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Introduction

- ¹ The Conservative Party has a long-established reputation for hostility towards trade unions, having often promoted restrictive or punitive policies towards them. The 1799-80 Combination Acts constituted the first Tory (forerunner to the Conservative Party) legislation to curb collective action by workers intended to pressure employers into improving employment conditions or wages, and although it was a subsequent Tory government which repealed these Acts in 1824, the Party's reputation for instinctive antipathy to trade unions, and parallel sympathy for employers, was already becoming established. This reputation was in spite of occasional "permissive" or liberalising Conservative legislation, such as the 1859 Molestation of Workmen Act, and the 1875 Employers and Workmen Act. One of the reasons why such legislation failed to eradicate the Conservatives' reputation for dislike of trade unions was that many of its Ministers were known to be unsympathetic to these reforms, and to trade unionism in general.¹ In effect, this liberalising legislation had been promoted primarily by the Party leader and/or Home Secretary, and as such did not signal a more positive approach to the trade unions by the Conservative Party *per se*.

- 2 More generally, sundry Conservatives publicly made unfavourable comments about trade unionism, and the combined and cumulative effect of such criticisms was to entrench the Conservative Party's growing reputation for being anti-trade union, and instinctively on the side of employers against workers. For example, in 1860, Lord Salisbury warned of "the strong, steady, deadly grip of the trade unions", and claimed that "we should welcome the military despotism that should relieve us" if Britain succumbed to trade union domination.² The trade unions' belief that the Conservatives were instinctively and ideologically hostile to them was subsequently reinforced by the refusal of Arthur Balfour's Government to introduce favourable legislation following the 1901 Taff Vale judicial decision, which had decreed that trade unions could be held liable for financial losses incurred by an employer or company due to a strike pursued by a union. Then, in 1927, following the previous year's General Strike, Stanley Baldwin's Conservative Government passed the Trade Disputes Act, which imposed strict limits not only on trade union activities, including the right to strike, but also their internal affairs. From the trade unions' perspective, it was not just the repressive nature of the 1927 Act that convinced them of the implacable hostility of the Conservative Party towards workers' organisations, but the fact that some Conservatives had actually wanted even more restrictive legislation to curb trade unionism.
- 3 However, the One Nation mode of Conservatism, which was dominant in the senior ranks of the Conservative Party from the late 1940s until the early 1960s, sought to contain and constrain trade union power precisely by avoiding repressive legislation and statutory curbs, both to foster trust, and avoid reinforcing assumptions of innate enmity. Instead, One Nation Conservatives aimed to reduce trade union militancy and conflict in industrial relations through two main methods. First, to pursue a conciliatory and "voluntarist" approach which would win the trust of trade unionists, and persuade them that the Conservatives were not antipathetic towards them. More responsible industrial relations were to be promoted via education, encouragement and exhortation. Second, One Nation Conservatives promoted partnership, both between employers and employees – thus creating One Nation in the workplace – and between Conservative governments and trade union leaders. This, it was assumed, would further reduce industrial militancy and strike activity, and eventually encourage more "responsible" trade unionism and thus more harmonious industrial relations, thereby proving that punitive or repressive legislation was unnecessary, and would be counterproductive. However, from the 1970s onwards, this conciliatory policy was increasingly challenged as the Conservative Party underwent an ideological and demographic transformation, whereupon the paternalistic and consensual One Nation Conservatives were steadily superseded by a more petit-bourgeois cohort whose brand of conviction politics and support for neoliberalism were openly hostile to the trade unions and workers' rights, instead promoting "management's right to manage" and "labour market flexibility".
- 4 This article examines the rise and inexorable decline of the One Nation Tory approach to industrial relations and trade unionism by careful examination of the wide range of archival sources which have steadily become available to political historians. These sources include internal Conservative Party documents, records of policy discussions, and intra-party correspondence, stored at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and records of

Ministerial meetings and intra-government correspondence held at the National Archives in Kew, London.

