Secretary of State for the Colonies with questions in the House of Commons. In June, the Fabian and Labor MP John Dugdale inquired “what action has been taken within the Colonial Empire to carry out the recommendations of the [UN] Hot Springs Conference” on Food and

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¹⁶⁶ Lord Winster, Speech to the House of Lords, August 1, 1944, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol. 133, cols. 26-68.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Fredericks, “Free Enterprise,” 229.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes, FS, January 16, 1939-June 29, 1946, April 24, 1944, LSE FSA C/20.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ W. K. H. Campbell, *Report on an Investigation of Cooperative Possibilities in Kenya* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1945), 1.

¹⁷² Robert Maxon, *Conflict and Accommodation in Western Kenya: The Gusii and the British, 1907-1963* (Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), 120.

Agriculture,¹⁷³ which emphasized “the important role which cooperative movements can and should play in post-war reconstruction.”¹⁷⁴ Stanley responded cautiously that the CO had commended the resolutions of the conference to the territories, hedging that the “general sense of the replies is that the Governments accept the broad aim of the resolutions and to give effect to them in so far as they are applicable in local conditions.”¹⁷⁵ When Creech Jones asked less than a month later, “what general policy is being followed to extend cooperation among producers and consumers throughout the Colonial Empire,”¹⁷⁶ Stanley provided a brief update on existing cooperative legislation, but added that, “measures to stimulate the growth of cooperation in the Colonies are in the first place a matter for the Governments concerned and it will be appreciated that local circumstances and conditions vary considerably. I am, however, giving consideration at the present time to the sending out of some general advice on the subject.”¹⁷⁷

If the government was still on the fence regarding cooperative policy when Winster made his remarks on the floor of the House of Lords in August, it came off the fence by November, when “a deputation from the Bureau was received by an inter-departmental committee of the Colonial Office to discuss the recommendations for the encouragement of the Colonial cooperative movement which had been put to the Colonial Office by the Bureau earlier this year.”¹⁷⁸ The deputation was led by Lord Winster and included Creech Jones, Sir Malcolm

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¹⁷³ Convened in 1943. Fabian Colonial Bureau, *Cooperation in the Colonies*, 16.

¹⁷⁴ John Dugdale, Speech to the House of Commons, June 21, 1944, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 401, cols. 180-181.

¹⁷⁵ Oliver Stanley, Speech to the House of Commons, June 21, 1944, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 401, cols. 180-181.

¹⁷⁶ Arthur Creech Jones, Speech to the House of Commons, July 12, 1944, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 401, cols. 1744-1745.

¹⁷⁷ Oliver Stanley, Speech to the House of Commons, July 12, 1944, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 401, cols. 1744-1745.

¹⁷⁸ *Fabian Society 62nd Annual Report (Draft)*, March 1945, LPA LHASC, JSM, International Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949.

Darling, and Dr. Hinden, secretary of the FCB. Following the discussion, “the Colonial Office agreed that the time had come to revise the laws on Cooperation in the different colonies, and also to prepare plans for the training of personnel to man cooperative departments. The Bureau was asked to help in both these tasks.”¹⁷⁹

With the CO on board, the Fabians set about work on two of the report’s more important suggestions: the formation of a Cooperative Advisory Committee, renamed the Advisory Committee on Cooperation in the Colonies and charged with determining “how the colonies should be advised on cooperation, and what changes in organization within the Colonial Office should be made to enable the subject to be dealt with adequately,”¹⁸⁰ and the formulation of a *Model Cooperative Societies Ordinance* to be “drafted on sufficiently elastic lines to cover the diverse conditions of the various Colonies, to be made effective in territories where cooperative legislation is at present inadequate.”¹⁸¹ Designed by former cooperative registrars E. H. Lucette and B. J. Surridge and augmented by Campbell’s *Memorandum on Cooperation in the Colonies* (1944), which outlined the principles of cooperation, the *Model Ordinance* was meant to serve as an “archetype,” a blueprint to “prevent the restriction of Cooperation to one form, and would preclude such freak legislation as the requirement of a minimum of fifty members in certain Pacific Islands.”¹⁸² The resulting template was chiefly defined by its flexibility, one that was general enough not to “cramp development,” but nevertheless outlined the objects a cooperative society could legitimately pursue—and the consequences should it not.¹⁸³

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¹⁷⁹ *Fabian Society 62nd Annual Report (Draft)*, March 1945, LPA LHASC, JSM, International Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949.

¹⁸⁰ *Records of the Colonial Office, Dominions Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, and Commonwealth Office, Vol. I* (London: HMSO, 1989), 126.

¹⁸¹ Fabian Colonial Bureau, *Cooperation in the Colonies*, 193.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, Foreword.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 179 and 193; *The Model Cooperative Societies Ordinance*, Colonial No. 199 (London: HMSO, 1946), 2-22.

In concert with the overtures made by the CO and certainly reflective of the new emphasis placed on colonial cooperation, the governor of Kenya introduced A Bill Relating to the Constitution and Regulation of Cooperative Societies to the Legislative Council in Nairobi. Informed by Campbell's investigations earlier in the year, in which he noted that the "pessimists" must disabuse themselves of "visualizing a complex organ like the 'English Cooperative Wholesale'" working at the incipient level in Africa,¹⁸⁴ and his subsequent testimony before the select committee,¹⁸⁵ the bill repealed the 1932 legislation that withheld the resources necessary for the support and organization of African cooperative societies. It also suggested the creation of a registrar and the provision of a staff to educate, train, and oversee an indigenous cooperative movement—the first of its kind in Kenya.¹⁸⁶ Recognizing this decisive change in policy, the Attorney General Stafford Sutton-Foster remarked that "it is in a sense breaking new ground" in that "we are making a departure from normal practice and we are doing it because conditions in this Colony justify" it.¹⁸⁷ The bill was debated by the LegCo in July 1945, during which several modifications were made that increased the ordinance's flexibility and augmented the powers of the registrar, such as those surrounding the rights and duties of cooperative societies to appeal decisions.¹⁸⁸ In doing so, the council brought the new ordinance in line with the Bureau's recommendations to the CO, which were published earlier that year in

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¹⁸⁴ W. K. H. Campbell, *Report on an Investigation of Cooperative Possibilities in Kenya* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1945), 1.

¹⁸⁵ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Legislative Council Debates (LegCo Deb.)*, XXII (July 26, 1945): 233-234.

¹⁸⁶ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Official Gazette*, XXXXVII (November 14, 1944), 413-423.

¹⁸⁷ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Legislative Council Debates (LegCo Deb.)*, XXII (July 26, 1945): 238.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 232-234. Both the liquidation of member assets and subsequent valuation were also elaborated along the lines articulated by the Fabians. See: Fabian Colonial Bureau, *Cooperation in the Colonies*, 178-180.

*Cooperation in the Colonies: A Report from a Special Committee to the Fabian Colonial Bureau.*¹⁸⁹

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In the final analysis, *Mass Education in African Society* and the Model Cooperative Societies Ordinance can be seen as bellwethers of later Fabian influence. Indeed, as John D. Hargreaves has observed, the fact that both innovations received vital impetus from the Conservative-dominated Coalition Government during politically and economically uncertain times indicates the Fabians' reforming conscience had made considerable ideological inroads, laying the groundwork for a burgeoning colonial consensus that was enormously suggestive of postwar developments.¹⁹⁰ However minor, a precedent of Fabian influence had been set.

Colonial Development Interrupted: The Sterling Crisis of 1947

Incipient and quietly effective "Fabianization" of colonial development policy between 1939 and 1945 exposes the Janus-faced nature of Britain's colonial development regime. On the one hand, Britain's wheelhouse of development programs included an array of modest, inexpensive schemes concerned to nurture indigenous progress at its most basic level—that is, the African community—by way of projects meant to encourage local-level betterment in terms of health, education, welfare, and economic equality. On the other hand, there is the postwar "colonial development offensive," to borrow Cowen and Shenton's militant-sounding phraseology, which is renowned for its large-scale and costly mechanized development projects. Inspired in part by Fabian ideas about the state as an agent of progress, designed by experts,

¹⁸⁹ Fabian Colonial Bureau, *Cooperation in the Colonies*, 178-180.

¹⁹⁰ John D. Hargreaves, *The End of Colonial Rule in West Africa: Essays in Contemporary History* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1979), 41. John Callaghan concurs. See: *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 150

implemented by bureaucratic “planners,” and coordinated through such bodies as the CO, the various colonial governments, and the newly-created Overseas Food Corporation (OFC) and Colonial Development Corporation (CDC), this singular aspect of colonial development dominates the historiography—and it is heavily criticized for its phenomenally expensive failures.¹⁹¹ Perhaps the most potent examples of this scholarly penchant involve the OFC’s East African Groundnuts Scheme (1947)¹⁹² and the CDC’s Gambia Egg Scheme (1948),¹⁹³ the abject failures of which historians routinely haul out, dust off, and then promptly use as a stick with which to thrash the postwar planners who stand accused of “maladministration” and “waste.”¹⁹⁴ These projects have been copiously examined elsewhere and, suffice it to say, scholars agree that

¹⁹¹ Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 225; Arjan de Haan, *How the Aid Industry Works: An Introduction to International Development* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2009), 34; Cowen and Shenton, “Origin,” 143.

¹⁹² An expert and objective collation of the policy-formulations, bureaucratic lineage, and official assessments of the groundnuts scheme can be found in D. J. Morgan, “The East African Groundnuts Scheme,” in *The Official History of Colonial Development, Volume 2: Developing British Colonial Resources, 1945-1951* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1980), 226-308.

¹⁹³ Absent a collation similar to that of Morgan, a contemporary view of the Gambia Egg Scheme, as expressed by the MP Alan Lennox-Boyd in the House of Commons on March 13, 1951, proves instructive: “That this House regrets the financial losses caused by the collapse of the Gambia Poultry Scheme, which had been launched without adequate consultation or any preliminary pilot scheme to discover whether the poultry could be kept in healthy production or the necessary feedingstuffs grown in the Colony. ... I think that the whole House will have heard with distress...the statement made a few days ago on 28th February by the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of the State for the Colonies. A sum of £825,000 has already been advanced for this project and we are told by the right hon. Gentleman that a substantial part of this sum must be written off. ... In addition to that, we were told that some 30,000 of the birds have died and that it has now been discovered in Gambia that with our present knowledge it is not possible to grow a sufficient quantity of food to keep the scheme going, and, as the right hon. Gentleman quite rightly staid, the scheme stands or falls by local production.” Alan Lennox-Boyd, Speech to the House of Commons, March 13, 1951, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 485, cols. 1318-1319.

A year later, the Gambia Enquiry concluded that Lord Trefgarne, the Chairman of the Colonial Development Corporation (CDC) and the project’s chief sponsor, was negligent, having failed to inform the Corporation’s Board that its expert advisers did not agree to the initial estimates provided by Millard J Phillips, the “bulldozing American” selected by Trefgarne to run the scheme, even though these were used as the basis of funding. Pounds subsequently poured in and the ill-advised poultry scheme moved forward. Following the inquiry, Trefgarne resigned as chairman of the CDC. *Report on the Gambia Egg Scheme*, Cmnd. 8560 (May 1952); Anthony Hurd, Speech to the House of Commons, March 13, 1951, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 485, cols. 1328-1329.

¹⁹⁴ Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 201.

the schemes were neither planned nor managed particularly well.¹⁹⁵ The question therefore becomes why? How do we explain these failures? The answer lies in the postwar sterling crisis of 1947.

The Second World War devastated Britain's economy. In the period between 1938 and 1945, for instance, Britain's external debt skyrocketed from £500 million to £3.355 billion while, during the same period, the value of its reserves of gold and dollars was nearly halved, falling from £864 million in 1938 to about £453 million by October 1945.¹⁹⁶ Nearly bankrupt and left with no other alternative following the end of the American Lend-Lease program,¹⁹⁷ Britain turned to the United States for a \$5 billion loan.¹⁹⁸ But policy-makers in Washington, who believed the best way to achieve global trade was through the elimination of trade barriers, viewed the sterling area—which, during the war, was the site of hard currency rationing “through the operation of the gold and dollar pool”—as a “discriminatory economic bloc” and, therefore, a

¹⁹⁵ A brief survey of the related historiographies is illuminating. According to Havinden and Meredith, it is owing to the groundnuts scheme that Tanganyika “bore the brunt” of the “new colonialism;” meanwhile, Pearce refers to the scheme as “ill-fated,” Lonsdale calls it a “farce,” Butler labels it “misguided,” and Murphy characterizes it as “an expensive embarrassment.” See: Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, 276; Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, 96; John Lonsdale, “East Africa” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 540; L. J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2002), 83; Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 39.

Although the Gambian Poultry Scheme features less prominently in the historiography, assessments are no less stark. For example, in *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, Pugh refers to it as a “humiliating failure;” in *Development Strategies in Africa*, Yansane calls it a “fiasco;” in *Colonialism and Development*, Havinden and Meredith consider it “equally disastrous” to the groundnuts scheme. See: Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, and Organize*, 225; Anguibou Yan Yansane, *Development Strategies in Africa: Current Economic, Socio-political, and Institutional Trends and Issues* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 75; and Havinden and Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, 2.

¹⁹⁶ Alistair Hinds, “Sterling and Decolonization in the British Empire, 1945-1958,” *Social and Economic Studies* 48, no. 4 (December 1999): 103-104; C. C. S. Newton, “The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan,” *The Economic History Review*, New Series 37, no. 3 (August 1984): 392.

¹⁹⁷ Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 208.

¹⁹⁸ Newton, “The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan,” 393.

massive obstacle to trade—precisely what the Americans proposed to dismantle.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the United States was unwilling to provide more than \$3.5 billion in credit to Britain—and, at that, only on condition that the UK government “made sterling convertible for current transactions into any other currency.”²⁰⁰ As this allowed “private citizens and companies to purchase US exports with dollars passing through Britain,” the immediate result was a “frantic run on the Bank of England’s reserves and the rapid depreciation of the pound against the dollar.”²⁰¹ As the value of the pound plummeted—and, with it, the basis of exchange in the sterling area—the empire-wide dollar deficit, accumulated through the importation of goods produced in the dollar area, soared. Indeed, to get some sense of the scope of the problem, we need look no further than the West Indies, where the Bahamas, which in 1948 had a total population of 85,000, incurred a net-dollar import deficit of \$6,495,000.²⁰² Such were Britain’s postwar economic woes and they fashioned a bleak prognosis for the empire: officials projected a “cumulative balance of payments deficit” of £1.25 billion between 1945 and 1950.²⁰³

This crisis framed Britain’s novel postwar status as the “world’s leading debtor country”²⁰⁴ and it did much to undermine Creech Jones’ “welfarist agenda.”²⁰⁵ In fact, from 1946/7, British policy-makers sought not only to “restrain” imports from the dollar area,²⁰⁶ but also to bend colonial development initiatives toward the production of dollar-earning and dollar-

¹⁹⁹ Newton, “The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan,” 393.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 208.

²⁰² Colonial Development Corporation: Report and Accounts for 1948, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 64/3.

²⁰³ Newton, “The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan,” 392.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Frank, “Labour’s ‘New Imperialist Attitude’,” 109.

²⁰⁶ Alistair Hinds, “Sterling and Decolonization in the British Empire, 1945-1958,” *Social and Economic Studies* 48, no. 4 (December 1999): 103-104.

saving commodities otherwise imported from outside the sterling area.²⁰⁷ As Sir Stafford Cripps, Minister for Economic Affairs, observed in a speech to the African Governors' Conference in November 1947, "What I think is most important is that we should get right ahead with as many large scale experimental schemes as possible."²⁰⁸ It was not long before Sir Stafford's sentiment was given an institutional basis. For in February 1948, Parliament legislated the Overseas Resources Development Act and established the CDC and the OFC, bodies which, in tandem with the CO and the Treasury, were charged with the coordination of Britain's postwar colonial development regime.

It was to be a fraught working relationship.²⁰⁹ Indeed, while the OFC and the CDC were tasked with "securing the investigation, formulation and carrying out of projects for production or processing in places outside the United Kingdom of foodstuffs or agricultural products other than foodstuffs, and the marketing thereof," and "securing the investigation, formulation and carrying out of projects for developing resources of colonial territories with a view to the expansion of production therein of foodstuffs and raw materials, or for other agricultural, industrial or trade development therein,"²¹⁰ respectively, and could, therefore, initiate development schemes, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who had "overriding responsibility for the political and economic well-being of the Colonies," had no such authority.²¹¹ Moreover, the CO was granted only minimal oversight of corporation-approved schemes, as Section 1 of the Overseas Resources Development Act made plain: "The

²⁰⁷ Newton, "The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan," 403.

²⁰⁸ Speech by Sir Stafford Cripps (Minister for Economic Affairs) to the African Governors' Conference, November 12, 1947, CO 847/36/4. See: Hyam, ed., *British Documents on the End of Empire: The Labour Government and the End of Empire, 1945-1951. Part I*, 301.

²⁰⁹ L. J. Butler, *Industrialization and the British Colonial State: West Africa, 1939-1951* (London: Routledge, 1997), 218.

²¹⁰ Overseas Resources Development Bill, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 49/2.

²¹¹ Morgan, "The East African Groundnuts Scheme," 271.

Corporation can therefore undertake a wide range of projects by widely differing methods, and neither the commercial soundness of a project nor the methods by which it is to be carried out, can be questioned by the Secretary of State [for the Colonies] unless the project, or the methods of its operation, conflicted with public policy.”²¹²

These limits, which prompted a lengthy rebuke from Creech Jones, effectively restricted CO influence to brokering, along with the Treasury, “policy and allocation clearances” for projects already approved by the new corporations.²¹³ Yet, even this constraint had its limits, for both the OFC and the CDC could embark on schemes “of a preliminary or urgent character” even in advance of sanction from either the CO or the Treasury.²¹⁴ The board of the CDC justified this latitude in its first annual report: “the board have sometimes felt, during the course of this first year, that if they are required to move always and only on the rails of exact planning, obtaining the full concurrence of various Government Departments and outside interests which may have views to assert, it may be difficult to move at all; and they have therefore welcomed every measure of freedom and independent initiative, within the general requirements of economic policy, which the Secretary of State [for the Colonies] and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have felt able, in their interpretation of the terms of the Act, to concede.”²¹⁵

Rationalized within the context of the sterling crisis and the urgent, postwar call for “resource mobilization” throughout the empire, these circumstances combined to elevate large-scale colonial development schemes to a position of importance several magnitude above

²¹² Memorandum, Matters Raised by the Secretary of State in Connection with Relations Between the Colonial Office and the Colonial Development Corporation, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 44/3.

²¹³ Draft Statement on Procedure and Relationships of Government Departments with the Colonial Development Corporation, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 44/3.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Colonial Development Corporation: Report and Accounts for 1948, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 64/3.

projects concerned chiefly with indigenous social betterment.²¹⁶ Little wonder, then, that, as Riley observes, there emerged within the Attlee government a polarity of development philosophies: on the one hand, figures such as John Strachey, the Minister of Food charged with overseeing the OFC and, consequently, the East African Groundnuts Scheme, and Lord Trefgarne who, as chairman of the board of the CDC, was ultimately responsible for oversight of The Gambia Egg Scheme, were adherents to this new fiscally-driven ethos, one motivated by the idea that development should aid in the postwar reconstruction of Britain.

Of course, given the scope of the crisis confronting the empire, and the purported outcome of the development schemes it compelled—it was estimated, for example, that the East Africa Groundnut Scheme alone would produce £10 million per annum in dollar-savings, while it was reckoned that egg production in The Gambia would produce something on the order of 20 million eggs per annum following a relatively minor capital outlay on the part of the UK government of £500,000—this ethos, while not justifiable, is certainly explicable.²¹⁷ Nevertheless, the change in development philosophy embodied by the work of these agencies has prompted certain scholars, such as Kelemen and Fieldhouse, to frame the resultant “colonial development offensive” in the bleakest of terms, characterizing them as exploitative of Africans in the vein of Chamberlain’s imperial estates doctrine—precisely the circumstance the Fabians set out to correct in 1929.²¹⁸

Indeed, it is the positivist vision derived from Sydney Olivier’s *Imperial Trusteeship*, published in 1929, with its prescriptive moral responsibility, its humanitarian precepts of civil,

²¹⁶ Hinds, “Sterling and Decolonization in the British Empire, 1945-1958,” 104.

²¹⁷ *Report on The Gambia Egg Scheme*, Cmnd. 8560 (May 1952).

²¹⁸ See: Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 208; Kelemen, “Planning for Africa: The British Labour Party’s Colonial Development Policy, 1920-1964,” 77; Fieldhouse, “The Labour Government and the Empire Commonwealth, 1945-51,” 95.

economic, and social equality, and a belief in the fundamental benevolence of state-sponsored development-based progress favored by Creech Jones, the FCB, and many within the CO, that stood in such stark contrast to the new development philosophy and the monstrous manifestations of midcentury modernity it obliged. This dichotomy not only prompted an institutional tension between the CO and the OFC and the CDC, but led, *pace* Heinlein and Riley, to resistance on the part of CO officials “on moral grounds” to development plans that “might engender exploitation, or even the perception of exploitation, of colonial populations for British financial gain.”²¹⁹

Conclusion

Britain’s postwar development strategy was about more than writing progress across the landscape of Africa in the mechanized language of industrialization—a fact that is clouded by the very historiography that scholars such as Kelemen and Fieldhouse perpetuate. Indeed, obscured by this tendency is an equally significant strand of development: modest, inexpensive schemes concerned to nurture indigenous progress at its most basic level—that is, the African community. Eclipsed by the ambitious and flashy plans of revolutionary large-scale mechanization and agricultural production, local-level initiatives were nonetheless critical to the development of Britain’s African territories. That such schemes go unnoticed or are treated as asides in the historiography fosters not only a grim assessment of postwar colonial development and the Fabianism which often lay at the heart of its ideals, but also one that is woefully

²¹⁹ Charlotte Lydia Riley, “‘The Winds of Change are Blowing Economically’: The Labour Party and British Overseas Development, 1940s-1960s,” in *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?* (London: University College, 2017), 53.

incomplete, particularly in light of the primacy Creech Jones assigned to one such colonial development stratagem: mass education.

Indeed, Creech Jones felt very strongly that the successful marriage of progress and development in Britain's African territories hinged on this particular community-level initiative. The byzantine path wended by Creech Jones and the Adult and Mass Education Subcommittee that led to the unspectacular promulgation of *Mass Education in African Society* in 1944 testifies to this. But the success of colonial development projects, Fabian-influenced or otherwise, lies ultimately not in an effective policy formulation, but whether or not—and if indeed, how—that proposal manifested itself tangibly on the ground in African communities. This, of course, is the problematic at the very center of the question of postwar Fabian influence on the British Empire. In the end, when the *Tribune* announced that the “Fabianising” of the empire had begun in 1947, was this meant to herald something more than the rhetorical comeuppance of a society whose members had spent years permeating the upper echelons of government—or was it simply the gleeful announcement of a long-awaited—and ultimately hollow—succession?

To answer this question, we must turn to the vehicle arguably best situated to Fabianize the British Empire following the Second World War: the Cambridge Summer Conference of 1948, convened under the auspices of the CO to “encourage initiative in African society.”

CHAPTER 4: 1948-1956

On Colonial Summer Schools and Community Development in Kenya and Uganda: Case Studies in the Fabianization of the British Empire

Through Mr. Creech Jones and Mr. Jim Griffiths our programme was largely put into effect by the Labour Government.¹

—Dr. Rita Hinden, Secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, to the House of Commons, November 20, 1953

Introduction

By the time the CO Summer Conference on African Administration convened in August 1948, the schematic of Fabian social trusteeship had crystallized into a positivist marriage of progress and development, a conjugation of Fabianism and Sydney Olivier's imperial trusteeship designed to bring about the betterment of colonial peoples through a regime of state-interference under the guiding agency of state trustees. Although the Great Depression's impact on Britain's political and economic circumstances had a cumulative suppressive effect on advancing these ideals in the realm of colonial development policy during the 1930s, the Fabians remained faithful to the basic principles of Olivier's design. Yet the formula of Fabian social trusteeship was not immutable; by the 1940s, circumstances prompted revision, particularly in light of the move toward colonial self-government. As the FCB observed: "In the move forward of colonial territories...it is of great importance that a modern system of government should be laid."²

¹ "Reflections on Colonial Affairs," Notes on a Meeting Given by Dr. Rita Hinden, House of Commons, November 20, 1953, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 48/1. Griffiths, who was also a Fabian, assumed the position of Secretary of State for the Colonies following Creech Jones' electoral defeat in 1950.

² *Venture: Journal of the Fabian Colonial Bureau*, 2, no. 8 (September 1950): 8, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 16/3.

As we have seen, for the Fabians, the foundation of this modern system of government had a basis in the experiences of Britain's nineteenth-century working-classes, which had been excluded from "the exercise of full political rights."³ As they gained and exercised these rights, the working-classes derived strength from what the Fabians saw as a host of "principal sources," notably trade unions, cooperatives, and local government. These institutions, long-cherished by the Fabians as both generators of a sense of community⁴ and incubators of democracy,⁵ provided not only a blueprint for eventual self-government, but also its requisite social trustees, the state-supported bodies best positioned to train Africans in the administrative skills needed to (eventually) take over from the imperial state.⁶ As important "staging posts" along the road to eventual self-government, the Fabians saw these institutions as logical counterparts to trusteeship in an age when Lord Lugard's indirect rule, the preferred method of governance in Britain's African colonies, had become increasingly outmoded, especially as educated Africans came to

³ "The Social Foundation of Trusteeship," *Venture: Journal of the Fabian Colonial Bureau*, 2, no. 8 (September 1950): 8, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 16/3.

⁴ Paul Kelemen, "Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot," in *Empire, Development & Colonialism*, eds. M. Duffield and V. Hewitt (Suffolk.: James Currey, 2013), 193.

⁵ For the Fabian perspective on the marriage of cooperatives, democracy, and colonial development policy, see, for example, Sidney Webb, *The Constitutional Problems of a Cooperative Society* (London: The Fabian Society, 1923); *Cooperation in the Colonies: A Report From a Special Committee to the Fabian Colonial Bureau* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1946); and Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ, "Cooperation as a Factor in Colonial Progress" in *Review of International Cooperation: The Official Organ of the International Cooperative Alliance* 36, no. 7 (July 1943). In the realm of secondary literature, the most recent comprehensive treatment of the history of Britain's colonial cooperative movement can be found in Rita Rhodes' *Empire and Cooperation: How the British Empire Used Cooperatives in its Development Strategies, 1900-1970* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2012).

Perhaps the most comprehensive statement of the *Fabian* position in relation to local government as an agent of democratization can be found in Sidney and Beatrice Webb's mammoth *English Local Government, Vol. IV: Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes* (London: Longmans Press & Co, 1922).

On Fabian perspectives regarding the relationship between trade unions, democratization, and colonial policy, see: Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1902); Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb*; and the *Passfield Memorandum*, as quoted in Robert J Parker and Eldon M. Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor in the English-Speaking West Indies* (London: Praeger, 2004).

⁶ Kelemen, "Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot," 193.

see it as a barrier to progress. Coupled with mass education, the institution particularly favored by Arthur Creech Jones and the subject of this chapter, local government, trade unions, and cooperatives comprised what the Bureau referred to as “The Social Foundation” of trusteeship.⁷

While the ideological bricks of this foundation were being laid, the Labor Party gradually devolved its colonial policy formulation machinery into the hands of the increasingly better-positioned Fabians. We get some sense of this movement as early as 1933, when something very much like the FCB’s Social Foundation made a tentative appearance in *The Colonial Empire*, one of Labor’s largely-disregarded Depression-era treatises on colonial policy. Promulgated following the party’s electoral implosion, retreat into opposition, and subsequent lunge to the left, *The Colonial Empire* outlined a plan of “socialisation and self-government” in the colonies that depended partly upon a framework of local government, the organization of cooperatives and native trade unions, and an educational curriculum that included mass education.⁸ The obvious parallel with the Social Foundation is rather more than historical happenstance; for at the time, the party relied on the ostensibly apolitical NFRB, a Fabian-led research department (the LRD), and an executive whose policy committee was dominated by Fabians to formulate its colonial initiatives.⁹ As suggestive as this is, however, the ultimate significance of *The Colonial Empire* lay not in its affirmation of Fabian permeation, but rather in its status as an exemplar of Labor’s prewar tendency to draw upon what became the nuts-and-bolts of Fabian social trusteeship. As Kelemen has observed, with the passage of time these rudiments became a “long-standing” and distinctly Fabian contribution to Labor’s postwar colonial policy

⁷ “The Social Foundation of Trusteeship,” *Venture: Journal of the Fabian Colonial Bureau*, 2, no. 8 (September 1950): 8, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 16/3.

⁸ *The Colonial Empire*, 4, 11, 12, and 14.

⁹ See Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion.

formulations.¹⁰ Indeed, it is the climax of this trend which prompted Morgan to describe the postwar CO as “the Fabian Colonial Bureau writ large.”¹¹

By the 1940s, a dense ideological network stretched between and connected Labor and the Fabians, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy. Little wonder, then, that the party’s 1945 election manifesto, *Let Us Face the Future*, should itself have been written by the Fabian Michael Young.¹² Yet, in many ways, it is no less emblematic for having been so; for as Callaghan has noted, in terms of sheer political clout—that is, the proportion of members in the governing body as an expression of influence—1945 represents something of an apex for the Fabians.¹³ In point of fact, the election that year, which brought to power Labor’s Third Ministry, a landmark occasioned by Labor’s historic landslide victory, and coincided with the promulgation of an amended CDWA, manifested an astronomical change in the political fortunes of the society: of the 394 Labor MPs elected, 229 were Fabians;¹⁴ ten cabinet ministers, including the premier, Clement Attlee; 35 undersecretaries of state and 11 parliamentary private secretaries were also Fabians.¹⁵ So transformative was the election of 1945 in terms of Fabian

¹⁰ Kelemen, “Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot,” 193.

¹¹ Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 205-206.

¹² R. Taylor and T. Steele, *British Labour and Higher Education, 1945-2000: Ideologies, Policies, and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 64-65.

¹³ John Callaghan, “The Fabian Society since 1945,” in *Ideas and Think Tanks in Contemporary Britain, Volume 2*, eds. M. David Kandiah and A. Seldon (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1996), 37.

¹⁴ Given as a proportion of the national membership of the Fabian Society (and excluding those Fabians who were members only of the local societies) in 1945, this represents approximately 6% of the total national membership (out of 3,961 full and associate members). *Fabian Society 62nd Annual Report (Draft)*, March 1945, LPA LHASC, JSM, International Subcommittee Minutes & Documents, 1942-1949.

¹⁵ Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 301. As Callaghan has noted, the Fabian Society’s “intimate relationship” with the PLP, particularly since 1945, is indicated by the fact the numerous MPs could “always be counted among its members,” including the premier himself and representatives of his “Front Bench team.” Among the list of well-disposed parliamentary figures is found members of the Fabian executive (Parker, John Diamond, Arthur Skeffington, Jay, Austen Albu, Ian Mikardo, and Durbin), Fabian lecturers (Sorensen, Maurice Edelman, W. N. Warbey, John Hynd, Ernest Davies, Ashley Bramwell, A. M. F. Palmer, and A. J. Champion), and chairmen as well as members of Fabian committees (H. D. Hughes, Ellen Wilkinson, and Jennie Lee). See in: Callaghan, “The Fabian Society since 1945,” 37-38.

representation that the wife of John Parker, the MP and general secretary of the Fabian Society, remarked on being introduced to the new PLP: “Why, it looks just like an enormous Fabian School!”¹⁶ Though we should not confuse numerical preponderance with anything like a mandate for the Fabian agenda, Mrs. Parker’s effervescence was not too far wide of the mark; for the fact remains that for the first time since 1929, a type of political context existed that was theoretically favorable to the “Fabianization of the British Empire.” “At last,” Dr. Hinden wrote of the elation felt among certain members of the FCB, “the policies which had been pondered over and pressed during the preceding years of hard work would be carried into effect, and enthusiasm ran high.”¹⁷

Of all the advisory mechanisms at the disposal of the Colonial Office to commence with this “Fabianizing,”¹⁸ to borrow from the *Tribune*, none was better situated than the CO Summer School¹⁹ on African Administration, which met for the first time in 1947 under the tutelage of the Fabian and newly-minted Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech Jones. Convened annually over a two-week period in August and September between 1947 and 1949 and again from 1951, the conferences were designed to bring the experience of “serving officers,”²⁰ who were given leave to attend, to bear on the problems confronting postwar-Britain in the administration of its dependent territories. In their turn, the conferences that met while Creech Jones was Secretary of State considered the subjects of African Local Government (1947), The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society (1948), and Agricultural Development in Africa (1949). Officially, these conferences were consultative in nature; they were not substitutes for the “ordinary

¹⁶ As quoted in Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, 301.

¹⁷ Rita Hinden, *Socialists and the Empire* (London: Fabian Publications, 1946), 22.

¹⁸ *Tribune*, July 4, 1947. As quoted in Cowen and Shenton, “Origin,” 143.

¹⁹ The meeting held in 1947 was referred to as a “school.” Subsequent meetings were referred to as “conferences.”

²⁰ Cohen to Hinden, May 5, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 25/2.

machinery” of policy-making in the African territories or in London. Rather, they were intended to pool experience and to produce practical suggestions for consideration by everyone concerned with African development. Unofficially, however, the position of the conferences *vis-à-vis* the official policy-making functions of the CO was less straightforward, as attested by Creech Jones' assurance in 1948 that the conference was not meant “to put something across to the officers from Africa.”²¹

There was no more appropriate setting for Creech Jones' caveat. For the centerpiece of the 1948 summer conference was mass education, a project in which the Secretary of State's faith was so deep and abiding he had garnered a reputation among certain colonial officials as its “apostle.”²² For Creech Jones, mass education was the “essence” responsible for stimulating the most elusive of all the alchemical quanta of colonial development: African initiative, which, in the eyes of many colonial officials, had been hitherto circumscribed by the commingling of hidebound “(native) lethargy and ignorance” and the more advanced Africans' generalized “distrust” of British intentions.²³ Yet, like all crusading apostles, Creech Jones' message was only as effective as the proselytizing missionary network on which it depended: in this case, the British Colonial Service. But the Secretary of State for the Colonies could not govern by fiat; instead, constitutional convention obliged him to work through colonial governors who, like himself, drew authority from the royal prerogative, and whose decisions he had, by and large, to

²¹ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King's College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 10, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

²² Captain A. G. Dickson to Creech Jones, August 16, 1945, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/1.

²³ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King's College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 23, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

support.²⁴ Within such a framework, the cooperation of the Colonial Service could only be solicited, not compelled—an administrative impediment complicated by the fact that, as Goldsworthy has pointed out, “many people had a stake in resisting (Creech Jones’) policies.”²⁵

Almost as a matter of routine, then, the task of winning over colonial officials was nothing short of Sisyphean: requiring navigation of the convoluted structure of an ossified, still-conservative colonial regime studded barbwire-like with what Creech Jones referred to as “unimaginative reactionaries,”²⁶ hostile toward “planning,” who saw CO Fabians as idealistic and their policies unrealistic. To say nothing of indigenous, nationalist resistance to colonial rule itself.²⁷ Thus, in many ways, Creech Jones’ best hope to further his progressive agenda lay in a well-executed summer conference populated by sympathetic colonial officials and partisans.²⁸

This chapter explores both the policy implications and practical ramifications of the “Fabianization of the British Empire.” It takes as its point of departure the CO Summer Conference of 1948. Convened under the sponsorship of Arthur Creech Jones in his capacity as Secretary of State for the Colonies, the conference met and deliberated on a topic in which the minister and the FCB were both keenly interested: mass education. This chapter shows that, as implemented within the framework laid out in *Mass Education in African Society*, the CO policy promulgated in 1944 and guided to a considerable extent by Creech Jones in his capacity as a

²⁴ Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 50-51. As Creech Jones noted, “you cannot in Whitehall dictate the changes you want in the Colonies. ... We have to rely on the good sense of the people’s representatives in a Colony and also on a very able body of colonial servants who know to serve and how to shed responsibility.” See: Arthur Creech Jones, “Labour’s Achievements in the Colonies,” in *The Way Forward*, 1950, 16, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 33.

²⁵ Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 50-51.

²⁶ Arthur Creech Jones, “Labour’s Achievements in the Colonies,” in *The Way Forward*, 1950, 16, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 33.

²⁷ Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, 50-51.

²⁸ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 12, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2); Holford, “Mass Education and Community Development in the British Colonies,” 168.

member of the ACEC, mass education policy had been revealed to be an ill-defined and unwieldy concept. In the colonies, the resultant muddle manifested a variegated efflorescence of mass education regimes which were noteworthy, above all, for their lack of consistency. As a result, the 1948 summer conference set out to reimagine mass education policy and bring to it some much-needed clarity. The conference accomplished this by framing what was essentially the same policy but within the rubric of “community development.” To get some sense of the efficacy of these formulations, and thus some idea of the nature of a “Fabianized” British Empire, this chapter pivots to an examination of community development *in situ*—that is, in Africa. As such, we conclude here with a pair of case studies on the evolution and practical effects of community development as realized in Kenya and Uganda.

The Fabianization of the British Empire: Fabians and the 1948 CO Summer Conference on African Administration

In his opening address to the 1948 Cambridge Summer Conference on African Administration, the Secretary of State for the Colonies Arthur Creech Jones laid out his vision for the future of development in Africa to a roomful of colonial officials. The nub of his speech, which faulted past development efforts for emphasizing the “substance” of development programs over the encouragement of indigenous “motive power,” was that the political and economic development of colonial societies depended ultimately upon their own peoples.²⁹ “Looked at by any real standard of values,” Creech Jones reasoned, “it is less important that a particular African territory should have a progressive constitution with full African participation

²⁹ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 10, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

than that there should exist in the territory a considerable group of people capable of effective political capacity, by which is meant...the capacity to take part effectively in public life and to shape political development themselves. At the other end of the scale it is less important that there should be a village school than that the people should have the initiative, not only to want a school and ask for a school, but actually to build and run it by their own efforts.”³⁰

For all its ostensible altruism, this high-minded rhetoric is jarring to modern ears, reminding us that the Secretary of State was no less subject to the “genie of colonial paternalism”³¹ than any other colonial administrator. Indeed, it was more a matter of degree than of completeness, since Creech Jones clearly believed Africans were capable of achieving progress, they lacked only the initiative to realize it. Little wonder, then, that Creech Jones concluded in his speech that the “primary task” of Britain’s colonial development regime in Africa was the stimulation of “initiative...to encourage people to want change” and “to equip them with the power themselves to create change.”³² In other words, the tangible ends of a planned development scheme—be it dams and irrigation canals, groundnut schemes or egg production, or schools and community buildings—were not, in fact, the point of development at all. Rather, it was the means by which development was accepted, understood, and achieved by the indigenous peoples—that is, the fostering of enterprise in African society itself as a sort of bastardized version of “development from below”³³ that depended, paradoxically, on

³⁰ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 10, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

³¹ Shilaro, “A Failed Eldorado: British Trusteeship, Luyia Land Rights and the Kakamega Gold Rush, 1930-52,” 47.

³² *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 10, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

³³ Creech Jones saw initiative as the foundational element for endogenous, self-reliant development that leads to the type of participative decision-making elaborated so compendiously by

paternalistic European encouragement—which would far outlast any metropolitan-imposed framework³⁴ and ultimately “allow Africans to take over from the imperial state.”³⁵

If, as Creech Jones held, African progress was a dynamic fueled by initiative, what remained was its arousal and sustainment; the means by which the bulk of the population who lacked the requisite “motive power” was to be induced to “become the pioneers in building the institutions and works most suitable to their needs.”³⁶ For Creech Jones, the necessary provocateurs in this scheme were the colonial state and, in time, the Fabian-favored institutions of social trusteeship—i.e. local government, trade unions, and cooperatives—whose job it was to supply “the spark to kindle the flame” of collective initiative. As opposed to market incentives, the chief mechanism for igniting this spark was mass education,³⁷ itself, as we shall see, the imprecise conceptual tinder which underpinned the philosophical basis of the 1948 Cambridge summer conference.