One Nation Conservative dominance from the late 1940s to the early 1960s

- 5 From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, the Conservative Party was dominated by One Nation Conservatives such as Harold Macmillan, Rab Butler, and Iain Macleod. Indeed, Macmillan was a prominent member of the Conservative Party policy committee which produced the 1947 *The Industrial Charter*. As Josh Williams explains in this volume, this 1947 publication heralded a new, more consensual, approach to economic and industrial affairs by the post-1945 Conservative Party. This was evident in the Party's conciliatory and constructive stance towards industrial relations and trade unionism until the early 1960s, reflected and reinforced by the fact that during the 1951-64 Conservative governments, the post of Minister of Labour (with a seat in the Cabinet) was mostly occupied by a succession of Conservatives from this section of the Party: Walter Monckton (1951-55), Iain Macleod (1955-59), Edward Heath (1959-60), John Hare (1960-63) and Joseph Godber (1963-64).
- 6 Even when a growing number of Right-wing Conservatives criticised this conciliatory approach, and blamed the trade unions for many of Britain's increasing economic and industrial problems, the Party's One Nation cohort continued to defend their conciliatory and constructive approach, and did so right through to the 1980s when they tried (but failed) to resist the Thatcherites' determination to weaken and marginalise the trade unions irrevocably. Throughout, the One Nation Conservatives warned that abandoning partnership between the two sides of industry (a term often used to refer to management and workers or trade unions) in favour of a confrontational and combative approach would not only exacerbate industrial relations problems and radicalise the trade unions, it might even jeopardise the Party's chances of winning the next general election if enough voters feared that a Conservative government would provoke "class warfare" against workers and their unions: Hence the One Nation Conservatives warned that:

as a government, we shall have to work with the trade unions . . . the more you attack the trade unions, the more wholeheartedly the weight of their organisation will be flung into the next election against us, and this will count for far more than any odd votes you pick up by attacking them.³
- 7 Throughout this period, therefore, One Nation Conservatives preached conciliation, co-operation, and industrial partnership, and therefore, as far as practicably possible, the avoidance of conflict. A prominent Right-wing critic in the Party, Enoch Powell, looked back at this period and lamented that: "*The Party came into Office...without any specific commitment on trade union law and practice, and it faithfully carried that non-commitment out for thirteen years*".⁴
- 8 The arguments advanced by One Nation Conservatives against restrictive or repressive trade union legislation throughout the 1950s were a blend of principle, pragmatism and practicability, although their Right-wing critics in the Party (such as Enoch Powell) were inclined to view these features as evidence of cowardice or appeasement, as they made clear in parliamentary speeches, and in Powell's case, various public speeches (* Sources). The One Nation Conservatives were insistent that many industrial relations

problems, most notably strike activity, were often psychological in origin, due to workers feeling either insecure, unappreciated or alienated. Insecurity was deemed to be a legacy of an earlier industrial era when workers had fewer rights and employment was much more precarious, so that many working people acquired defensive attitudes, and viewed management with deep suspicion, especially when changes were proposed via new working practices or technologies: “*Many of the difficulties now being experienced are the result of ... fears of recurrent mass unemployment*”, a distrust which was “*of long standing*”, and thus in need of “*patience and persistence*” in the application of Conservative principles and policies “*before it can be dispelled*”.⁵ In this respect, it was acknowledged that “*the memory of unemployment in the inter-war years is a spectre that can only be exorcised with the passage of time*”, and by “*the strengthening of mutual confidence between management and employees in conditions of at least fairly full employment*”.⁶