The 1948 summer conference stood astride the nexus of an extensive, years-long, and somewhat *ad hoc* information collation project, which gathered together technique analyses as well as experiential and experimental data with a view toward assessing the “whole problem” of colonial mass education and determining, in Creech Jones’ words, “what can be done to get the Colonies directed [to] carry this thing [mass education] further.”³⁸ Organized and spearheaded

Ursula K. Hicks in *Development from Below: Local Government and Finance in Developing Countries of the Commonwealth* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961).

³⁴ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 19, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

³⁵ Kelemen, “Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot,” 193.

³⁶ African Conference, 1948, NA CO 847/38/7.

³⁷ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 12, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

³⁸ “Some Current Colonial Problems,” address by Arthur Creech Jones, May 23, 1946, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 48/2.

by a group of Fabians and a clique of like-minded CO administrators, parliamentarians, and colonial and international officials who saw communal activity and training in administrative skills as the necessary precursors to self-government,³⁹ the conference was the second in a series of annual summer conferences on African Administration that were the brainchild of Andrew B. Cohen,⁴⁰ the Fabianized head of the African Division of the CO.⁴¹

When it met in Cambridge, the 1948 summer conference was packed virtually stem to stern with Fabian partisans, comprising a veritable “who’s who” of colonial development specialists and planners that included: Cohen, chairman of the conference; G. B. Cartland, general secretary of the conference and contributor to the FCB’s report on *Local Government and the Colonies*;⁴² Leonard Barnes, Fabian and co-chair of the panel tasked with examining the “Incentives to Progress in African Society;” the Fabian Dr. Margery Perham who, along with Prof. C. H. Philips, himself a Fabian collaborator, spoke on nationalism as a motive force in African societies; Dr. Huxley, a long-serving Fabian, former member of the ACEC, and director general of UNESCO who spoke of the inspiration his agency had drawn from the CO’s mass education policy; the Fabian Prof. Arthur Lewis, who spoke on the “indirect approach” of encouraging African initiative in “betterment schemes;” W. E. F. Ward, Deputy Colonial

³⁹ Kelemen, “Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot,” 193.

⁴⁰ Memorandum, Native Administration Policy by Andrew B. Cohen. Originated with Cohen, but evolved especially through discussions with Sir Philip Mitchell, governor of Kenya, CO 847/35/6 (12). See: Ronald Hyam, ed., *The Labour Government and the End of Empire, 1945-1954: Pt. I: High Policy and Administration* (London: HMSO, 1992), 116. On Cohen’s Fabianization, See: Kelemen, “Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot,” 197; R. I. Rotberg, *Black Heart: Gore-Browne and the Politics of Multiracial Zambia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 255; Gordon W. Morrell, “The Big Three, the UN Trusteeship Council, and the Early Cold War,” in *Imperialism on Trial: Oversight and Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective*, eds. R. M. Douglas, Michael D. Callahan, and Elizabeth Bishop (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 125.

⁴¹ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 12, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

⁴² Hinden to Cartland, May 2, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 49/1.

Education Adviser, chairman of the panel charged with elaborating “The Content of Mass Education,” and contributor to the *New Fabian Colonial Essays*,⁴³ as well as Colonial Education Adviser Sir Christopher Cox, who served as deputy chair of the conference, and Dr. Margaret Read, who spoke on the necessity of encouraging “key individuals” to promote progress—both of whom were long-time Fabian collaborators and contributors who worked alongside Creech Jones in the formulation of *Mass Education in African Society*.

Planned, prepared, and delivered by this group of Fabians and their collaborators and correspondents, the conference was pumped and primed to diffuse a Fabianized vision of colonial mass education policy throughout the empire.⁴⁴ Appropriately, it took as its point of departure the CO’s report on *Mass Education in African Society*, the “prime begetter” of which was Creech Jones.⁴⁵ Published in 1944, the report did much to encourage an empire-wide dialogue about mass education, while rendering it increasingly amorphous, a duality acknowledged by Creech Jones in his opening remarks at the Conference: “There has been a great deal of talk over the past three or four years about mass education,” Creech Jones noted, “and many people have failed to understand what it means.”⁴⁶

By 1948, this lingering sense of nebulousness was felt most acutely in the colonies. Between 1944 and 1946, the “dilemma” of mass education came up in a variety of colonial contexts. For example, the educationalist V. L. Griffiths, the principal of Bakht-er-Ruda College in Sudan, argued that mass education, even assuming it was properly understood and implemented, was but a constituent part of the solution to a much larger problem facing Britain’s

⁴³ Ward penned Chapter VIII: “Education in the Colonies.”

⁴⁴ Cowen and Shenton, “Origin,” 154-155.

⁴⁵ Cox to Creech Jones, May 28, 1945, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/1.

⁴⁶ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 20, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

postwar colonial empire. “If we really mean to develop the Colonies until they are capable of governing themselves within measurable time,” he wrote Cox in 1944, “I suggest that the civic training of the educated and the gaining of their cooperation is as important a subject as Mass Education.” Griffiths punctuated his appraisal with a warning that “without some such complement to Mass Education, the latter is likely to go sour on us through the interference and rivalry of flamboyant and bitter nationalists. This has happened in India....”⁴⁷ Griffiths’ paternalistic concerns that African initiative without proper “supervision” could be dangerous—and, hence, the need for vesting trusteeship in the hands of “experts”—were echoed by Uganda’s social welfare adviser, who reflected in 1946 that: “My experience here in Uganda has utterly convinced me...that the CO Report on Mass Education would remain only paper until such time as Africans were called up for training in citizenship....”⁴⁸ This “training in citizenship” encompassed a wide range of vague-sounding initiatives framed by the notion that “good citizenship” was a “way of living,” rather than a “body of knowledge.” As such, it included both a direct classroom approach and an indirect classroom approach, from fostering “elementary social habits”—learned through the constant contact of pupils with teachers and staff—reinforced by cleanliness and self-control; “character training,” where Africans learned how to be what Europeans considered “good citizens” by observing and following the examples of good behavior set by their teachers while simultaneously maintaining “good relationships” with those

⁴⁷ Griffiths to Cox, June 14, 1944, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 36/1. By this time, Griffiths had acquired a considerable reputation for character training as “citizenship training for the educated native.” As such, he became a key figure in the formulation of the CO’s training for African citizenship, given form in the 1948 report, *Education for Citizenship in Africa*. See: J. M. Lee, *Colonial Development and Good Government: A Study in the Ideas Expressed by the British Official Classes in Planning Decolonization 1939-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 165; *Education for Citizenship*, Colonial No. 216 (London: HMSO, 1948), 18-24.

⁴⁸ Dickson to P. E. W. Williams, April 2, 1946, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), Papers of P. E. W. Williams [henceforth PEW].

around them; to field trips where classes visited government offices (post offices, police stations, railways stations, etc.) to attain an understanding and even appreciation of the work officials do; and classroom-based studies in such subjects as politics, where more advanced students could learn about the “machinery and spirit of Government: in the native authority and the Crown colony system, in Dominion status, in the working of the parliamentary and Cabinet system, and the functions of the Crown.”⁴⁹ It was, in other words, meant to be a regime of inculcation in a specifically British (and generally Eurocentric) vision of citizenship.

When, in the summer of 1947, an investigation was launched under the auspices of the CO “to advise on problems of mass education and literacy” in East Africa with a remit to discuss related plans of campaign in Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, and Uganda, the survey confirmed that progress regarding mass education had been irregular. Carried out by Prof. Philips of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, the survey recognized that while the “underlying conception” of mass education in colonial society had “long been part of British rule,” the term “mass education” was itself “much misunderstood” in the colonies. In Kenya, for example, the survey found a robust infrastructure existed to help facilitate mass education projects, but that administrative overlap between the Departments of Education, Training, and Social Welfare had coupled with resource limitations to create an incoherent and inefficient policy.⁵⁰ Meantime, in Uganda, where it fell under the purview of the Department of Public Relations and Social Welfare, mass education consisted, in part, of traveling demonstration teams exhibiting everything from latrine maintenance to the proper planting of banana trees and posters exhorting the moral virtues of hard work. While favorably impressed by the teams’ “fine

⁴⁹ *Education for Citizenship*, Colonial No. 216 (London: HMSO, 1948), 18-24.

⁵⁰ “Report of Professor Philips’ Visit to East Africa, July 20 to September 6, 1947: A Report to the Right Honourable Arthur Creech Jones, MP,” BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 55.

method of mass teaching,” Prof. Philips cautioned that the lack of coordination and delay in follow-up could derail their efforts.⁵¹

In his final report, Prof. Philips assessed candidly the state of mass education in East Africa. “To some [mass education] means simply literacy for all within a couple of years and properly is dismissed as impracticable;” by others it was “taken to mean nothing more than universal schooling for children, which, in any event, is unlikely to be achieved...in under a generation;” while “for most it carries the connotation of formal education within the walls of a classroom.”⁵² By any of these measures, Prof. Philips concluded, mass education was not happening in certain of Britain’s East African colonies, most notably Tanganyika, the soon-to-be site of the East African Groundnuts Scheme.⁵³

Given this, and despite Cox’s own remark to Creech Jones in 1945 that “action” on mass education was “overdue,”⁵⁴ it is evident that little progress had been made in capturing and caging the ponderous mass education phenomenon before 1948. Yet, an almost inexorable centripetal momentum had been triggered with the promulgation of *Mass Education in African Society*, which first broached the idea of coupling mass education with native initiative, albeit inchoately. Centered on the CO, what at first was an epiphenomenal byproduct of a policy pronouncement had, by 1947, become a deliberate campaign under Creech Jones to canvass the empire’s mass education regime, drawing in data from across Britain’s African colonies and, gradually, building up a framework for the conference—a blueprint which included everything from the controversy surrounding the meaning and intent of mass education, to its configuration,

⁵¹ “Report of Professor Philips’ Visit to East Africa, July 20 to September 6, 1947: A Report to the Right Honourable Arthur Creech Jones, MP,” BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 55.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Cox to Creech Jones, May 28, 1945, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/1.

utility, and, ultimately, its practice. These components converged at King's College, Cambridge, where, over the course of a fortnight's deliberation between August 19 and September 2, 1948, the future of colonial mass education policy and its place in Britain's development arsenal was decided.

As had been the case with its predecessor, the summer conference of 1948 was carefully orchestrated by its chairman, Cohen, who "sat in the Chair from the first lecture to the last every day."⁵⁵ The officers at King's were divided into six groups, each of which attempted to elaborate certain aspects of colonial mass education policy and its role in stimulating African initiative. The groups were concerned with the technique and content of mass education, the question of incentivizing progress in African society, exploring the connections between citizenship and education, and the role of women in the colonial mass education project. For all this, the most important discussion was that of Group VI. Chaired by P. E. W. Williams, Commissioner of Social Welfare in Kenya and himself a former critic of *Mass Education in African Society*, the group's chief concern was the organization of mass education.

Conscious of the vexatious confusion which surrounded the term "mass education," practically the first thing the group did was to adopt "community development" as a suitable complementary alternative.⁵⁶ This rationalization not only clarified the *modus operandi* of mass education—the encouragement of a "popular self-help movement," of which Creech Jones was a principal fosterer in Africa,⁵⁷ designed to motivate "better living"—but also bequeathed to it a

⁵⁵ Williams to Cohen, February 8, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

⁵⁶ "Community Development," *Corona: The Journal of His Majesty's Colonial Service* 1, no. 2 (March 1949): 1, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 48/3. "Community development" was adopted as a central tenet of Britain's African policy following the 1948 summer conference.

⁵⁷ Hinden to Creech Jones, March 10, 1948, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 26/1.

multi-tiered organizational framework designed to ensure its perpetuation.⁵⁸ Eager to assuage concerns that such an alteration obliged a costly, and therefore prohibitive, restructuring of colonial administration, it was stressed that mass education was not, in fact, a new field of activities, but rather constituted the application of new techniques within the extant framework—albeit one adapted to the purpose. Indeed, while the framework could be retained, it had to be “flexible” enough to accommodate Creech Jones’ prescription that community initiative ought to be stimulated from below as well as from above.⁵⁹ With this caveat in mind, the group defined, and the conference accepted, mass education as follows:

We understand the term “mass education” to mean a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community, with the active participation and, if possible, on the initiative of the community; but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, it should be aroused and stimulated by special techniques designed to secure the active and enthusiastic response of the community. Mass education embraces all forms of betterment. It includes the whole range of community development activities in the districts, whether these are undertaken by Government or unofficial bodies; in the field of agriculture by securing the adoption of better methods of soil conservation, better methods of farming and care of livestock, in the field of health by promoting better sanitation and water supplies, proper measures of hygiene and infant and maternity welfare; and in the field of education by spreading literacy and adult education as well as by the extension and improvement of schools for children. Mass education must make use of the cooperative movement and must be put into effect in the closest association with local government bodies.⁶⁰

Bristling with vogueish catchwords and key concepts that were the hallmarks of postwar development theory, the basis of which was later roundly encapsulated in Rostow’s modernization theory of development, this definition suggested a system that not only

⁵⁸ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 104-109, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19. “Development from above can only make limited progress,” Creech Jones observed.

⁶⁰ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 101, BLUO 600.17 r. 147 (2).

encouraged in Africans a deep desire for their own progress and betterment, but one that sustained it.⁶¹ This required a complex ideological calculus, one that married popular inspiration with civic awareness, an “education for citizenship” designed to complement colonial mass education policy. For, as the CO’s report on *Education for Citizenship in Africa*, published ahead of the summer conference and the basis of its deliberations on the same topic, cautioned officials, “political machinery or economic devices will not ensure true democracy. Democracy requires a temper of the general mind which will only spring from a temper of mind found in the individual citizen. Unless the true democratic temper is present, the most beautifully devised political or economic machinery will result in nothing but slavery.... If this temper is present, details of the machinery matter little.”⁶²

In practice, such considerations situated the village unit, possessed of a collective knowledge of its own economy, infrastructure, and society⁶³ and, therefore, “the starting point from which the original ideas...must emanate,”⁶⁴ at the very heart of the mass education project. It therefore constituted the organizational basis of the colonial Mass Education Movement and, as such, the *locus* of Creech Jones’ crucial initiative-building regime. Centered around a “hard core”⁶⁵ of villagers (a preferably “large and fluid body” to include ex-army servicemen, “Africans that have put in useful work in the African Civil Service and Local Government

⁶¹ Rohland Schuknecht, *British Colonial Development Policy after the Second World War: The Case of Sukumaland, Tanganyika* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 10.

⁶² *Colonial Office Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, Education for Citizenship in Africa*, Col. No. 216 (London: HMSO, 1948), 14, BLUO, USPG 456.

⁶³ Riley, “‘The Winds of Change are Blowing Economically’,” 51.

⁶⁴ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 104, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

⁶⁵ “Training of Ex-Servicemen at Kabete,” *Corona*, 17, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 48/3.

Service,” and their wives⁶⁶) and specialist staff consisting of local-level field officers and “Provincial Community Development (or Mass Education) Officers” charged with “stimulating local enthusiasm” within the widest possible rubric, this regime manifested a circuitous system of “community mobilisation”⁶⁷ designed to canalize African motive power by inspiring it through emphasis on a complex of mutually-reinforcing local-level interests, hobbies, and occupations.⁶⁸ The soundness of this approach was later explicated by Jackson, who, in language which suggests a belief that African society was somehow frozen in time, notes in his study on community development in eastern Nigeria that “village communities form the obvious area for community development work” for they were “still by far the strongest community...bound by a common history and the beliefs in a common ancestor, by the common ownership of land and the ties of intermarriage, by a common social life and a common custom.”⁶⁹

If the village unit and its assorted communal activities stood at the heart of the motivational enterprise that undergirded mass education, it was cooperatives, trade unions, and local government—the institutional essence of the social foundation of Fabian trusteeship—that were its civic lifeblood, the means by which the critical village-level initiative could be mustered and translated meaningfully into nascent self-governance along the lines of the “democratic

⁶⁶ “Training of Ex-Servicemen at Kabete,” *Corona*, 17, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 48/3.

⁶⁷ To borrow from Kelemen, “Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot,” 199.

⁶⁸ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 43 and 104-105, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2). Running a gamut that encompassed everything from farming techniques and soil conservation and hygiene, to sanitation, adult education and literacy programs, university extra-mural activities, and even “pageants and merry-making.”

⁶⁹ I. C. Jackson, *Advance in Africa: A Study in Community Development in Eastern Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 28.

British model.”⁷⁰ For Kelemen, the reciprocal initiative-encouraging schematic that characterized mass education policy constituted something like a “new system of governance,” the principles of which were laid down at the summer conference as a guide for wider application across Britain’s colonial territories.⁷¹ As the new Fabian-influenced paradigm, Creech Jones made it the crux of his opening address at the African Governors Conference,⁷² which convened nearly a month later on September 29, 1948. “The dynamic of progress must be created by the people themselves,” he surmised, adding that:

The devolution of responsibility, the transfer of executive power, is no simple problem, but little progress can be made unless the people cooperate in the work of government, assume some direct responsibility in their own affairs, develop a sense of public service, and do not wait on government but initiate and attack their social and economic problems themselves. It is for this reason that in recent colonial policy we have sought so strenuously to promote voluntary service and mutual aid, we have talked much about breaking through ignorance by community education, about extending mass education and literacy, and encouraging individual and community initiative. ... As we emphasised many years ago in our Report on Mass Education, we must secure the interest and cooperation of the local people in their advance so that they themselves become pioneers in building the institutions and works most suitable to their needs.⁷³

Before the year was out, mass education (alt. community development) was adopted as one of the central features of Britain’s African policy.⁷⁴ *Corona*, the journal of the British Colonial Service, heralded the event as pioneering; it was “practical” and “constructive,” noted the editor, distinctions which suggest its predecessors, *Mass Education in African Society* and *Education for Citizenship in Africa*, were not.⁷⁵ At the same time, however, *Corona* sounded a

⁷⁰ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 44, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

⁷¹ Kelemen, “Individualism is, Indeed, Running Riot,” 199.

⁷² Minutes of the African Conference, September 29th to October 9th, 1948, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 322, ACJ.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ “Community Development,” *Corona: The Journal of His Majesty’s Colonial Service* 1, no. 2 (March 1949): 4, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 48/3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

note of caution, admonishing colonial officials then-engaged in mass education not to take for granted the cooperation of local peoples. “Everybody will not be interested in the same thing,”⁷⁶ the journal explained, a fact which complicated the already-formidable work of community development (mass education) officers in “getting to know as much as possible about the people; their way of life, language, customs; their natural leaders; wants, hopes, and aspirations.”⁷⁷ Couched as an oblique indictment against indirect rule, the intent was to might stimulate and arouse native initiative, the vital element identified by Creech Jones as the essence of mass education and, by extension, Britain’s postwar colonial development enterprise. Thus, *Corona*’s warning that “no scheme will be successful” if initiative was not aroused had serious implications for Britain’s imperial future.⁷⁸

For all this, however, as an expression of Fabian influence on colonial development, the work of the 1948 summer conference gets us closer to understanding the phenomenon of “Fabianization” only at the level of policy formulation. Absent any sense of how Fabian influence revealed itself in practice, our evidence lacks the kind of granularity necessary for a reasonably comprehensive understanding of the process implied by the “Fabianization of the British Empire.” As this suggests, the vital corollary is an examination of mass education in context; that is, a study of Fabianized colonial development policy *in situ*, at the level of the colonies. This, however, is a deceptively straightforward proposition. For, in the end, how do we choose which of Britain’s colonial territories to examine?

⁷⁶ “Community Development,” *Corona: The Journal of His Majesty’s Colonial Service* 1, no. 2 (March 1949): 4, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 48/3.

⁷⁷ John Moffett, “Bridging the Gap,” in *Glimpses of Empire: A Corona Anthology*, ed. Anthony Kirk-Greene (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 139.

⁷⁸ “Community Development,” *Corona: The Journal of His Majesty’s Colonial Service*, 1, no. 2 (March 1949): 4, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 48/3.

The answer to this question can be found at the juncture of the central conceit of this study—that is, Fabian influence as realized in both the theory and practice of Britain’s colonial mass education policy—and the nature of the summer conference itself. Logic dictates that the officials who attended the conference from the colonies were those best positioned to determine, or at least exercise, related initiatives in their respective territories. Given postwar retrenchment and the concomitant imperial belt-tightening it engendered, suggesting otherwise is dubious.⁷⁹ Thus, in the search for exemplary colonial candidates who manifested Fabianization, the summer conference is an ideally-suited starting point. Moreover, there is no prerequisite built into this study that argues candidates from the conference must also be members of the Fabian Society. Indeed, as with the historic operation of Fabian “permeation,” affiliation is neither obliged nor expected; rather, as agents of Fabian-favored policies, officials need only to endorse said initiatives, a sanctioning surmised either through outright approval (as, for example, quantified in correspondences) or, more tangibly, through implementation (be it partial or, more hopefully, complete).

Subjected to these considerations, and excluding CO staff from London who had no hand in administering the conference, speakers and participants not affiliated with either the CO or any other official organ of state, attendees from territories not under the purview of the CO (e.g. Sudan), clerical workers (e.g. stenographers) and students, and the number of potential candidates drops from 160-plus to below 70. Of these, two figures stand out both for their role in guiding the deliberations of the conference and in the formulation and ultimate implementation of the policies as enunciated at Cambridge in 1948. They are Williams, Kenya’s Commissioner

⁷⁹ On Britain’s postwar retrenchment, see: Glen O’Hara, *Governing Post-War Britain: The Paradoxes of Progress, 1951-1973* (London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2012); and Hendrik Spruyt, *Ending Empire: Contested Sovereignty and Territorial Partition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

of Social Welfare, the chairman of the conference group responsible for defining mass education, and future principal of the Local Government and Community Development Training Center at Entebbe, Uganda; and Cohen, the Fabianized conference chairman and future governor of Uganda. Thus, in the search for tangible manifestations of Fabianization in the colonies, the field is considerably narrowed to these two East African territories.

What follows is a pair of case studies designed to plot the trajectory of colonial mass education policy against the backdrop of the evolving political and social landscape of postwar Kenya and Uganda. In the end, the findings reveal not only the breadth and scope of postwar Fabianization, but also underscore the fact that nowhere did (or, for that matter, could) development policy (Fabianized or otherwise) persist unadulterated following promulgation; indeed, policy formulations rested on a design that was intentionally negotiable⁸⁰ so that it might be rendered legible within the framework of a particular colonial context.⁸¹ For the “British Empire” was hardly the monolithic, homogeneous entity the name suggests; rather, it was an aggregation of territories and cultures, an umbrella under which a vast array of peoples with wide differences were collected and administered in vaguely similar ways—inherent and unavoidable

⁸⁰ Monica M. van Beusekom, “Disjunctures in Theory and Practice: Making Sense of Change in Agricultural Development at the Office du Niger, 1920 – 1960,” *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 1 (2000): 79.

⁸¹ As explained in the CO’s report on *Education for Citizenship in Africa* (1948): “The aim (of education) may be the same for all Colonial peoples; but the Colonies vary so greatly in culture, in social and economic conditions, that the path towards it can hardly be the same for all. Even within one of the larger territories, for example Nigeria or Tanganyika, there are great differences, such as those between the large well-organised Mohammedan emirates of Northern Nigeria and the bewilderingly disintegrated tribes of parts of the south-west, in which British officers endeavouring to follow the policy of Indirect Rule have difficulty in discovering any stable political organisation on which to build. Other marked differences are those of the mining and industrial areas (such as the Rhodesian Copper Belt) and the relatively stable and often very isolated rural populations.... In some Colonies there is a well-preserved tribal organisation, in others...there is no tribal organisation, and never has been. Some Colonies possess indigenous cultures based on African or Oriental languages; some are linked culturally rather with Britain or with some other European country. Some have a relatively homogeneous population, others are peopled by different races, who are hindered from drawing together by divergent economic interests and social jealousies.” *Education for Citizenship in Africa*, 7.

circumstantial particularity that played an important part in the shape of mass education in both Kenya and Uganda.

Mass Education in Context: Case Studies of Postwar Social Welfare and Community Development in Kenya and Uganda

Kenya

*I have got so far, far enough to see that community development is on the edge of the map.*⁸²

-P. E. W. Williams, November 16, 1949

Some fourteen months after the 1948 Summer Conference on African Administration, Williams wrote to Cox lamenting the future of community development in Kenya. Williams' five-year community development plan (*Mass Education or Rural Community Development, Kenya Colony*), placed before the executive council in 1948 and accepted "in principle" (an invariably ominous turn of phrase), had suffered a series of ghastly and humiliating setbacks at the hands of Nairobi's bureaucrats, including the deletion of the mass education budget, funds for Williams' assistant, and the money for the development of rural industries.⁸³ So catastrophic was this turn of events, nearly unimaginable just eleven months before, that Williams not only declared his community development plan "dead," but also resigned as Commissioner for Social Welfare.⁸⁴ Fabianization, it seemed, was stillborn in Kenya. Or was it?

⁸² Williams to Cox, November 16, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Contrary to Joanna Lewis, who gives the impression that Williams' resignation was the result of his promotion to a "senior post in Tanganyika," the event which prompted Williams' resignation was the deletion of most of his community development budget—agreed "in principle" before his departure—

The story of mass education in Kenya is one of oscillation and contradiction, starting with Williams himself. After graduating from Cambridge with an MA in Modern Languages, he joined the British Colonial Service as an Education Officer in Tanganyika Territory in 1926. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he enlisted with the King's African Rifles (KAR) in East Africa where, as Staff Officer until 1943, he was tasked with forming and directing the East African Army Education Corps (EAAEC). The origins of the EAAEC, which was formally inaugurated in 1942 and headquartered at the Center "C" Jeanes School (Kabete) on the outskirts of Nairobi, lay in the expulsion of the Italians from East Africa in 1942. As Parsons explains, following the defeat of the Italians in the Ethiopian campaign, senior colonial officials began to worry about the African soldiery's declining morale. These concerns were exacerbated when, in February 1942, the KAR 25th Brigade in Eritrea, believing the expulsion of the Italians from East Africa signaled the end of the war, refused to board ships bound for Southeast Asia. General William Platt, the officer in charge of the East Africa Command (EAC), concluded that a basic education program was needed to explain Allied war aims to the African soldiery.⁸⁵ Once built, such a program could be bent to complementary purposes. For example, colonial military authorities believed that bored *askaris* (African soldiers) were more likely to drink and seek the company of prostitutes than those engaged in things like course work. Properly conceived, military education could not only elucidate Allied war aims, but also serve to improve health and

while he was on holiday in America. Moreover, it is worth noting that while Williams was in fact offered a position in Tanganyika, he seems either not to have taken it, or at the very least to have delayed his assumption of the role. For from 1951 until his retirement in June 1955, he served as principal at the Local Government and Community Development Training Center in Uganda. See: Lewis, *Empire State-Building*, 340; Williams to Cox, November 16, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW; Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development for the Year Ended December 31, 1955*, 2, University College London, Institute of Education [henceforth UCL IOE].

⁸⁵ Timothy Parsons, "Dangerous Education? The Army as School in Colonial East Africa," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 28, no. 1 (January 2000): 122.

morale by providing a more “wholesome” and “productive” use of soldiers’ spare time.⁸⁶

Moreover, it provided *askari* with the opportunity to learn useful technical skills that, once they returned to civilian life, could help them secure well-paid jobs. For their part, East African civil officials welcomed formal army education as a tool to blunt CO criticism that they had unnecessarily cut back on African education during the war.

Over time, the AEC had a profound impact on rural populations throughout East and Central Africa. Indeed, as Holford has observed, the AEC formed a touring army unit “not as a recruiting organization, but to inform millions of villagers in East and Central Africa about what their young men were doing in the forces.”⁸⁷ These units, Mason notes, were composed of “hand-picked young Africans from various branches of the army...using ingenious techniques of demonstration, play-acting, and showmanship.”⁸⁸ One such “show,” which anticipated greatly the later work of mass education demonstration teams in Uganda and Togoland, toured the United Kingdom in 1945 and so impressed Cox that he sought out its creator. “Who had the lion’s share,” he wrote in May 1945 to Creech Jones, at the time Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, “in bringing into being the remarkable Army Education business of the Jeanes School, Kabete, in the last three or four years and is now on show here in UK[?]”⁸⁹

Having so recently published *Mass Education in African Society* which, as we have seen, was subject to no small amount of criticism—even Williams described it as “insufficiently realistic” in the context of Britain’s poverty-stricken African colonies⁹⁰—Cox was eager to see if

⁸⁶ Parsons, “Dangerous Education?,” 122.

⁸⁷ Holford, “Mass Education and Community Development in the British Colonies, 1940-1960,” 177.

⁸⁸ H. Mason, Some comments on the African contribution (paper, the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) Seminar on Community Development, Bangkok, July 19-23, 1965).

⁸⁹ Cox to Creech Jones, May 23, 1945, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ, 34/1.

⁹⁰ Note on CO Advisory Committee’s Report on Mass Education in African Society, March 4, 1944, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/1.

Williams' wartime work on education in Kenya could somehow be translated to the civilian sphere. After meeting with Creech Jones and Read, Cox hastily sent an air mail to Williams. "I feel that you'll understand that people here," he scrawled, "particularly those who had anything to do with the Mass Education Report, who've seen or heard anything of the work of the AEC in East Africa & your Jeanes show in particular, are extremely keen that its distinctive features & assets & spirit should somehow have a chance of being carried over into the civil set up. It's a great piece of work...if anything can be done, you're the person to see how."⁹¹

Possibly one of the most astute judges of the vital correlation between mass education, native interests, and native capabilities in all of British Africa, Williams welcomed Cox's invitation to contribute to the postwar mass education discourse—an inducement reified by subsequent (and multiple) visits to Kenya from the likes of Creech Jones, Cohen, Elspeth Huxley, and indeed Cox himself.⁹² All were enthusiastic about Williams' "effective and impressive" education centers at Kabete, particularly the innovative Jeanes School.⁹³ Host to a

⁹¹ Cox to Williams, July 4, 1945, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

⁹² Williams to Cohen, July 1, 1946, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

⁹³ After surveying mass education and adult literacy campaigns in Russia, China, Turkey, the Dutch East Indies, India, and the Negro South of the United States, the CO's Advisory Committee on Education (ACEC) determined that the Jeanes system of itinerant supervisory teachers in rural communities developed in the Southern United States was best suited to address adult and mass education needs in Britain's African colonies. As the Committee observed in its report on *Mass Education in African Society*, the "situation in the Negro South of the United States is...perhaps nearer to the situation in some of the British Colonies, especially in the West Indies and Africa," than any of the other regions surveyed. For there, "Two races live side by side, divided by social and economic barriers, members of the same body politic, with the white race dominant." See: *Mass Education in African Society*, 53-54.

Originally funded in the 1920s by the Carnegie Corporation in New York and intended for the training of supervising and visiting teachers, Jeanes Schools were not "schools" in the brick-and-mortar sense of the term. Rather, they were model village communities to which teachers educated in rural middle school went, with their wives and families, to learn how to live domestic lives on "progressive and enlightened lines, and how to communicate the method of such a life to others." Once trained, the graduates of these schools, along with their wives and families, travelled to rural areas to educate the population on everything from house-planning and building to "the management of simple dispensaries, the growing of sample crops, the theory and practice of hygienic sanitation, (and) the principles of cooperative credit work." See: Arthur Mayhew, *Education in the Colonial Empire* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1938), 121-122.

noteworthy curriculum of experimental and progressive coursework, such as homecrafts for the wives of ex-servicemen and even training courses for their children, Williams hoped the school would be the future home of mass education in Kenya.⁹⁴

In the meantime, as he worked with Cox on how best to position the Jeanes School as the colony's mass education training center,⁹⁵ Williams shared what he believed ought to be the basis of mass education with the newly-reconstituted Mass Education Subcommittee in London.⁹⁶ "It seems to me," he wrote, "that what all our...work should be based on [is] a group of men of sound character living in a village. If we could only get groups of such men—some perhaps working as craftsmen, one or two as petty traders, and an agricultural instructor, a teacher and a health worker or two—and work outwardly from this group, getting them to run boy scouts, farmers clubs, welfare clubs etc., I feel we should very gradually build up a better spirit."⁹⁷

Williams' invocation of "a better spirit" derived from activities centered on a village unit anticipates, at least in part, the focus of Creech Jones' community-based initiative-building regime, the struts and armatures of which were emplaced the following year at the 1948 summer conference. Although absent the vital bridge connecting this collective "spirit" or motivation with self-government, and thus devoid the civic dimension of the Fabians' social foundation of trusteeship, Williams clearly envisioned a mass education regime that in some measure accounted for progressive development from below. Such an expression (albeit incomplete) by an official with twenty years' experience educating Africans, increasingly *au courant* with

⁹⁴ Huxley to Williams, March 2, 1947; and Williams to H. S. Scott, March 21, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

⁹⁵ Williams to Heely Jowitt, March 27, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

⁹⁶ The organ responsible for *Mass Education in African Society* (1944).

⁹⁷ Williams to Scott, March 21, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

Creech Jones' own thinking, could but have endeared Williams to the Secretary of State. It is perhaps little wonder, then, that Williams should have played an important part in that conference's deliberations. Indeed, when the time came to organize the 1948 conference, he was asked to chair Group VI, which, as we have seen, originated the definition of mass education (alt. community development) ultimately accepted by the conference.

The crystallization of policy achieved at Cambridge had an almost immediate effect on mass education in Kenya; for it effectively saved the Jeanes School from being decommissioned. Opened in 1925 to provide special training for rural village teachers as instructors, the school was closed down at the start of the Second World War and commandeered as a training center (Center "C") for the EAC.⁹⁸ Following the end of the war, the center was repurposed as a civil re-absorption organization at which ex-servicemen were given training to equip them for their return to civilian life—a program which had decidedly mixed results.⁹⁹ Indeed, as Williams wrote to Heely Jowitt, his opposite in Bechuanaland, the efforts of the civil re-absorption officers to concentrate on village welfare had revealed a subversive and disheartening duality at the back of British development efforts in postwar Kenya: on the one hand, educated Kenyans often had “absolutely no desire to assist their less educated brethren;” on the other hand, African literacy training was an at-best fraught endeavor given the abundance of subversive anti-government, anti-settler, and anti-white literature which virtually saturated the colony. As he surveyed this increasingly vehement vanguard of anti-colonial sentiment, punctuated by a massive strike at Mombasa in January 1947 that was itself the culmination of years of unaddressed or partially-

⁹⁸ Tom Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee: Memoirs and Memoranda of Colonial Kenya*, ed. Joanna Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 125.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

addressed African grievances *vis-à-vis* labor conditions,¹⁰⁰ Williams jadedly concluded that “Kenya is a very unhappy place at the moment and generally speaking the African population are getting completely out of hand. ... I suppose these are all growing pains, but it does rather shake one’s belief and tempers one’s enthusiasm.”¹⁰¹

And yet, insofar as native education and training was concerned, the challenges posed by these “growing pains” were hardly mitigated by the fact that the civil re-absorption program was set to expire in 1949 and, with it, the postwar rationale which underlay the continued operation of the Jeanes School.¹⁰² The future looked undeniably bleak for the center at Kabete—until, that is, the summer conference of 1948, the advent of which brought with it a new *raison d’être* for the school: “community development” (this was the term Williams preferred to “Mass Education,” although they meant the same thing).¹⁰³ Accordingly, as the re-absorption scheme

¹⁰⁰ While this study is not concerned with the complexities of the labor unrest visited upon Britain’s East African Territories (specifically Kenya, Uganda, and Zanzibar) during and after the Second World War (there is already an exhaustive and compendiously researched historiography on the subject) it is worth noting the key factors which underlay African grievances, which include: deteriorating working and living conditions, themselves exacerbated by the exodus from the countryside of those Kenyans who were landless and in need of work, and egregiously poor pay. While wages failed to keep pace with the spiraling cost of living, officials’ efforts at remediation actually worsened workers’ conditions. For example, while the proclamation of a legal minimum wage during the war marked an advance over previous wage policy, the minimum was set at an artificially low level—and it became the wage rate offered by many employers. Such “reforms” did little more than institutionalize African poverty.

For a relevant historiographic starting point, see: Tiyaambe Zeleza, “The Colonial Labour System in Kenya” in *An Economic History of Kenya*, eds. William Robert Ochieng’ and Robert Maxon (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd., 1992), 188-190; Anthony Clayton and Donald C. Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895-1963* (Abingdon: Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1974), 271-273; Arthur Creech Jones, Speech to the House of Commons, January 22, 1947, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 432, col. 206; *East African Standard*, January 21, 1947, as quoted in Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 234-235.

¹⁰¹ Williams to Jowitt, March 27, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW. Williams, evidently caught up in self-pity, seems to have given no thought of how prevailing conditions tempered the “enthusiasm” of poverty-stricken and landless Kenyans.

¹⁰² Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 125.

¹⁰³ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Mass Education or Rural Community Development*, 15, Afr. J. 750.78.c.6w5, Nairobi University Library [henceforth NUL].

gradually wound down, the Jeanes School underwent an overhaul, becoming not only the “main adult education centre” for the colony, the principal activities of which included enlightening leaders about the “working of government and local government” to “open the eyes” of the people as to the requirements of the “modern state,”¹⁰⁴ but also the “nucleus” of Kenya’s nascent community development regime.¹⁰⁵ At the heart of this regime lay a series of recommendations derived entirely from the conference, massaged to fit Kenya’s prevailing colonial context, and detailed by Williams in the memorandum *Mass Education or Rural Community Development, Kenya Colony*.

Williams’ five-year plan took as its point of departure mass education as defined and accepted at Cambridge.¹⁰⁶ The decision to do so was not inconsequential; for in recognizing the conference’s definition as the key principle of Kenya’s new community development plan, Williams implicitly accepted the framework for mass education it obliged, beginning with the “setting up of an organization whereby the African people of the Colony can be led to appreciate the part they must play in...district, provincial and departmental development plans of the Colony. The organization must be designed to win their interest and cooperation by instruction, discussion and adult teaching techniques generally and thus arouse their initiative and enthusiasm.”¹⁰⁷ Aware, however, that recommendations for new capital expenditures on social welfare and mass education were the economic equivalent of a blind date with a cold sore—indeed, a full report on “Social Welfare, Information and Mass Education” had been submitted to the council in January 1946 where, nearly three years later, it remained, writhing in fiscal

¹⁰⁴ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 141.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁰⁶ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Mass Education or Rural Community Development*, 1, Afr. J. 750.78.c.6w5, NUL.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

purgatory—Williams stressed that community development was not a new field of activities.¹⁰⁸ Rather, as accepted at Cambridge and confirmed by Williams, it constituted the application of new techniques within the colony's extant mass education framework adapted to the purpose of "arousing initiative." In the end, then, Williams drew up a plan that grafted community development onto Kenya's existing social welfare superstructure and assumed the ongoing cooperation and financial assistance of Local Native Councils.¹⁰⁹ In doing so, his plan steered clear of any major reversals of existing policy; instead, it consisted chiefly of the expansion of then-current work, accelerating the features that appeared to be "worthwhile," and jettisoning those which did not. In other words, it hewed closely to the summer conference's recommendations.