- 9 One Nation Conservatives also argued that many workers felt alienated, due to the growing scale of industry and increasing size of companies in the latter half of the 20th Century. As industrial enterprises became larger in an era of increasing company mergers, monopolies and oligopolies, so the organisational distance between workers and managers also increased, and the workplace seemed increasingly bureaucratic and impersonal. In this context, many workers felt insignificant, and frustrated that their efforts were not appreciated by increasingly remote management.⁷ As Anthony Eden (Conservative leader 1955-57) acknowledged, the modern workplace led many employees to feel as if they were “*a mere cog in the wheel*”.⁸ These sentiments led to festering resentment, which sometimes erupted into various modes of industrial unrest, of which strikes were the most visible type.
- 10 The instinctive response of Right-wing Conservatives to industrial unrest was to demand legislation to curb strikes or punish those deemed responsible for them; the blame was usually attributed to Left-wing trade union leaders or shop-stewards fomenting class conflict or pursuing Syndicalism. In stark contrast, One Nation Conservatives were often empathetic to the workers’ grievances, which were explicable in a cultural, historical and organisational context, as noted above. Even if some industrial conflicts were provoked by Left-wing militants in the trade unions, One Nation Conservatives argued that these extremists could only succeed if there was already underlying discontent among the workforce: “*agitators can hardly make much headway, unless they can find latent grievances to work on*”.⁹ As such, long-term industrial peace could only be attained by tackling the underlying workplace grievances that the Left assiduously exploited; the Right’s perennial demand for anti-strike legislation would tackle the symptom, but not the cause.
- 11 Moreover, laws to curb trade unionism were deemed likely to alienate “moderate” union members – the very people whose trust and support the One Nation Conservatives were trying to win, and who needed to be persuaded that the Party was not intrinsically hostile towards organised labour and ordinary workers. Consequently, One Nation Conservatives consistently rejected demands for statutory pre-strike ballots, arguing that this would antagonise and alienate the trade unions, thereby reinforcing their distrust of the Conservative Party. Such ballots were a regular demand of the Conservative Right, often heard from delegates at the Party’s annual conference, and a handful of backbench Conservative MPs, such as Thomas Iremonger, Sir Waldron Smithers, and Dame Irene Ward. Such Conservatives were critical both of

the trade unions, and their Ministers' conciliatory stance, which they viewed as cowardice.

- 12 It was also argued that the repeated Right-wing demand for strike ballots was often predicated upon the assumption that ordinary trade union members were more moderate than their union leaders (and would presumably vote against strike activity if given the option via a secret ballot), a premise for which there was absolutely no evidence, and as such, One Nation Conservatives warned that imposing pre-strike ballots might result in more strikes. Furthermore, in such cases, a further ballot might be needed to ask workers if they agreed with a deal negotiated between their union leaders the management of the company. This might take time to organise, thus prolonging the strike and concomitant industrial disruption or public inconvenience, and it might also result in the union members rejecting the recommended deal, and thus place their union leaders in an awkward position. Ultimately, One Nation Conservatives insisted: "*If trade union organisation is to be reformed...success will...depend on the movement coming from within the unions themselves. Little can be done from above*".

The One Nation 'human relations' approach to industrial relations

- 13 By claiming that many industrial disputes, and latent mutual suspicion among workers towards employers, were socio-psychological in essence or origin, One Nation Conservatives insisted that good industrial relations were ultimately about promoting good human relations in industry, whereby employers treated their workers with decency and dignity, rather than a 19th Century notion of master and servant.
- 14 However, One Nation Conservatives recognised that human relations in the workplace could not be achieved through Ministerial diktats or governmental legislation. Instead, the human relations approach had to be patiently pursued mainly by employers simultaneously communicating with their workers, to explain the rationale for decisions or new working practices, while also listening to (and being seen to listen to) the anxieties of their staff, and as far as practicably possible, responding positively to assuage such apprehension.
- 15 The role of Ministers was to *encourage* this human relations approach, but without intervening directly unless explicitly invited to do so by both sides of industry. Indeed, it was envisaged that if the human relations strategy led to improved industrial relations, and thus fewer strikes, then One Nation Conservative governments could resist Right-wing demands to introduce legislation to control the activities or internal affairs of trade unions: good industrial relations would have been achieved by the *voluntary* efforts of the two sides of industry, which would reflect and reinforce the development of mutual trust. Thus was the return of a Conservative government in 1951 accompanied by the publication of a policy document – with Macmillan as one of the authors – which asserted that "*a new political approach to the vital problems of human relationships throughout our complex industrial structure is of pressing urgency*".¹⁰