Ultimately, the form to be given expression by Williams' proposed community development plan consisted of three essential parts: first, it required a sound training

¹⁰⁸ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Mass Education or Rural Community Development*, 1, Afr. J. 750.78.c.6w5, NUL.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Local Native Councils, instituted in Kenya under the Native Authority (Amendment) Ordinance of 1924, were advisory and legislative bodies concerned chiefly with the raising and spending of local funds. In the 1920s and 1930s, they imposed local rates, maintained treasuries, and drew up estimates of expenditure and revenue in consultation with their (European) District Commissioners. As self-governing and democratic as this may seem, the Local Native Councils were rather less than independent bodies. As Lord Hailey observed in his *Survey*: "They are by their constitution so largely under official control that it is not easy to determine how far they are likely to constitute genuine organs of local self-government or to provide that field for Native political ambition which many, who supported their creation, expected to see in them. It detracts from their educative value that their executive powers are limited. Most of the major works for which they vote funds are carried out by Government departments. The system under which names are sent up for nomination is, in effect, a type of election by consent, and though it is not easy to say how far the process is effected [*sic*] by influence, in many cases the election is real." For a full exposition of Hailey's findings on the same subject, see: Hailey, *An African Survey*, 382-393.

When Williams was drawing up his plan in 1948, efforts were afoot to reorganize local government, but these were embryonic in nature and, necessarily subject to the same sets of variables at colonial mass education policy, slow moving. On Local Native Councils in Kenya, see: "Kenya," in *Local Government and the Colonies: A Report to the Fabian Colonial Bureau*, ed. Rita Hinden (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1950), 125-132; M. R. Dille, *British Policy in Kenya Colony* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1937), 27-29.

organization, beginning with an effort to inculcate an awareness in government staff that they were all, in fact, “Mass Education Officers” and that, as such, they were to regard themselves as teachers as well as “exponents of government and British colonial policy.” Second, a field service was needed, working at the village as well as the district level “distributing information, stimulating initiative, arousing interest and generally preaching the gospel of responsibility and self-help within the community.” Here, Williams’ intent was to instill a sense of “realism” among those in the field responsible for implementing development plans by giving them a voice in their preparation. Finally, there was to be “no rigid control from above” concerning the disposition of central funds after they had been allocated for community development work. Instead, once estimates were planned on the village unit, district, and provincial bases, and monies accordingly disbursed, the local village committee was to have “greater latitude” as to their use with an absolute minimum of oversight. This devolution of responsibility, with its attendant local government implications, Williams pointed out, was a necessary component of the whole “enthusiasm” building scheme.¹¹⁰

To achieve all this while simultaneously keeping overhead down, it was necessary for Williams to splice community development with Kenya’s Social Welfare Department, the infrastructure of which was arguably best-positioned to facilitate the necessary work. Staffed by European district welfare officers and African welfare workers and equipped with numerous social welfare halls throughout the colony, the reach of the department was considerable—as indeed was its curriculum and workload, which included demonstrations illustrating better farming methods and improved hygiene and sanitation, adult literacy and English programs, field

¹¹⁰ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Mass Education or Rural Community Development*, 1-2, Afr. J. 750.78.c.6w5, NUL.

trips, spinning, weaving, and sewing classes, and handicrafts.¹¹¹ At the center of all this stood, hub-like, the re-purposed Jeanes School, with its newfound emphasis on “Social Education,” offering citizenship courses in local government, marketing and trade, and the function of cooperative societies; lectures on agricultural, medical, and veterinary matters of interest; and rural development coursework on the social impact of education, marriage customs and dowry, and the inheritance of land and its consequent fragmentation.¹¹² Thus, even while endeavoring to depress costs, the assumption of more work by an organization so encumbered unavoidably entailed further expenditures. Indeed, Williams’ plan called for additions in both personnel (six more European district welfare officers, four in the newly-devised post of African assistant district welfare workers, as well as an increase in the number of African welfare workers from 41 to 50 so that each location had one, and a rural industries officer) and infrastructure (both new constructions as well as renovations to standing structures and the implementation of temporary “Welfare Rooms”).¹¹³

In accordance with the Secretary of State’s Despatch No. 86 (dated November 10, 1948) requesting “immediate action” on community development, Williams submitted this plan to the Executive Council in Nairobi.¹¹⁴ From the outset, the response from Government House was patently hostile. Indeed, after he “glanced” through Creech Jones’ initial despatch, Kenya’s Governor Sir Philip Mitchell dismissed the idea of financial devolution envisioned by the conference and carried forward in Williams’ proposal. The Legislative and Executive Councils,

¹¹¹ “East Africa—Kenya,” in *Mass Education Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (December 1949): 7, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/1.

¹¹² Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 141-145.

¹¹³ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Mass Education or Rural Community Development*, 9-11, Afr. J. 750.78.c.6w5, NUL.

¹¹⁴ Despatch No. 86, Secretary of State to all the Colonies, November 10, 1948, NA CO 852/941/3.

Mitchell is reported to have said, “always expected to have estimates very cut and dried and were always desirous of seeing that expenditures followed very closely to that shown in the detailed estimates.”¹¹⁵ Making matters worse was Mitchell himself who, at the time, was preoccupied with trying to push his legacy project—the Nairobi Cultural Center—through the LegCo before the end of his term in office.¹¹⁶ The governor’s penchant for tangentially referring to this complication during meetings concerned with community development made it quite clear that he was unwilling to sacrifice his posterity at the altar of some newfangled CO novelty.

The strong headwinds blowing from Government House were exceeded by those emanating from the white settler-dominated LegCo, which was “greatly perturbed at the proportion of money being spent in Kenya on Social Services as opposed to what they call productive services.”¹¹⁷ While the legislators grudgingly accepted the role of education, medical care, community development, and welfare in native progress, they resented the government’s emphasis on such programs, preferring instead that the funds be invested in transport infrastructure, soil and water conservation, and stock improvement. After attending a council session at which the colony’s social welfare budget was heatedly debated and the Jeanes School nearly deleted altogether,¹¹⁸ Williams reported to Cox: “I cannot over emphasize [*sic*] the strength of this opinion supported on the Government side.... I listened to some of the debates and it seemed to me that the C[hief] N[ative] C[ommissioner]’s voice was crying alone and almost unsupported.”¹¹⁹ Beyond the confines of the LegCo, European popular sentiment was no less discouraging. For there was throughout the colony a sort of generalized sense that the

¹¹⁵ Williams to Cox, January 3, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Williams to H. Mason, January 12, 1950, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

¹¹⁹ Williams to Cox, January 3, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

money spent in the past on schooling Africans had produced very little. Williams, alive to this reality, conceded as much. In his acknowledgement, we find warnings of a deep social malaise, the ramifications of which would be realized in 1952: “Never before has the African shown such disturbing traits in his character; a complete dislike for work, lack of application even in office work and no understanding of honesty not only in dealings with other races but among members of his own race.”¹²⁰

It had been less than two months since Williams optimistically put forward his plan to the Executive Council and in that span of time he had gone from being an upbeat and energetic purveyor of the benefits and possibilities of community development in Kenya, to being a demoralized, borderline misanthrope mired in seemingly hopeless disillusionment. Little wonder, then, that his cohort of supporters had grown cynical. As he confessed to Cox in January 1949: “Even those who have expressed agreement with the plea of the Cambridge paper that the African should be encouraged to think for himself given the opportunity to take part in planning right down to the village level and then authority to put accepted plans into operation, do so rather in the spirit of ‘It’s worth while [*sic*] trying but I doubt if it will work.’ It is the sort of last despairing hope.”¹²¹

None of this boded especially well for the success of a mass education-based development plan that hinged critically on the building up of native initiative and enthusiasm. Indeed, despite a meeting of provincial commissioners in February during which it was agreed that the Cambridge recommendations, including greater financial devolution, should be put into action, and majority support for Williams’ five-year plan by such groups as the African Affairs Sub-Committee of the Electors’ Union, resistance was strong. So strong, in fact, the year

¹²⁰ Williams to Cox, January 3, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

¹²¹ Ibid.

following the 1948 summer conference witnessed an almost comprehensive breakdown over the future of community development in the colony,¹²² events which culminated in Williams' bittersweet resignation. "I feel at the moment that I am stale," he wrote to Cox in November 1949. "I certainly have no right to feel this, but yet for the last 9 months this has certainly been so." Given what we know about the struggle over his community development plan, one could hardly blame him. And yet there was an encouraging upshot. For in standing aside, Williams opened the necessary (and, most crucially, budgeted) slot for his replacement as Commissioner for Social Welfare: "a person...who is 100% enthusiastic, having behind him that little necessary personal push because it does make a difference."¹²³ That person was Tom Askwith, to whom responsibility for the realization of Williams' community development plan passed.

Formerly Municipal African Affairs Officer, Nairobi, Askwith was hand-picked by Williams to be his successor not only because of his "wide interests, a real love of matters African and an understanding of the African mind to an extent that is rarely found," but also because of his proven ability "for getting initiative among the African population."¹²⁴ Described by Joanna Lewis as a curious blend of paternalism, progressivism, and inclusiveness, Askwith was "instrumental" in promoting a concept of community development "based on the devolution of resources to Africans."¹²⁵ At root, he believed that if Africans generated their own local-level, small-scale initiatives after technical officers (such as agricultural, veterinary, and medical specialists) ran campaigns of awareness-raising (from demonstration teams showing how to build latrines and cowsheds to the use of hand-puppets in curriculum focused on child-rearing), then the big administrative challenges of the day—be it soil erosion, disease, or even transport

¹²² Williams to Cohen, February 8, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

¹²³ Williams to Cox, November 16, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 1843 (1), PEW.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 13.

constraints—would gradually be solved. In working to accomplish community development, which required acting as a corporate body to collectively determine what resources to use and what projects to prioritize, villagers gained direct, hands-on experience in the democratic process. Such elemental aspects of self-government and citizenship would, Askwith believed, remedy the perceived lack of native experience in British-style local government.¹²⁶ For all this, however, no community development plan, be it Williams', Askwith's, or Creech Jones', could possibly have accounted for Mau Mau, which “blew apart” the “edifice of colonial rule” in Kenya in 1952.¹²⁷

Mau Mau violently stripped the veneer from the colonial façade in Kenya, exposing the bricks and mortar of manipulation and repression which constituted the foundation of imperial rule in the colony. Fueled by years of compounding (and largely unaddressed) grievances over the progressive circumscription and abolition of native land rights, inequitable labor practices, and discriminatory agricultural policies—factors which converged to effectively normalize

¹²⁶ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 13-14.

¹²⁷ Lewis, *Empire State-Building*, 341. The multi-dimensional complexities and ambiguities of Mau Mau and the Emergency have been covered extensively elsewhere and need not detain us overlong in this study. The generally-agreed causal factors of the movement are broadly identifiable and have some basis in wartime and postwar economic conditions—including massive African unemployment, poor housing, and high inflation—and the grievances they engendered and intensified. The war itself lasted between 1952 and 1956, while the state of emergency was not lifted until 1960, when delegates went to London for a conference which promised African rule.

The legacy of Mau Mau remains a topic of much scholarly debate. Appreciable relevant surveys include: John Lonsdale, “Mau Maus of the Mind: Making Mau Mau and Remaking Kenya,” in *Journal of African History* 31 (1990), 393-394; Myles Osborne, *Ethnicity and Empire in Kenya: Loyalty and Martial Race Among the Kamba, c. 1800 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 199-200; Marshall S Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs: History, Memory, and Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 109-110; Louis Leakey, *Defeating Mau Mau* (London: Routledge, 1954), 107; E. A. Atieno-Odhiambo, “The Formative Years, 1945-55,” in *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya, 1940-93*, eds. B. A. Ogot and William Robert Ochieng’ (London: James Currey Ltd., 1995), 39-40; Michael Twaddle, “The Struggle for Political Sovereignty in Eastern Africa, 1945 to Independence,” in *General History of Africa VIII: Africa since 1935*, ed. Ali A. Mazrui (Oxford: James Currey, 1999), 235-245.

African poverty—Kenya erupted in 1952 into a “dirty war”¹²⁸ between the empire and a nationalist insurrectionist movement (“Mau Mau”), resulting in the deaths of nearly 15,000 people.¹²⁹ Throughout the conflict, a key component in the government’s strategy to gain and maintain control over the colony was its “rehabilitation program,” a polite euphemism for the imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of Africans in detention camps and enclosed villages.¹³⁰ Viewed through the lens of these fraught circumstances, it is rather difficult to imagine a state of affairs less conducive to fostering the kind of initiative-building mass education campaigns and progressive self-government that constituted the means and ends of Fabian-favored community development. And yet, unquestionably, community development was an important fixture in Britain’s Emergency-era program of pacification and rehabilitation in Kenya. Indeed, as Lewis has noted, it was the seemingly irrevocable, inertia-like “slide” toward Mau Mau that first prompted the CO to press Nairobi into restoring the deleted line items from Williams’ five-year community development budget.¹³¹

To get some sense of the degree to which Kenya’s Emergency-era community development regime was “Fabianized,” we need look no further than the work of the colony’s Department of Community Development and Rehabilitation under Askwith.¹³² It is worth noting, however, that while the remit of the department not only accounted for community

¹²⁸ David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: A Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co Inc, 2005), 2.

¹²⁹ Statistics from Colonial Office, *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau* (Cmnd. 1930, May 1960), 316. As quoted in Lonsdale, “Mau Maus of the Mind,” 398.

¹³⁰ Osborne, *Ethnicity and Empire in Kenya*, 199.

¹³¹ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 15.

¹³² Until 1950, community development fell under the purview of Kenya’s Department of Social Welfare. Soon after becoming an independent body within the colonial government, the Emergency was declared and the Department of Community Development’s responsibilities were extended to cover Mau Mau rehabilitation. Henceforth, it was known as the Department of Community Development and Rehabilitation.

development, but also the “re-education and re-settlement or re-employment”¹³³ (i.e. “rehabilitation”) of tens of thousands of Mau Mau detainees and convicts, we are concerned here only with projects whose lineage has a basis in the work promulgated at the 1948 summer conference. Since the accepted definition of mass education or community development that emerged from that meeting did not reckon with prisoners or convicts or the exigencies of war, “rehabilitation projects” designed to “repatriate” Mau Mau are necessarily excluded from consideration.

Of the remaining projects,¹³⁴ one in particular stands out for its near-universal application of community development as defined at the conference: the Machakos Betterment Scheme, a wide-ranging community development project which brought together schemes on soil erosion, water conservation, and animal husbandry; communal homestead improvement projects; an adult literacy program; and even nascent elements of self-government and citizenship along the lines of the democratic British model of local government—all of which was undergirded by a regime of initiative-building.¹³⁵ The scheme was so effective that, by 1958, it was being described by the Commissioner of Social Welfare as a “model” development project.¹³⁶

The Machakos Betterment Scheme

Machakos District had been the site of welfare schemes since 1948/9, when an expatriate social welfare officer engaged in a campaign to get Kamba communities interested in adult literacy programs, the building of meeting halls, the formation of women’s clubs (focusing on

¹³³ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 100.

¹³⁴ Including projects in Central Nyanza, Elgon Nyanza, and Taita, as well as those among the Kalenjin in the Highlands and the Kikuyu in central Kenya.

¹³⁵ T. G. Askwith, *Kenya’s Progress* (Nairobi: The Eagle Press, on Behalf of the East African Literature Bureau, 1958), 113.

¹³⁶ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 149.

things like domestic management and homecrafts), and improved farming management and related techniques.¹³⁷ For assorted reasons, these efforts were met with frustration. For example, not only was the labor required to engage in soil conservation arduous, but the measures proposed entailed the reduction of livestock, which possessed an almost religious significance for the district's inhabitants. When the campaign prompted a protest march on Government House in Nairobi, and the district's residents rebuffed a subsequent proposal to introduce machinery to help with the project, the government found itself at an impasse. For the next several years, the land continued to deteriorate, poverty increased as a result and, with it, unrest.¹³⁸

Social welfare development languished in the district until 1953, when Askwith introduced a betterment scheme based on a community development approach. The first step in the process was a propaganda campaign meant to build awareness among the Kamba population and "convince" residents not only of the necessity of soil conservation, but also to accept the use of machinery to undertake it. Led by John Malinda, a local man appointed African Administrative Officer, the inhabitants were gradually persuaded to accept Nairobi's offer of assistance. But Government House, no less cognizant of the ramifications of expensive large-scale operations on native self-reliance, considered it essential that a self-help campaign along the lines articulated at Cambridge in 1948 be introduced in tandem with its soil conservation project.¹³⁹

So it was that a "homestead improvement campaign" was born. Rooted in earlier work carried out in Central and North Nyanza Districts, the campaign drew together the training

¹³⁷ Mary Tiffen, ed., *Environmental Change and Dryland Management in Machakos District, Kenya, 1930-90* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 1992), 17.

¹³⁸ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 173.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

efforts of the Jeanes School at Kabete, which in this instance focused its energies on developing a plan based on modern agricultural methods and the promotion of farm consolidation, with the technical field staff from Machakos District.¹⁴⁰ The objective of the campaign was to connect community development with popular support by way of a single, initiative-generating homestead improvement project. The first step in doing so was the identification of a demonstration homestead in the district to serve as the project centerpiece. When that was accomplished, what remained was to persuade the neighbors of the homestead to assemble on a given day and, under the guiding hand of the community development technical staff, tackle the jobs which the householder wanted carried out, but was unable to do unaided. Acting together, the group would set about improving the homestead by re-plastering and repairing the house, building a shed for cattle, paddocking and cultivating a vegetable garden, building a lavatory, and cleaning up the compound.¹⁴¹ The field staff believed that, in seeing the fruits of their labors, achieved quickly and through group effort, the project would serve as the mass education spark that would kindle the flame of collective initiative in Machakos.

Of course, all this was easier said than done, since the Kamba homesteaders had first to be convinced of the merits of investing valuable time and industry in the repair and upkeep of their neighbors' compounds. To this end, the heads of the different homesteads were invited to the Jeanes School where the plan, along with its attendant logic, was discussed.¹⁴² While the reasons for the various improvements were explained and it was emphasized that they could only be carried out quickly and effectively by a group of people working together, the community development staff made absolutely no mention of the problems of soil conservation or of

¹⁴⁰ Tiffen, *Environmental Change and Dryland Management in Machakos District, Kenya*, 17.

¹⁴¹ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 174.

¹⁴² Martin J. D. Hill, *The Harambee Movement in Kenya: Self-Help, Development and Education among the Kamba of Kitui District* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1991), 32.

reducing stock, since both issues were still, in Askwith's words, "explosive."¹⁴³ Moreover, the European team stressed that the project was not compulsory; rather, the leaders were asked to return home and to discuss the campaign with the villagers who, if the project appealed to them, were to let Malinda, the district's African Administrative Officer, know and to fix a day for the project.¹⁴⁴

This democratic consensus-building campaign reaped almost immediate rewards; for days later, the "Betterment Team"¹⁴⁵—as the multifaceted staffs responsible for community development came to be called—was in full swing at the demonstration homestead. By day's end, it was the site of a veritable "transformation": the house had a new thatch, with "new large windows and smooth walls;" there was a cow shed, fences, and a vegetable garden.¹⁴⁶ Encouraged by their achievement, the Kamba agreed not only to continue the scheme, but to extend it.¹⁴⁷ Extension, however, brought with it difficulties, since resources—from manpower to the availability of the necessary tools—were finite. Prioritization was therefore essential. Thus, the population formed a sort of corporate system, working communally under locally-elected village committees to determine which homesteads were repaired and in what order, going so far as to develop their own methods to ensure compliance—this, rather than relying on the chief's sanctions.¹⁴⁸ The result, over the course of the project, was a unique marriage of a genuine (if embryonic) institution of self-government with a variant of the traditional *mwethya*

¹⁴³ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 175.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ John C. de Wilde, *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa, Volume II: The Case Studies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 94.