Promoting industrial partnership

- 16 For One Nation Conservatives, an important means of securing greater co-operation, communication and trust between management and workers was through establishing industrial partnership, or co-partnership as was sometimes referred to. This certainly did not mean that employees were to be granted equal authority or power in the workplace with their employers, but it strongly recommended that managers should engage in regular communication with their staff, in order to explain why specific decisions were being taken. This would also enable employers to explain to workers the importance of their own roles and tasks in the company's success, which, in turn, would hopefully overcome much of the alienation which many employees were assumed to experience in the large, impersonal, modern corporation. Indeed, it was suggested that the real merit of successful industrial partnership schemes "*lies in their forming a very good basis for more harmonious industrial relations*" by fostering "*a loyal team spirit in the firm*", and thereby encouraging a much greater sense of identity and status among employees.¹¹
- 17 This would also, One Nation Conservatives envisaged, reduce the propensity for minor grievances or suspicions to be exploited by the Left in order to foment industrial disruption and strikes, especially if such partnership schemes simultaneously allowed workers to express their views and concerns to management, without fear of retribution. As Robert Carr observed, when management made a conscious effort to keep the workforce informed about what was happening in the company, smoother and more constructive industrial relations invariably ensued, a view shared by Churchill's successor as Conservative leader and Prime Minister, Anthony Eden.¹² A further advantage was identified by Harold Watkinson (a junior Minister of Labour, under Monkton, from 1952 to 1955), who suggested that if employers provided their employees with an honest and straightforward account of the company's financial and commercial situation, they would undermine the mischievous or misleading claims about the "*bloated profits of capitalism*" which were propagated by Communist agitators in the trade unions.¹³ If such partnership schemes yielded more trust between management and workers, and therefore resulted in fewer strikes, then One Nation Conservatives would face fewer demands from the Party's Right-wing for anti-trade union legislation.
- 18 However, in accordance with the One Nation Conservatives' voluntarist approach (see next section), it was maintained that industrial partnership schemes had to be encouraged not enforced. Ministers should promote their virtues but leave companies to adopt such schemes "*on a voluntary basis, where the conditions of the particular industry and firm are suited to them*".¹⁴ As Rab Butler reiterated to a Cabinet committee on industrial relations:
- the Government's policy should be to continue to express support for co-partnership schemes in principle, wherever a company decides that in its own circumstances are favourable to their introduction. But we should certainly take no steps to make such schemes compulsory.¹⁵
- 19 Beyond the advocacy of industrial partnership at company or industry level, One Nation Conservatives also pursued such collaboration between the two sides of industry at national or governmental level, as symbolised by the 1962 creation of the National Economic Development Council (NEDC). This forum, comprising senior employers'

representatives, trade union leaders, and government Ministers (mostly from Departments concerned with economic and industrial policies) met on a regular basis to discuss matters pertaining to employment, industry and the economy in general. This quasi-corporatist institutional innovation was intended to establish One Nation at the highest political level, by bringing Capital and (organised) Labour together at the very highest levels, and incorporate them into national-level discussions and decision-taking about economic and industrial affairs. Although it was a novel innovation at the time, it neatly accorded with the ideas that Macmillan had previously expounded in his 1938 book, *The Middle Way*, in which he outlined an alternative to *laissez-faire* Capitalism and Soviet-style Socialism; a planned, regulated, and socially responsible Capitalism, in which workers and trade unions were treated, and listened to, with much more respect.

¹⁶

- 20 Although it was not formally or officially concerned with determining wages, Ministers envisaged that the NEDC would *inter alia* fulfil an educative function, whereby trade union leaders would learn the economic facts of life, and consequently refrain from pursuing excessive pay increases each year in order to avoid wage-push inflation. In other words, One Nation Conservatives hoped that, via the NEDC, responsible pay bargaining and restraint would be encouraged on a voluntary basis, as trade union leaders learned about the wider economic situation and what the country could afford.¹⁷ This too, it was envisaged, would reduce Right-wing demands legislation to restrict the trade unions' role in collective bargaining or regulate their internal affairs.