¹⁴⁶ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 175.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁴⁸ Tiffen, *Environmental Change and Dryland Management in Machakos District, Kenya*, 17.

ethic,¹⁴⁹ the nucleus of which was clan-based “voluntary and traditional self-help groups.”¹⁵⁰ As Creech Jones had argued was essential, the necessary stimulus for the homesteading project was multi-directional; that is, it came “from below as well as from above.”¹⁵¹

As a “considerable measure of popular support”¹⁵² was harnessed and channeled in precisely the “community betterment” terms outlined by the 1948 summer conference¹⁵³—which, as noted earlier, also called for the canalization of self-help—homestead after homestead was refurbished. Alongside these efforts, a terracing project was launched to augment soil conservation work. Over the course of about two years, these efforts at preventing erosion resulted in the furrowing of hundreds of miles of ridges, which trapped water underground and produced higher crop yields in subsequent years.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, groups made boundaries for newly-demarcated land, constructed dams, and built roads.¹⁵⁵ According to Askwith, these infrastructural improvements spread to villages throughout Machakos and the attitude of the Kamba toward conservation and surplus stock began to change.¹⁵⁶ The district also became the site of Kenya’s “first adult literacy scheme.”¹⁵⁷ Administered by the recently-established District

¹⁴⁹ *Mwethya* was an *utui* or village organization. Typically, these were called by individuals who needed assistance with a definite, short-term task. The groups, based on the concept of mutual assistance or “self-help,” were composed of relatives, friends, and neighbors who, in exchange for their labor, would receive food and drink. See: Tiffen, *Environmental Change and Dryland Management in Machakos District, Kenya*, 15.

¹⁵⁰ De Wilde, *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*, 97.

¹⁵¹ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 10, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2)

¹⁵² De Wilde, *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*, 97.

¹⁵³ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 101, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

¹⁵⁴ Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 176-177.

¹⁵⁵ Tiffen, *Environmental Change and Dryland Management in Machakos District*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas G. Askwith, “Mau Mau: Was It Really Necessary?,” 213 (unpublished), BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 2166, TGA.

¹⁵⁷ Osborne, *Ethnicity and Empire in Kenya*, 207.

Council from 1954, the pilot scheme was so successful that a year later it inspired a companion scheme in South Nyanza.¹⁵⁸ But while comparatively-speaking the adult literacy program flourished in Machakos, the “response was poor” in South Nyanza, prompting the scheme’s closure and the withdrawal of its organizing officer.¹⁵⁹

And yet there were also significant problems with the Machakos Betterment Scheme itself. To begin with, one man’s “motivation” is another man’s “compulsion;” indeed, a study conducted by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development¹⁶⁰ soon after Kenya’s independence found that some of the villagers in Machakos District felt “considerable pressure to participate” in the betterment scheme, prompting a “reaction against all communal effort” in the early 1960s. This retrogression was linked also to the diminution of government staff in the district after 1959. At the same time, the project lays bare a deep contradiction of Britain’s late-colonial enterprise; for despite the impressive modernizing efforts of a betterment scheme fueled by propaganda, supported with progressive training methodologies and industrial machinery, and backed by an army of technical “experts” in agricultural, medical, and veterinary practice, the colonial state found it necessary to revive and exploit *mwethya*, a traditional system of mutual assistance, to achieve its ends. It was this very negotiation between modernity and “the energy-producing molecules” orbiting a time-honored indigenous convention which Askwith himself credited with the success of community development in Kenya.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Lydia Kanini Muendo, “Challenges Facing Local Government in Development in Kenya: The Case of Machakos District, 1950-1974,” *Historical Research Letter* 33 (2016), 20.

¹⁵⁹ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Kenya Education Department Annual Report, 1955* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1955), 24.

¹⁶⁰ See: de Wilde, *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa, Volume II: The Case Studies*.

¹⁶¹ “Mau Mau: Was It Really Necessary?,” 188-189 (unpublished), BLUO, MSS. Afr. s. 2166, TGA.

Even so, the policy lineage which constituted the basis of the Machakos Betterment Scheme belies the notion, broached at the beginning of this case study, that the Fabianization of Britain's colonial development policy in Kenya was stillborn with the advent of Williams' resignation in 1949. Indeed, even allowing for the unavoidable impingement of context-specific vicissitudes, as indicated by the exploitation of *mwethya*, it is quite clear that Askwith effectively carried forward his predecessor's community development plan, which, as we have already seen, was rooted in the work of the heavily-Fabianized 1948 summer conference at Cambridge. Moreover, such rural development schemes based, at least in part, on the democratic organization of the people gave, as Askwith himself observed, a "reality and foundation" to the "more sophisticated organs of local government" then emerging.¹⁶² Given this, Machakos stands as an exemplar, an exceptional interface that allows us to witness the form and efficacy of Fabian-influenced colonial development policy at a granular, village level typically obscured by the tendency of scholars to focus on the failure of large-scale and costly postwar industrial development initiatives.

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Uganda

*I believe profoundly myself that the rapid building up of local government through the process of devolution...is the most important of all methods by which we must seek to foster political evolution in Africa, in the hope of securing, when self-government eventually comes, a stable political system really representative of the whole body of the people rather than an oligarchy based on a comparatively limited intelligentsia or professional class.*¹⁶³

– Andrew B. Cohen, October 29, 1947

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¹⁶² Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee*, 178.

¹⁶³ Local Government in Uganda, from A. B. Cohen to Sir J. Hall, CO 847/37/7 (12). See: Hyam, ed., *The Labour Government and the End of Empire*, 143.

*Mass education (community development)...must be put into effect in the closest association with local government bodies.*¹⁶⁴

– 1948 Summer Conference on African Administration

*These schemes are unspectacular; but, as one who has travelled widely in every part of the country, I can assure Honourable Members of their very great value.*¹⁶⁵

– Sir Andrew B. Cohen, Speech to the Uganda Legislative Council, December 18, 1956

The Fabian Andrew B. Cohen, unlike his conservative predecessor at Entebbe, Governor Sir John Hathorn Hall, was a bullish force for modernization in Uganda Protectorate.¹⁶⁶ Having served as head of the African Division of the CO under fellow Fabian Arthur Creech Jones, in which capacity he presided over the Cambridge summer conferences on Local Government (1947), The Encouragement of African Initiative (1948), and Agricultural Development in Africa (1949), few colonial officials at the metropole were as deeply involved with, or indeed intimately aware of, the progressive direction of Britain's postwar colonial development regime. It is little

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¹⁶⁴ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King's College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 101, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

¹⁶⁵ Sir Andrew B. Cohen, *Report on Uganda* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1956), 9.

¹⁶⁶ J. C. Ssekamwa, *History and Development of Education in Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1997), 162. Uganda Protectorate is a somewhat curious fixture in the pantheon of British colonies. Indeed, British policy in Uganda was to preserve, rather than destroy, the leading precolonial polity within its borders: the Kingdom of Buganda. Now, as Twaddle is sure to remind us, "Uganda" and "Buganda" were "not geographically the same" thing. Rather, "Uganda" consisted not only of the Kingdom of Buganda, but also several smaller kingdoms (e.g. Ankole, Toro, and Bunyoro) and "peoples in the western section of the Uganda Protectorate, not to mention the many kingless societies in the north and east of the territory." Despite (or perhaps because of) this rather obscure geopolitical reality, the British based their rule upon Buganda, recognizing its "quasi-autonomy" and introducing an "unusual form of quasi-freehold land tenure through the Uganda Agreement of 1900." The fact that the British employed Buganda intermediaries throughout the protectorate to help facilitate its colonial administration further complicated matters, particularly in light of embryonic nationalism. See: Twaddle, "The Struggle for Political Sovereignty in Eastern Africa, 1945 to Independence," 228-229.

wonder, then, that when viewed through the lens of his own liberalism, Cohen saw Britain's postwar colonial crisis—characterized by labor strikes and disturbances in Tanganyika, Kenya, and Uganda and insurgencies in Gold Coast and Kenya—in terms of a reckoning; a settling of accounts that had been forged, grievance by grievance, over years of conservative and “ill-informed” colonial policies.¹⁶⁷ Acutely aware of the capacity of these grievances to fuel the fire of African nationalist sentiment,¹⁶⁸ Cohen believed that the necessary corrective was devolution; a movement, as Apter explains, toward “African freedom and African responsibility.”¹⁶⁹ It was this reality that indicated to Cohen the “great value” of community development, alluded to above, which both he and Creech Jones held possessed an almost organic capacity to build local-level initiative and, in so doing, foster self-government.¹⁷⁰

When he arrived at Entebbe to assume the governorship of Uganda in 1951, Cohen brought with him a near gospel-like faith in community development, a temperament which revealed itself soon after his inaugural tour of the colony. For the findings of this extensive, district-by-district perambulation—during which the governor met not only with his district officers, but also with large numbers of Africans—laid bare the reality of postwar colonial rule in Uganda: neither social welfare nor the devolution of responsibility had kept pace with economic development in the colony. This disparity troubled the populist, reform-minded Cohen, as he wrote in a despatch to the CO dated July 22, 1952: “From all that I have so far seen and heard in this country, I am convinced that a vigorous program of community development is

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¹⁶⁷ David E. Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study in Bureaucratic Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1967), 235.

¹⁶⁸ Sir Andrew Cohen, *British Policy in Changing Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1959), 31-63.

¹⁶⁹ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 235.

¹⁷⁰ Cohen, *Report on Uganda*, 9.

needed...urgently.”¹⁷¹ Cohen warned that the growing imbalance between economic and social development witnessed under the regime of Governor Hall threatened to blunt, if not retard, progress (and here he cited the protectorate’s recent industrial advances on the Owen Falls hydroelectric station and the Kilembe copper mine), an upshot which could easily dovetail into popular disaffection and, in the worst possible scenario, violence.¹⁷² The risk posed by the advent of a yawning and potentially unbridgeable chasm between these developmental priorities was therefore not insignificant, as testified by Uganda’s disturbances in 1945 and again in 1949, leading Cohen to reason that “economic projects...must be accompanied by solid and progressive advance in the Protectorate and local government services in the rural areas; it is here that the need for a vigorous program of community development is felt.”¹⁷³

The correspondence suggested by Cohen between local government and community development was not merely a marriage of ideological convenience. It was altogether more significant, as he concluded in his despatch: “an organized program of community development cannot succeed without an efficient system of local government.”¹⁷⁴ Here we have a crucial caveat; for while it recalls the terms of community development as summarized and accepted at the summer conference of 1948, Cohen’s despatch presents an important emphatic difference between community development as envisioned by the conference and community development as realized in Uganda. Whereas the conference recommended the “closest” possible “association” between community development and local government, Cohen invoked the relationship in terms that effectively framed their interdependence as vital: you could not have

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¹⁷¹ Sir Andrew Cohen, Despatch no. 490/52 to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 22, 1952. As quoted in Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 266.

¹⁷² Despatch no. 490/52.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

one without the other.¹⁷⁵ But the nature of colonial governance in Uganda presented Cohen's populist agenda with a near-insoluble problem, and it came in the form of the semi-autonomous Kingdom of Buganda and its ruler, the Kabaka.

Prior to the arrival of the British, the Kabaka (king) of Buganda occupied an autocratic position and governed his kingdom through the agency of ministers and chiefs, all of whom were nominated by himself. The Kabaka, his three chief ministers, and senior chiefs sat in the Great Lukiko (council) and the orders of the Kabaka were communicated from this body to the people through Enkiko (subordinate assemblies), local bodies devoid any legislative or executive functions, instead serving as channels of communication between Buganda government officials and the people.¹⁷⁶ The polity, in other words, lacked any tradition of local-level (to say nothing of democratic) decision-making. This pattern of governance persisted in Buganda long after the arrival of the British who, in 1900, concluded an agreement with the Kabaka that guaranteed a large measure of autonomy to the royal regime.¹⁷⁷ Although by 1945, the colonial government could optimistically report that there had been a "considerable extension of popular representation on the Great Lukiko," creating the means of channeling unofficial criticism and constructive thought to the royal government, the Enkiko remained "only advisory."¹⁷⁸ Cohen's plans at devolution ran headlong into this political reality when he attempted to impose constitutional reforms and a framework that made Uganda a unitary state. When weeks-long

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¹⁷⁵ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 265.

¹⁷⁶ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Fourth Session, August 20-September 1, 1951, Queens' College, Cambridge: African Local Government*, 44-45, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (4).

¹⁷⁷ *Colonial Office Summer School on African Administration, First Session, August 18-28, 1947, Queens' College, Cambridge: African Local Government*, 76-77, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147.

¹⁷⁸ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Fourth Session, August 20-September 1, 1951, Queens' College, Cambridge: African Local Government*, 44-45, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (4).

negotiations to transform the autocratic Kabaka into a constitutional monarch broke down, Cohen responded by deporting the king, a step that galvanized the Buganda, who united in indignation against the colonial state. Cohen broke the impasse which followed, which lasted two years, only by bringing the Kabaka back and by making major concessions to Buganda in the form of more autonomy, rather than less.¹⁷⁹

Introducing Community Development in Uganda

It was not Cohen who introduced the rudiments of community development to Uganda; rather, it was Hall, who, following the promulgation of the CO's report on *Mass Education in African Society* in 1944, set about welding together something like a basic framework for mass education in the colony. This was, however, to be a rather fraught process; for at the time, the protectorate government was neither temperamentally nor institutionally disposed to realize mass education along lines favored by the report, which suggested the "effective co-ordination of welfare plans and mass education plans so that they form a comprehensive and balanced whole."¹⁸⁰ To begin with, the protectorate was the site of a series of massive and violent labor strikes and riots in January 1945. Fundamentally a byproduct of postwar economic conditions in the colony (the by-now characteristic formula of low wages coupled with commodity shortages and a steep rise in the cost of living), the riots were initially centered on the quasi-autonomous Kingdom of Buganda.¹⁸¹ Over the course of about three weeks, however, the disturbances

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¹⁷⁹ Crawford Young, et al., *Cooperatives and Development: Agricultural Development in Ghana and Uganda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 42-43.

¹⁸⁰ *Mass Education in African Society*, 10.

¹⁸¹ Although some historians, such as Apter and, to a lesser extent, Twaddle, remind us of the political context of these events, from the complexities which underlay embryonic nationalism in Buganda to the long list of grievances of Uganda's tripartite "fragmented petite-bourgeoisie," all of which were enhanced by the Second World War, contemporary historiography tends to attribute the events of 1945 to a coalescence of these elements with overriding economic factors.

spread, erupting in all the main towns of Uganda, including some just outside Kampala, the Bugandan capital city.¹⁸² In the shadow of this pandemonium, which was finally subdued only after reinforcements arrived from Kenya, Entebbe launched a full-scale inquiry into both the country's economy as well as its developmental prospects.¹⁸³

The results, which indicated that "it was doubtful if a policy of progress would be possible by example and persuasion," were discouraging.¹⁸⁴ In the absence of inducement by encouragement, there was only compulsion which, as we have seen in the case of the Machakos Betterment Scheme in Kenya, risked hampering both current and future development. Moreover, the report cited several factors as being the principal impediments to progress in Uganda, including a lack of fundamental information about the country, an outmoded and wasteful agricultural system, use of the "most inefficient of fuels" for power (wood), and,

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Tensions had been simmering in Buganda since the 1920s, where the knock-on effects of the Great Depression had prompted severe belt-tightening on behalf of the provincial administration. The Second World War exacerbated these conditions, for rationing and the need to sequester materiel in aid of the war effort effectively thwarted the colonial state's ability to sustain the flow of imports into Uganda. Since somewhere near three-quarters of all the household goods and commodities used in Ugandan daily life were imported, the resultant shortages and concomitant rise in prices—the cost of cotton piece-goods, for example, rose something like six times what they were during the war, while "hoes became difficult to obtain at controlled prices"—made difficult the life conditions of many Africans. As wartime price-gouging became rampant and a black market for consumer goods flourished, pressure mounted, and Uganda became the site of low-intensity violence in the form of strikes and riots in 1940 (Kampala), 1941 and 1942 (Lugazi), 1943 (Entebbe), and 1944 (Kampala and Lugazi)—a pattern which ultimately culminated in the events of January 1945. As Governor Hall comprehensively observed in a despatch to the Colonial Secretary of State on January 28, 1945: the "high cost of living and above all the greatly increased cost of essential piece goods, acute shortage of which has operated to defeat price control, have imposed special hardship on the poorer elements of the African and Asian population and created mounting discontent."

See: Cohen, *British Policy in Changing Africa*, 35; Gardner Thompson, "Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945," *African Affairs* 91 (1992), 605-606, 614-615, and 619-620; Twaddle, "The Struggle for Political Sovereignty in Eastern Africa, 1945 to Independence," 228-232; Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 226-233; Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *Uganda: An Historical Accident? Class, Nation, State Formation* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1985), 35; Despatch from Sir John Hathorn Hall to Oliver Stanley, January 28, 1945, NA CO 536/215/40339/1/1945.

¹⁸² Thompson, "Colonialism in Crisis," 605-606.

¹⁸³ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 229.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

especially, “the low capacity of the African for physical and (less important for the time being) mental work, coupled with a lack of desire for economic or social advancement.”¹⁸⁵ This patently racialized assessment, in light of the recent unrest, suggested to Government House that a series of indigenous and perhaps insurmountable brakes existed on the system that would make a development-based program of reform difficult, if not impossible, to attain.¹⁸⁶

Nevertheless, a program did eventually emerge—albeit one that was, to paraphrase Apter, unimaginative and fitfully executed.¹⁸⁷ To a considerable degree, the dithering that characterized its early implementation was down to Hall himself, who confessed to being uncertain as to what social welfare was, let alone where and how mass education fit into it all.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, it was only after several postponements and delays—a kaleidoscope of oscillation that elicited frustrated, if mostly sympathetic, murmurings from the CO—that the governor and his administration finally began “hastening slowly” to forge something like a combined mass education/social welfare scheme in the protectorate. To this end, a preliminary outlay of £50,000 in development funds was made available for the construction of “permanent” and “lavishly equipped” district welfare centers throughout the colony. Once completed, these constituted the infrastructural backbone of Uganda’s newly-amalgamated Department of Social Welfare and Public Relations, under whose purview mass education somewhat controversially fell.¹⁸⁹

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¹⁸⁵ E. B. Worthington, *A Development Plan for Uganda* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1947), 9, NA CO 536/218/3.

¹⁸⁶ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 229-230.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁸⁸ Uganda, 1944-45: Social Welfare and Public Relations, C.D.&W. Grant, minute by M. Darlow, July 9, 1945, NA CO 536/215/5.

¹⁸⁹ Uganda, 1944-45: Social Welfare and Public Relations, C.D.&W. Grant, minute by W. A. M., August 10, 1945, NA CO 536/215/5. Many, including Cohen, felt the marriage of mass education with public relations was ill-conceived, since it risked blurring the lines between propaganda and mass education in the minds of the population.

Over the course of the next several years, the sluggish pace of mass education in the colony—and social welfare development, generally¹⁹⁰—was matched only by the lack of enthusiasm which emanated from Hall. The governor was “pessimistic” about the potential of Ugandans to sustain development projects once the CDW funds allocated for them were exhausted.¹⁹¹ In point of fact, Hall’s racialized attitude encouraged in the governor not only an aversion to requesting any social welfare development funds whatsoever from Whitehall but, on one occasion, the reallocation of nearly £50,000 in social welfare-designated CDW monies to other projects in the protectorate.¹⁹² Moreover, when, in March 1949, he submitted to the CO a request for CDW funds in accord with the revised Uganda Development Plan of 1948, it included an annual fixed outlay of only £10,000 for public relations and social welfare schemes.¹⁹³ Augmenting the governor’s apprehension was a dubiousness, stimulated to some extent by the disturbances and subsequent unrest witnessed in Uganda in 1945, that the *formal* education of Africans, particularly in a secondary school setting where politics featured as a part of the curriculum, would achieve little beyond increasing nationalist agitation among Ugandans.

Yet, the governor did show a genuine interest in, and appreciation for, the merits of *non-formal* (that is, non-academic) education for the illiterate and barely literate to learn proper agricultural techniques so that they might increase production—although he believed such ends could be achieved far more simply and cost-effectively through the combined propagandizing

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¹⁹⁰ Governor Hall alluded to these circumstances when he noted in a covering letter to his despatch revising the Uganda Development Plan (1948), sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on March 30, 1949, that: “It is sometimes objected that, if development is taking place, there is little to show for it.”