One Nation Conservatism and “voluntarism” in industrial relations

- 21 Both of these One Nation approaches to industrial relations – the socio-psychological account of industrial unrest, and the advocacy of partnership in industry – reflected and reinforced the voluntarist strategy adopted by One Nation Conservatives, whereby the State refrained from intervening either in relationships between management and workers, or in the internal affairs of the trade unions. Instead, any improvements in industrial relations or the conduct of the trade unions had to occur voluntarily, as a consequence of the freely chosen desire and decisions of the two sides of industry themselves; reform needed to be bottom-up, from below, not top-down, imposed from above. The State's role would be to encourage and explain the desirability of such reform, but it could not enforce, by laws, improved relations between management and workers, or in the ways that the unions operated.¹⁸
- 22 In emphatically rejecting legislation, One Nation Conservatives reiterated that improved industrial relations and *inter alia* fewer strikes could only be achieved by encouraging closer communication and co-operation between management and workers, and thereby overcoming them-and-us attitudes in the workplace: “it is upon voluntary agreement in industry that we must depend for good industrial relations...good industrial relations cannot be enforced by laws”.¹⁹
- 23 This advocacy of voluntarism had been foreshadowed in *The Workers' Charter*, the third and final section of *The Industrial Charter*, published in 1947, where it had been decreed that the Conservative Party's objective was “to humanise, not nationalise” industry.²⁰ This goal was to be achieved partly by industrial management ensuring that their

workers were provided with a reasonable expectation of industrial security [of employment], improved incentives to develop skills and talent, and enhanced status or dignity generally. Such measures would constitute “a series of standards in the field of industrial relations” to which employers would be expected to conform, although *The Workers’ Charter* was adamant that there could be no question of legislative compulsion. These proposals to enhance the status and security of workers would only be effective to the extent that they were developed voluntarily and piecemeal, for the “conditions of industrial life are too varied to be brought within the cramping grip of legislation”, which thus meant that “such a charter cannot be made the subject of an Act of Parliament”.²¹

- 24 The importance of securing a new, more harmonious, mode of industrial relations, through voluntary developments not statutory decrees, was reiterated in the Conservatives’ 1949 policy document *The Right Road for Britain*, which insisted that:

Industrial relations must no longer be thought of in terms of two sides with interests which are permanently opposite and inevitably conflicting. Fundamentally, both management and labour have the same interest in the prosperity of their industry, and to this they must devote their attention in a spirit of co-operation and partnership. The spirit of partnership cannot be enforced by law.²²

- 25 Thus did Walter Monckton, Minister of Labour from October 1951 to December 1955, explain to his colleagues that “there is no panacea for these ills [poor industrial problems and strikes]” and as such, “the scope for remedial action by the Government is limited”. Ultimately, what was needed was to cultivate “a sense of national responsibility and of internal discipline among the rank and file of the trade union movement”, yet the “educational task involved is a long-term one”.²³ In the meantime, he declared that the Conservative Party’s “established policy [is] to leave the regulation of their relationships, and the determination of terms and conditions of employment, to employers and workers” themselves, thereby “supporting the basic principles of industrial self-government”.²⁴ This policy was fully endorsed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who curtly rejected a demand in the House of Commons, by Sir Waldron Smithers MP, for strikes to be outlawed unless they had been subject to a prior ballot of union members. Churchill was adamant that:

Her Majesty's Government have no intention of departing from the established tradition in this country under which the trade union movement is left to manage its own affairs to the fullest possible extent without Government interference.²⁵