¹⁹¹ Ssekamwa, *History and Development of Education in Uganda*, 158-161.

¹⁹² Uganda Circular Despatch No. 110, December 1, 1949, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 45/2.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

techniques of mobile cinema units and demonstration teams.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, so convinced was Hall of their educative value that, as of 1949, six amalgamated “propaganda teams,” consisting of between six and ten members and outfitted with a lorry, camp equipment, a portable stage, a mobile cinema van (occasionally), models, and posters constituted the “main Mass Education development in Uganda”—this, despite the creation of the Department of Social Welfare and Public Relations.¹⁹⁵ Although Hall’s faith was not entirely displaced, for such teams had already shown a noteworthy facility for instruction in Uganda,¹⁹⁶ this was hardly tantamount to the vision of mass education then being propagated by Creech Jones and, in turn, the CO.

The upshot of Hall’s dull conservatism—which one scholar has referred to facetiously as “reform without politics” and precisely the opposite of what Creech Jones had intended—was a regime of community development that, by the end of the decade, had very little to show for itself.¹⁹⁷ As the Fabian Colonial Bureau (FCB) pointed out in a series of correspondences addressed to Creech Jones at the CO on “Some Causes of Discontent in Uganda,” Entebbe had failed to create the kind of initiative-building framework anticipated by the Secretary of State at the 1948 summer conference; for Africans had neither become more meaningfully associated

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¹⁹⁴ Ssekamwa, *History and Development of Education in Uganda*, 158.

¹⁹⁵ *Mass Education Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (December 1949): 9, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/1.

¹⁹⁶ The extensive efforts of one such team were detailed in an article entitled “A Demonstration Team in Uganda,” which appeared in the debut issue of the *Mass Education Bulletin*. Following a quartet of demonstrations, which included the importance of latrine covering (a ghastly-sounding hands-on affair that incorporated a jar of worms), the planting of banana trees, proper tree trunk care and removal, and the benefits of rearing calves in cowsheds, the team engaged in a round of singing and general merry-making to rouse their audience of several hundred Africans. Over the course of the next several days, they visited other villages in the district, “bringing some new colour to the lives of the people....” The article concluded that while the effect of the work of such teams was “difficult” to ascertain, the subsequent appearance of improved homes and latrines, as well as “better cattle...produced by better feeding and care,” suggested “lessons are being learned.” See: *Mass Education Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (December 1949): 18, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 34/1.

¹⁹⁷ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, fn 265.

with the decision-making apparatus of local self-government¹⁹⁸ nor witnessed the kind of devolution of responsibility (fiscal or otherwise) Governor Hall had earlier promised.¹⁹⁹ And since Government House had decided that “the field where the abilities of Africans will find the best scope is employment in the professional and technical departments of Government,” Africans seemed also to be excluded from opportunities in the civil administration.²⁰⁰ Thus, in spite of Creech Jones’ assurances to the contrary, the FCB could not but conclude that “no responsibility for any of the decisions is given to the people. This is a serious gap which has alienated opinion in many Colonies.”²⁰¹ When, in 1949, Uganda was once again the site of labor unrest and violent disturbances, the Fabians no doubt felt somewhat justified in their bleak assessment.

Some two years later, the findings of the Wallis Inquiry on African Local Government in the Uganda Protectorate did much to confirm the Bureau’s appraisal.²⁰² Commissioned by Cohen soon after his appointment in 1951 and conducted by the noted expert on British local government, C. A. G. Wallis, who had earlier collaborated with Dr. Hinden on the FCB’s report on *Local Government in the Colonies* (1950),²⁰³ the investigation found that, notwithstanding the “encouraging” and “admirable” talk which periodically bubbled up from Entebbe, local government had, in fact, languished under Hall.²⁰⁴ Indeed, *contra* Apter, even the formal

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¹⁹⁸ Hinden to Creech Jones, April 28, 1948, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 26/1.

¹⁹⁹ Education Policy, African Governors’ Conference draft minutes 29, November 1947, CO 847/37/1 (21). See: Hyam, ed., *The Labour Government and the End of Empire, 1945-1951: Pt. 2: High Policy and Administration*, 294. An assessment confirmed by the Wallis Inquiry into African Local Government in the Uganda Protectorate, which was launched in 1952 (see below).

²⁰⁰ Creech Jones to Hinden, June 19 and November 23, 1948, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 26/1.

²⁰¹ Hinden to Creech Jones, April 28, 1948, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 26/1.

²⁰² Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development For the Year Ended December 31, 1952*, 1-3, NA CO 822/656.

²⁰³ Hinden to T. W. B. Mynors, October 22, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 40/2.

²⁰⁴ Cohen to Hall, October 29, 1947, CO 847/37/7 (8). See: Hyam, ed., *The Labour Government and the End of Empire, 1945-1951*, 142.

establishment of district councils mandated by the 1949 African Local Government Ordinance had resulted in no meaningful devolution of authority in the protectorate.²⁰⁵ As Wallis concluded:

African Local Governments as such have no functions or responsibilities other than those arising from the Native Administrations (Incorporation) Ordinance, 1938. The councils equally have no responsibilities, for the bye-laws they make depend on the approval of the Provincial Commissioner or Governor and the budgets they pass are subject to the final instructions of the Protectorate Government. ... In practice a grave defect has been found to be the absence of any position function for the minor councils other than their triennial duty of electing members of the next higher grade of council. ... There is doubt even about the Government's own intentions.²⁰⁶

Wallis' report revealed also that Hall's obduracy had had a serious subsidiary effect on community development/mass education in the colony.²⁰⁷ For the absence of a responsible intermediary body (i.e. "local government") to canalize African ingenuity from village units—as we have seen, the nucleus of Creech Jones' all-important initiative-building regime—to district councils (hitherto the large and cumbersome "local authority," some of which could meet only twice a year²⁰⁸), had effectively thwarted a vital stimulant of African "motive power."²⁰⁹

Cohen's Joint Community Development and Local Government Regime

These circumstances converged with Cohen's conviction as to the collective and corresponding merits of devolution and community development to map a new way forward in

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²⁰⁵ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 238. The ordinance determined the composition and powers of District Councils and made provision for the same thing to be done for councils at lower levels.

²⁰⁶ Uganda Protectorate, *Report by Mr. C. A. G. Wallis of an Inquiry into African Local Government in the Uganda Protectorate*, 10-13, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 126/3.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 46. So unwieldy was this arrangement, Wallis complained, that even though he was engaged in a survey on local government, it was not possible for him to meet any of them.

²⁰⁹ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King's College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 10, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

Uganda: the institution of a comprehensive program that weaved together local government and community development under the auspices of a central authority fully invested in the “modern philosophy of colonial administration,” one which advocated the “democratic spirit” fostered by the marriage of economic development and social advance.²¹⁰ Guiding the protectorate on this innovative and progressive trajectory was the newly-created Department of Community Development,²¹¹ the scope of which was extended to embrace training not only in the sphere of community development, but also in local government as well.²¹²

What followed was the prosecution of a protectorate-wide community development program, at the head of which was situated nearly a dozen district-level community development officers. Charged with enlisting “the support and active participation of the people in the process of economic development and to prepare [them], especially by the training of their leaders, to adapt themselves to the social changes that...follow in the train of economic development,” the functions of these officials ran an exhaustive, and at times contradictory, gamut: from community betterment and self-help schemes undertaken in rural areas, to adult education activities carried out in association with the protectorate’s Education Department, to social welfare programs meant to alleviate the “social ills” arising from the very changes the colonial administration was attempting to realize.²¹³

At first, the “fewness” of these officials “hampered” the department’s work, but in time each district came to have not only its own officer, but also teams with whom they worked in

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²¹⁰ Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development for the Year Ended December 31, 1952*, 2, NA CO 822/656.

²¹¹ The Department of Community Development replaced the largely ineffective Department of Social Welfare and Public Relations, which Cohen dissolved in 1952.

²¹² Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development for the Year Ended December 31, 1952*, 2, NA CO 822/656.

²¹³ Ibid.

conjunction with county councils (or *ssazas*, in the case of Buganda), who, in turn, helped facilitate their activities down to the village level.²¹⁴ At the nexus of all this work, providing “maximum collaboration”²¹⁵ between county councils and both the community development officers and the district officials, stood the newly-built Local Government and Community Development Training Center at Nsamizi.²¹⁶ The principal and lead curriculum designer of this center was P. E. W. Williams, Kenya’s former Commissioner for Social Welfare, who arrived in Uganda alongside Cohen to help install and launch the protectorate’s community development program. Under Williams, the scope and breadth of the training syllabus at Nsamizi mirrored that which he had developed at Kabete, including special courses for training officers of cooperative societies, adult education courses, courses on local government, chiefs’ leadership courses, child welfare, progressive farming techniques, literacy, and so on.²¹⁷

In a “Visitor’s Handout,” Williams explicated the objectives of the new center, which included: giving “a fuller understanding of the duties of a good citizen” (covering an eclectic range of subjects, from water, food, and health, to transport, the postal service, freedom, and education); the training of “Chiefs and Local Government staffs in their duties while at the same time increasing their understanding of some of the problems facing us here in Uganda” (based on the coursework in good citizenship, but considerably enhanced to include “Protectorate and

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²¹⁴ Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development for the Year Ended December 31, 1952*, 2, NA CO 822/656.

²¹⁵ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 266.

²¹⁶ The center was impressive. The teaching block alone consisted of 11 classrooms, a 40-seat theater, demonstration kitchen and laundry, a seminar room, five staff rooms and four administrative offices, waiting rooms, five storage rooms, a library, an assembly hall capable of seating 300, and a recreation room. Beyond the teaching block, the site included 25 semi-detached houses, each with a kitchen, a store, shower, and lavatory, as well as four dormitories outfitted with 20 cubicles and shared shower/lavatory facilities and common rooms. “Visitor’s Handout,” NA CO 822/1142.

²¹⁷ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 266 and Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development, For the year Ended December 31, 1953*, Appendix C, UCL IOE.

Local Government organization, local government,” finance, judicial systems, industrialization, infrastructure, and cooperatives); training “Community Development Assistants in their duties, broadening their outlook and instructing them in the use of some of the techniques suitable for adult education work;” instructing “Government staff, who have acquired their technical knowledge at their departmental training centres, in the art of how ‘to put over’ that knowledge to the general public;” training “the wives of some of the above in homecraft;” and giving “a knowledge to Councillors and leading citizens of Local and Protectorate government organizations.”²¹⁸

It was an impressive program, all the more so because the curricular DNA that comprised the matrix of the center’s syllabus—with its emphasis on community and adult education, devolution of responsibility, public service, betterment and citizenship schemes—augmented the initiative-building of community development officers and their assistants to create a body of work that, at both the level of design and practice, represented a recognizable hereditary link back to Creech Jones and the work of the 1948 Summer Conference on African Administration.

This program manifested itself rapidly across the protectorate. Thousands of village self-help schemes were launched, ranging from bridge and road repair to the construction of schools, swamp crossings, spring protection, fish ponds, and even clubs.²¹⁹ In 1957 alone, hundreds of community development schemes were either underway or had already run their course, an array of projects that included everything from those aimed at small-scale adult literacy development (e.g. a £5 funding allocation for books to expand the holdings of Kisoko Men’s Club Library in Bukedi) to large-scale training facility construction and improvement (e.g. a thousand-pound

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²¹⁸ “Visitor’s Handout,” NA CO 822/1142.

²¹⁹ Economic Commission for Africa, “Uganda Statement on Community Development Programme” (Workshop on Community Development, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 14-25, 1959), 5.

outlay each for workshops in Kyadondo and Buganganzsi), and everything in between (from pest control to latrine maintenance and sports ground repair to the construction of permanent show-grounds).²²⁰ It was an awesome gamut, notable not only for its specificity, but also its comprehensiveness.

Several comprehensive community development schemes were launched annually, a pair of significant ones in 1953. In Buganda, a full campaign was opened in Butambala District in mid-August. Organized by a committee of the county council with the help of the various departments concerned, including Community Development, Veterinary Services, the Department of Agriculture, and the Medical Services branch, and begun with a six-day course attended by some 200 local leaders, the program's syllabus included demonstrations and lectures on disease vectors (e.g. dirt), the importance of housing upkeep and the maintenance of water supplies, child welfare and diet, plant diseases and increasing crop yields, and incorporated cinema shows on dysentery and cooperative coffee growing in "Chorgoria (sic)" and a play on "The Good Banana Garden." When the course ended, the demonstration team launched a months-long tour of the *gombolola* (parish) of Mumyuka through early October. Spending five days in each *gombolola* parish, the team—consisting of between six and ten members and staff from the various invested departments—ran through a compressed version of the syllabus: the first day was devoted to plays and demonstrations, followed by three days of practical work on latrines, soil conservation, and housing of stock. On the final day, a course for village headmen was held covering methods and techniques of village and local governance.²²¹ In its 1954 summary of the campaign, the Community Development Department concluded that "real

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²²⁰ Uganda Protectorate, "Community Development Schemes 1953," NA CO 822/656.

²²¹ Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development, For the Year Ended 1953*, 4, UCL IOE

progress resulted,” citing specifically the emergence of a number of small “better living societies” throughout the county, whose members engaged in self-help campaigns to improve each other’s homes.²²²

Meanwhile, in Kaberamaido County, Teso District, Eastern Province, an ambitious, year-long community development project unfolded. Begun in February 1953 with a four-day course for 60 chiefs aimed at improving housing and animal husbandry in the county, what followed was a series of month-long demonstrations by teams in each of the county’s seven *gombololas*. The teams worked on some “thirty or more houses” which were improved, with the assistance of “volunteer labor,” to act as “examples for the rest of the area.” The results, the Community Development Department reported, were promising; for by the end of the year, Kaberamaido had at least two hundred houses complete with “doors, windows and ventilation together with kitchens, bath places, chicken houses and hide and skin drying apparatus.” Most encouraging of all, however, were indications that the team’s work had paid off in terms of initiative-building, a dividend realized with the continuation of housing improvements long after the team had left the county. Indeed, so impressive were the results that not only did Cohen visit several of the improved homes, but film showing the work of the district team then-engaged in the campaign was shot.²²³

A few years later, the governor delivered a speech in the LegCo in which he confidently noted that “these schemes are unspectacular; but, as one who has travelled widely in every part of the country, I can assure Honourable Members of their very great value.”²²⁴ As honest an assessment as this may have been, at least insofar as Cohen’s expectations were concerned and

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²²² Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development, For the Year Ended 1953*, 4, UCL IOE

²²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

²²⁴ Cohen, *Report on Uganda*, 9.

bearing in mind that he was addressing the group of people who, by virtue of their constitutionally-obliged fiscal responsibility, effectively held the fate of the Department of Community Development in their hands, it is an inescapable fact that progress had been painstakingly slow.²²⁵

Additionally, and despite Cohen's optimistic reportage, evidence suggests that something was not quite right with community development in the protectorate between 1952 and 1956. We get a hint of this only as early as 1956, when the department noted, at the end of a lengthy passage in the "Campaigns" section of its annual report on the "considerable amount of progress" witnessed in Mengo District, Buganda, that villagers in the county of Buwekula were unenthusiastic about pursuing work related to community development. "When the campaign ended in March," it was noted, "most of the tasks had been completed but it was found that while the majority of the villagers understood and appreciated the measures recommended, very few were energetic enough to keep up the work unless pressed to do so."²²⁶

This could simply be an anomaly, of course, but for the fact that the same report signaled a potentially deeper problem. For in the *gombolola* of Busoga Kapyanga, a rural betterment campaign was launched using a "new technique": "Instead of the campaign being initiated from the top through the various councils the initiative was taken by the people themselves in the villages. Community development staff first toured the area speaking with the people and discovering their problems. Then followed a course at the district training center for selected leaders. When the leaders returned to their villages 54 different groups of people were formed each with its selected leader, to tackle the various problems...."²²⁷

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²²⁵ Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development, For the Year Ended 1956*, 13, UCL IOE.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

The trouble here is the indication that, through 1956, community development in Uganda had depended on a framework of paternalistic compulsion—this, rather than cultivating the kind of bottom-up, village-level initiative-building enterprise Creech Jones had anticipated. Such an observation is more than simply a case of pedantism run amok; for it suggests that community development in the protectorate had failed in what Creech Jones viewed as the “primary task” of colonial development: the stimulation of “initiative...to encourage people to want change”²²⁸ so that they might “become the pioneers in building the institutions and works most suitable to their needs.”²²⁹ This failure was confirmed, at least in part, by Entebbe when it published its *Review of Community Development Policy* in 1957. Launched in 1956 to “assess what has been achieved,” the review found not only that some project leaders placed too much emphasis on the “building up of many projects rather than encouraging the self-help and cooperation that should result” from them, but also that, in some cases, the community development leader was “far more enthusiastic for a project than the people it was intended to serve.” The report went on to stress that community development should “stimulate [the people] to take an active part in schemes for their own betterment,” and concluded, in a statement rife with implication, that “the people themselves must play a greater part in initiating and carrying out local schemes.”²³⁰

At the same time, the nature of British rule in the Uganda Protectorate acted as a brake on the community development/local government package in Buganda. The threatened secession of Buganda from the protectorate in the face of Cohen’s reformist agenda was halted only with the recall of the Kabaka Mutesa II in 1955. To quell the nationalist furor that had plagued Buganda

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²²⁸ *Colonial Office Summer Conference on African Administration, Second Session, August 19-September 2, 1948, King’s College, Cambridge: The Encouragement of Initiative in African Society*, 10, BLUO, 600.17 r. 147 (2).

²²⁹ African Conference, 1948, NA CO 847/38/7.

²³⁰ Uganda Protectorate, *A Review of Community Development Policy* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1957), 1-2, NA CO 1071/403.

since the king's deportation in 1953, the British had further to concede more autonomy to the Kingdom of Buganda under the reinstated Kabaka. Rather the opposite of what Cohen had intended. Buganda's new political circumstances had the effect of suppressing the more ardent democratizing elements embedded within Uganda's broader community development program. While community development schemes continued to move forward, the aspects designed to foster self-governance were modulated, if not jettisoned altogether.²³¹

Nevertheless, the fact remains that Uganda Protectorate possessed one of the most heavily Fabianized community development regimes in all East Africa. Having proceeded under the sponsorship of Cohen, a leading Fabian figure who was not only deeply influenced by the work of A.C. Creech Jones, but who also played a vital role in the process which defined community development at the 1948 summer conference; equipped with an educational system built literally from the ground up by Williams, a leading evangelist of Fabianized community development; and born aloft by the very organizational structure all three men helped forge, the protectorate presents, in theory at least, an ideal paradigm. That Uganda was no less subject to the vicissitudes and vagaries of colonial rule than any of Britain's other territories during the late-colonial period makes the protectorate's "solid" community development accomplishments all the more remarkable.²³² Indeed, the very breadth and depth of Fabian penetration in the protectorate presents us with a singular context in which to witness the unfolding of Fabian influence against a rapidly evolving and enormously complex colonial backdrop. By virtue of precisely these circumstances, community development in Uganda warrants a great deal of further study, particularly as it evolved in the final years of colonial rule.

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²³¹ Young, et al., *Cooperatives and Development*, 42-43.

²³² David G. Scanlon, *Education in Uganda* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1965), 88.

CONCLUSION

The Inescapable Contradictions of Fabian Designs

The efforts of the Fabians continue to be subject to criticism. As we have seen, numerous scholars have scorned—to a point, justifiably—the failures of Fabian-influenced postwar development, both in terms of the sheer cost involved and because the associated projects are at times viewed as being exploitative, recalling the dreadfulness of Chamberlain's imperial estates doctrine. It is also evident that Britain's efforts to develop her African territories, regardless of the magnanimous rhetoric which at times surrounded them, were framed in the overtly paternalistic language and ideology of empire-builders. Indeed, it would seem the one thing postwar planners, developers, and imperialists could agree on was that Europeans knew what was best for Africans, be it government by white settler minorities and the degradation and suppression of the African population which resulted, or by the colonial state and its associated trustees in whom the responsibility of governance was to be vested until Africans could govern themselves.¹ The principle, as we have seen, which underlay community development.

In part, such considerations informed the Fabian perspective on the question of immediate colonial independence, a calculus that was not as straightforward as Riley has suggested. For the Fabians, colonial self-government depended crucially on a series of gradual, incremental changes—this, rather than the sweeping grant of self-government many desired. Equally important to the Fabians was that self-government either within or without the Commonwealth was unthinkable if it meant rule by white European settlers. As a result, the FCB routinely invoked the need for Labor to foster the conditions they believed would ultimately

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¹ "Government in Africa: The Socialist and the Conservative Attitudes," *Empire* 10, no. 11 (May 1948): 6-7, BLUO, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 58/2.

lead to independence. As Creech Jones himself opined in a letter to the editor of the *Times* following the election of 1951, “It is imperative that Labour should continue its work of debunking imperialism and assist in creating the conditions of viability and independence in the dependent territories in the Commonwealth.”² As far as Creech Jones was concerned, such conditions did not yet exist in all of Britain’s African territories.

It is a testament to the Fabians’ thorny and paradoxical position as socialists rationalizing the empire that, on the one hand, they were criticized for opposing the independence of colonial territories while, on the other, they were excoriated for advocating colonial self-government. As Dr. Hinden wrote in *Socialists and the Empire*, “There are some very vocal colonials who wish Britain to evacuate all the Colonies at once—nothing short of immediate and absolute independence will satisfy them. The Bureau, on the other hand, while favouring the grant of independence in certain Colonies at once, has regarded others as being unfit for it immediately, and has considered the immediate task to be to *prepare* all Colonies for independence at the earliest possible moment. The Bureau has therefore been very bitterly attacked by some of these people who have misrepresented its position, even to the extent of suggesting that it is against independence altogether.”³

That Dr. Hinden could unselfconsciously argue against paternalism in the language of a paternalist is jarring, but symptomatic of the broader ideological contradictions which underscore the Fabian position. For their part, the Bureau’s stance on any given colony’s independence seems to have hinged on what they perceived as the relative maturity of those institutions which fostered democracy—that is, trade unions, cooperatives, local government, and the like. In

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² Arthur Creech Jones, “Labour and the Colonies,” *The Times* (n.d.), BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 332, ACJ 16/3.

³ Rita Hinden, *Socialists and the Empire* (London: Fabian Publications Ltd., 1946), 20

colonies where these were still-nascent, and thus the basis for democratization weak, the Fabians seem to have been cool to the notion of self-government. Where they had become entrenched, the Fabians were more apt to support immediate independence, as had been the case with Ceylon.⁴

Nevertheless, the subtle nuance of these distinctions was and is impossible to quantify, being invariably subject to the vicissitudes of circumstance. As a result, the argument over the nature of Fabian colonial perspectives and intentions persists. As a result, scholars often characterize Fabian intentions as being somehow nefarious; less trustworthy and altruistic than what the Fabian rhetoric would have us believe. To paraphrase Dr. Hinden, it is the “stick” with which the Fabians can always be chastised.

The “Partial” Fabianization of the British Empire?: The Cold War and the Globalization of Community Development

In “Reflections on Colonial Affairs,” a speech before the House of Commons on November 11, 1953, Dr. Hinden, the recently-retired secretary of the FCB, declared that the “work of the (Bureau) is responsible for a great deal that has been achieved...in the colonies.” Sometime later, Dr. Hinden reviewed the transcript of her speech and inserted the word “partly” into the sentence. It now read: “The work of the (Bureau) is *partly* responsible for a great deal that has been achieved...in the colonies.”⁵ This otherwise innocuous adverbial interlineation by the figure positioned second only to Creech Jones in terms of formulating the Fabians’ colonial policy recommendations doubtless remains the best possible assessment of the complicated

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⁴ Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize*, 224; Labour Party and Fabian Colonial Bureau Conference, September 9, 1950, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 33/5.

⁵ “Reflections on Colonial Affairs,” Notes on a Meeting Given by Dr. Rita Hinden, House of Commons, November 20, 1953, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 48/1.

legacy of Fabian influence on Britain's colonial enterprise. Indeed, despite unprecedented political conditions which witnessed, for the first time, a Labor-dominated Parliament whose majority membership identified as Fabian, the Fabianization of the British Empire could only ever be partial. This sense of incompleteness is to a considerable extent the result of the dynamics that have been outlined in this dissertation.

As we have seen, conditions aligned to forestall what Hodge has referred to as a hoped-for postwar "imperial renaissance."⁶ These conditions included intransigence at the level of colonial administration, which had the effect of blunting in many ways Creech Jones' efforts at social betterment evangelization, as well as the sterling crisis, which, in the immediate term, acted to relegate colonial development that was not designed to achieve dollar-earnings or dollar-savings to a semi-peripheral position in the development discourse. Despite this postwar colonial development revision, however, Britain's fiscal position remained parlous and resource mobilization by way of mechanized agricultural production, no matter how rapid, could not realistically be expected to offset the looming crisis, with all its attendant political and social implications both for Britain, specifically, and Europe, generally.⁷

As a result, the United States, fearful that prevailing economic exigency would render its wartime European allies vulnerable to the siren-like call of Soviet Communism in the early Cold War years, launched the Marshall Plan. More suggestion than a statement of policy when first articulated by the American Secretary of State George Marshall in 1947, the eponymous plan (formally, the European Recovery Program or ERP) dovetailed with the Truman Doctrine's anti-Soviet containment strategy and was intended to help rebuild the economies of those Western

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⁶ Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 208.

⁷ Hinds, "Sterling and Decolonization in the British Empire, 1945-1958," 104. Sir Stafford Cripps, for example, warned of "extreme industrial dislocation" and the possibility of "unrest" among the workforce.

European nations devastated by the war.⁸ Although some \$98 million in ERP funds were eventually directed toward colonial development, mostly through the CDWA,⁹ it was earmarked for three purposes only: “providing technical assistance, for the development of strategic materials, or for financing the dollar equipment required in Government projects of which the Americans approve.”¹⁰ The encumbered magnanimity of the ERP notwithstanding, considerable practical obstacles remained for British administrators in the colonies, not least of which had to do with the notion of “technical assistance.” As Dr. Hinden wrote in an article for *The New Statesman*, “Each Colonial Office has to hunt for the experts it wants, and they are hard to find. ... The total number of American technicians who have actually gone to the British Colonies may be counted easily on less than ten fingers.”¹¹ The Point Four Program, announced as part of Truman’s Inaugural Address in 1949,¹² only compounded these concerns. Meant to extend technical and economic support to developing countries as Marshall Plan aid tapered off, Point

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⁸ The Truman Doctrine was itself a response to Britain’s postwar economic crisis. As President Truman explained in a speech before a joint session of the US Congress on March 12, 1947, “The British Government, which has been helping Greece, can give no further financial or economic aid after March 31. Great Britain finds itself under the necessity of reducing or liquidating its commitments in several parts of the world, including Greece.” As an analogous situation obtained in Turkey, the United States, concerned that Russia would fill the political vacuum created by Britain’s withdrawal, was compelled to promulgate a policy hardening its Cold War “containment” strategy. The Marshall Plan was an essential extension of this. See: Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 155-159; Thomas J. McCormick, *America’s Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 75-81; Kathleen Britt Rasmussen, “Great Britain and American Hegemony,” in *A Companion to Harry S. Truman*, ed. David S. Margolies (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), 305.

⁹ As Creech Jones acknowledged to Clement Attlee in an explanatory note on colonial economic development, “...what we invest in the Colonies is in the last analysis drawn from what we are ourselves borrowing from America.” “Economic Development in the Colonies,” February 5, 1948, PREM 8/733. Hyam, ed., *British Documents on the End of Empire: The Labour Government and the End of Empire, 1945-1951: Part I*, 58.

¹⁰ Rita Hinden, “The Fourth Point,” *Colonial Review* (March 1950), UCL IOE.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Initially, the organ responsible for administering Point Four was the Advisory Committee on Technical Assistance (ACTA). In 1950, the body was renamed the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA).

Four replaced the agency of government institutions with that of “private American capitalist” firms whose investment and entrepreneurial spirit—lured to the world’s “undeveloped areas” by “guaranteed” profits underwritten by public funds—would facilitate the “long process of negotiating agreements, working out country-wide development plans, and setting up effective organizations and technical staffs for carrying them out.”¹³ It was these considerations which led Dr. Hinden to conclude gloomily that “American help, as at present envisaged, is doing nothing...to meet our real difficulties.” Hers was not a singular perspective, particularly when framed by the United States’ blatant and well-known anti-colonialism, which was nowhere more succinctly (and in extraordinarily impolitic terms) expressed than by US Congressman Emmanuel Celler, who characterized the problems faced by postwar Britain as “too damned much Socialism at home and too damned much Imperialism abroad.”¹⁴

Such sentiment, expressed by a pro-Zionist¹⁵ as Britain’s hold over its mandated territory in Palestine looked increasingly tenuous, reflected the broader US commitment to decolonization,¹⁶ a reality which made the Marshall Planners, “Fourth Pointers,” and Britain’s imperial policymakers unlikely—and, at times, uncomfortable—bedfellows. As Riley notes, there was no “natural affinity” between these groups, a complicated reality made all the more so when seasoned with British distrust over US intentions *vis-à-vis* imperial sovereignty. At Westminster, for example, there was palpable bipartisan anxiety surrounding the potential risks of American meddling in Britain’s postwar colonial affairs: Conservative MPs like Beverley

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¹³ Technical Cooperation Administration, Department of State, Voluntary Groups and Private Organizations in the Point 4 Program, April 8, 1952, Harry S. Truman Library and Papers, Lloyd Files, Point IV Conference.

¹⁴ As quoted in William Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, The United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 45.

¹⁵ That is, an individual who favored the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

¹⁶ Peter Duignan and L. H. Gann, *The United States and Africa: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 286.

Wilcox worried that the US would try to dictate terms of production to meet American needs, while, on the opposite bench, Labor parliamentarians such as Major Geoffrey Bing expressed concern that American aims, devoid of any moralizing element, would precipitate the exploitation of the colonies—a retrogression the Fabians were themselves keen to avoid.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the corridors of Whitehall were positively alive with the sound of wringing hands as bureaucrats in the CO fretted that the Americans' basic lack of knowledge in colonial matters would lead to an emphasis on what became known internally as the "major project approach," which assessed colonial development chiefly from the perspective of "large-scale, expensive programs"¹⁸—a fear exacerbated by the idea that the Americans intended to create a kind of catalog of such schemes from which they could "pick and choose" *a la carte*-style where to intervene directly in the colonies.¹⁹ Worse still, should such a "horrifying" prospect become reality,²⁰ it would mean an absolute sundering of the "unspectacular" social development projects that many in the CO considered vital to the long-term development of Britain's colonies.²¹

Although Colonial Office administrators such as A. H. Poynton, Deputy Undersecretary of State in charge of the Economic Division, and W. A. C. Mathieson, an Assistant Secretary of State, were deeply suspicious of US aims relative to the empire, and equally concerned over the prospect of US interference, American observers were nonetheless routinely present at the CO's

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¹⁷ Riley, "Monstrous Predatory Vampires," 150.

¹⁸ W. S. Carter to Emanuel, Clausen, and Poynton, May 30, 1949, CO 537/5160. As quoted in Riley, "Monstrous Predatory Vampires," 157.

¹⁹ W. S. Carter, report on meetings of the OTC in Paris, May 24, 1949, CO 537/5160; Gerard Clauson, notes on report of meetings of OTC in Paris, compiled by W. S. Carter, May 24, 1949, CO 537/5160. As quoted in Riley, "Monstrous Predatory Vampires," 158.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Emanuel to Mathieson, May 17, 1949. As quoted in Riley, "Monstrous Predatory Vampires," 157.

summer conferences. Given that attendance was by invitation only—and, at that, limited to “people with experience of Colonial administration or Colonial problems”²²—the presence of American officials at the conferences is certainly suggestive. On one hand, of course, it reflects the inescapable reality of the postwar world, one in which Whitehall had necessarily to reconcile itself with the hegemonic influence of US interests both at home and abroad. Yet, on the other hand, American attendance presented the British with an educative opportunity, a chance to bridge the knowledge gap between themselves and US officials, who were, in the Fabian view, “completely uninformed as to the essence” of colonial policy and the “proper role” of colonial development.²³

How effective the conferences were in achieving this is open to debate, since edifying the half-dozen or so State Department officials who attended them between 1947 and 1949 on the nuance of colonial rule and development was hardly the remit. What is certain, however, is that, at first, the Americans were “not favorably impressed” by what they saw and heard. Initially, at least, the observers seem to have detected “defeatism” among the participants; a vague sense of resignation surrounding the question of British imperial longevity in the wake of the war. This pessimism, it appears, made the British “overly sensitive” to international criticism, particularly when it was intimated that they were pushing local government reforms “too rapidly”—a development which had, in the view of the American observers, triggered in the colonies a “race for control of a self-governing state” between the “educated minority” and the “ignorant majority.” It is possible, however, that the American impressions were themselves overdrawn, the result, perhaps, of entrenched anti-imperial sentiment; for the next year, US officials rendered

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²² Cohen to Hinden, May 5, 1947, BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 25/2.

²³ “Colonial Policy from the Public Relations Point of View,” BLUO, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 365, FCB 48/1.

a decidedly more upbeat assessment of deliberations surrounding mass education and community development, characterizing them as constructive and enlightened.²⁴

While it seems clear that the observers neither made a substantive contribution to conference discussions nor tried to influence those of others, US policymakers soon coopted community development as a principle of their overseas development efforts. For a year after the 1948 summer conference, which was attended by several bureaucrats from the US Department of State, President Truman enshrined community development in American foreign policy as part of his Point Four Program—and in terms Creech Jones, Cohen, Dr. Hinden, Askwith, and Williams would have found strikingly familiar:

Community Development is a technique for stimulating organized self-help undertakings through the democratic process. It aims to mobilize the principal resource of most underdeveloped areas—their manpower and their interest in improving their own lot—once they have become aware that improvement is possible.²⁵

Combined ostensibly with an emphasis on fostering political and economic stability through participation and inclusion, US policymakers adopted a model of community development that had much in common with that of the British. Soon after, the notion that, *pace* Daniel Immerwahr, “villagers could shape their own destiny” through development built “from the bottom up” became, for a time, an important weapon in the US arsenal in the global fight against Communism.²⁶ As Lane Holdcroft observes, it is this potent reality, encumbered with all the attendant complexities of the still-nascent East-West polarity, that more than any other

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²⁴ James P. Hubbard, *The United States and the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa, 1941-1968* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2011), 91.

²⁵ Alyosha Goldstein, “The Attributes of Sovereignty: The Cold War, Colonialism, and Community Education in Puerto Rico,” in *Imagining Our Americas: Toward a Transnational Frame*, eds. S. Shukla and H. Tinsman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 315-317.

²⁶ Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 63.

informed the character and subsequent globalization of community development in the 1950s.²⁷ Considered within the context of the Cold War, the “political rationale” for community development was rendered clear: “Essentially, community development was seen by its free world advocates as the democratic response to totalitarianism. In the ‘Cold War’ era of the 1950’s, American leadership believed that the developing nations in the free world were under a two pronged [*sic*] threat from international communism: a) the potential for external military aggression and, b) the possibility of internal revolution growing out of subversion via communist agrarian movements.”²⁸

As such, American promotion of community development was reflective of a larger trend in the West inspired by the Cold War’s inherent dichotomy—one made manifest by the subsequent “wave” of related research and reports originating with the United States and the United Nations throughout the 1950s.²⁹ Indeed, *pace* Holdcroft, this efflorescence in community development, laden with such virtuous and propaganda-friendly principles as political and material emancipation was, in reality, a façade masking social and political control—albeit one based, Olivier Charnoz explains, on “consent and self-involvement.”³⁰

The Cold War-inspired evolution of community development should not, however, detract from the social betterment rationale which was fundamental to the earlier, Fabianized version which took root in Kenya and Uganda. Indeed, it is a testament to the resilience and appeal of this Fabian-favored paradigm that, despite British skepticism surrounding American

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²⁷ Lane Holdcroft, “The Rise and Fall of Community Development, 1950-1965,” (master’s thesis, Michigan State University, 1976), 3-9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁹ Olivier Charnoz, “The Local Power Effects of Global Discourses: A Methodological Enquiry into ‘Community Participation’,” in *Local Politics, Global Impacts: Steps to a Multi-Disciplinary Analysis of Scales*, eds. Olivier Charnoz, Virginia Diaz Pedregal, and Alan L. Kolata (London: Routledge, 2015), 163-165.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

involvement in colonial affairs (understandably heightened by prevailing attitudes in US political circles *vis-à-vis* decolonization) and the fact that fiscal circumstances clearly favored largish dollar-generating development schemes (and, of course, efforts to make something of them did not go away), the “unspectacular” projects characteristic of the community development regimes found in Uganda and Kenya remained both popular and vital mechanisms of progress in the colonies—and, at that, not only to British colonial development policy, but to US foreign policy as well. Framed and delivered in large part through the agency of the Fabians and their like-minded sympathizers in and out of government following the Second World War, there is perhaps no more fitting postscript in terms of the Fabianization of the British Empire—partial or otherwise.

Assessing the Impact of Partial Fabianization: Study Findings and Outcomes

Fabianized community development programs in Kenya and Uganda in the 1950s are an important link connecting the rhetoric of midcentury Fabianization with its practice, despite the kind of context-specific limitations that prompted Dr. Hinden’s circumspection. Undertakings like the Machakos Betterment Scheme and the numerous community development projects in Uganda discussed above complicate a historiography that for decades has emphasized the high-profile failures of Britain’s postwar colonial development regime to the detriment of smaller-scale initiatives. The case studies presented in this dissertation therefore suggest a need for scholarly revision.

First, the findings of this study indicate that community development led to qualitative improvements in local level living conditions. From the application of soil conservation strategies and the use of small-scale mechanization, to the introduction of health, education, and

welfare initiatives, the lives of many Africans were tangibly altered for the better. Furthermore, where elements of devolution and responsibility for local governance were present, Fabianized community development fostered a democratic spirit among indigenous populations. That this transpired against the backdrop of rapid political and social change suggests the designers of community development anticipated the inevitability of self-government.

Second, the findings of this study indicate that at the village level, the processes inherent to development required negotiation between the community targeted for development and the agents of initiative-building on which the regime largely depended. As much as anyone, the Fabians understood that the dynamic interaction of consultation with communities and cooperative decision-making were crucial to the success of development schemes. Time and again, we witness this dynamic being employed to effect by the community development regimes in Kenya and Uganda, be it in the form of propaganda campaigns to encourage village buy-in of soil erosion prevention techniques and the necessity of farm consolidation, or the promotion of rural homestead improvement schemes through village-wide demonstrations.

Third, the findings also indicate that, despite the high-mindedness of its rhetoric and its designs, the “inspiration of motive power” on which the Fabian ideal of community development rested was difficult to achieve when it came cloaked in the mantle of European paternalism, no matter how well-intentioned. That the FCB could not effectively fathom out how to comprehensively realize development solutions beyond this framework speaks to their inability to rationalize development independent of centuries-old European prejudice and signals the limits of their capacity. Indeed, even Fabianized community development, at root a village-level enterprise designed to promote development from below, required top-down European

involvement. It often took colonial officials years to recognize this paradox, as shown by the evidence from both Kenya and Uganda.

Despite this, it can reasonably be argued that community development was relatively successful, at least in terms of its positive impact on the lives of many villagers in Britain's African territories. While this finding goes some way toward alleviating the obscurantist's view of postwar colonial development, which is often rationalized within the unhelpful framework of the vaunted and controversial colonial development offensive, it comes encumbered with the caveat: this conclusion hinges on evidence derived chiefly from British sources and, thus, reflect a primarily European perspective on community development in Uganda and Kenya. Until the African voice can be isolated and included, which will undoubtedly complicate the narrative, the conclusion is necessarily tentative. The future study of the Fabianization of the British Empire lay in this direction.

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