- 26 There was also an important practical reason why the One Nation Conservatives resisted Right-wing demands for legislation to compel trade unions to conduct pre-strike ballots, namely the problem of enforcement if such laws were subsequently defied; what sanctions could be invoked? As Monckton emphasised, anti-strike legislation would raise “difficult questions of penalties and enforcement”, because in cases of blatant non-compliance, either widespread fines would need to be imposed on striking trade union members or the unions themselves, or potentially thousands of ordinary union members might be sent to prison, either for pursuing unlawful strike action or refusing to pay a fine. In either scenario, the whole trade union movement was likely to be mobilised against the Conservatives, fatally damaging the painstaking efforts at fostering greater trust and co-operation, while the imprisonment of recalcitrant trade unionists was likely to turn them into martyrs, in which case public opinion was likely to turn against the Conservatives, perhaps accusing them of draconian measures and breaking-up families (sending a parent to prison for going on strike).²⁶ Winston Churchill also cautioned against compulsory strike ballots, noting

that their practical disadvantages would greatly outweigh any advantages which might accrue.²⁷

The importance of personalities

- 27 The conciliatory and voluntarist approach which One Nation Conservatives adopted towards industrial relations and trade unions during the 1950s and early 1960s was reflected and reinforced by the character of the people who served as Minister of Labour during this period. The first of these, Sir Walter Monckton (1951-55), has been described by Peter Hennessy, one of Britain's most eminent contemporary political historians, as "*hyper-emollient*".²⁸ Soon after being appointed, Monckton declared that he was "*a firm believer in government by consultation and consent*", and pledged that "*I shall do everything I can to carry out that principle in the conduct of my Ministry*".²⁹ Indeed, so conciliatory was Monckton that during his tenure as Minister of Labour, that many trade union leaders "*did not regard him a Tory minister*".³⁰
- 28 His successor at the Ministry of Labour, Iain Macleod, mostly maintained this conciliatory and voluntarist stance, and therefore similarly resisted Right-wing demands for a tougher policy towards industrial relations and trade unionism. One of his senior Cabinet colleagues, Rab Butler, recalled that "*Iain's qualities were entirely suited to this Ministry, for he was a negotiator par excellence, able to conduct his talks with the unions on a friendly basis*".³¹ One of Macleod's biographers agreed, noting that the conciliatory approach "*represented his personal policy ... he wished to preserve it*".³²
- 29 Macleod was briefly replaced by Edward Heath in 1959, and although Heath later presided over the introduction of the controversial 1971 Industrial Relations Act, he happily continued with the conciliatory and voluntarist approach to industrial relations during his nine-month tenure at the Ministry of Labour. Heath explained that:
- my main aim was to reassure the British worker that if he put his back into making the nation more prosperous, a "One Nation" Conservative government would treat him fairly and do its best to ensure that he was properly rewarded.
- 30 In response to the increasingly impatient demands of the Conservative Right (including MPs such as Enoch Powell, Sir Ronald Bell, Dame Irene Ward, and Thomas Iremonger, along with the Inns of Court Conservative and Unionist Association³³) for a tougher stance toward the trade unions, Heath insisted that most trade union leaders appreciated the need to tackle the militants in their midst who fomented industrial conflict, and so "*the TUC should be given a further chance to deal themselves with their undisciplined minority*".³⁴
- 31 This voluntarist approach was maintained by Heath's successor, John Hare, who insisted that poor industrial relations could not be eradicated by introducing prescriptive or punitive Acts of Parliament (as relentlessly demanded by the Conservative Right). He also pointed out that attempting to enact such laws would alienate the moderate trade unionists who the Conservatives needed to win the trust and co-operation of. A confrontational approach would play into the hands of the Left, because they would cite this as evidence that the Party was inherently anti-trade union, and that the next Conservative government would attack workers' rights. Ministers therefore must avoid saying or doing anything which would give credence to the Left's allegations and leave moderate trade unionists isolated or feeling betrayed. As Hare explained to the Conservatives' 1960 annual conference: "*Our main job is to do*

everything we can to ... smooth the relationship between employers and unions ... Our aim must be to strengthen the sense of responsibility of both sides of industry", a stance he fully maintained at the Party's 1961 conference, when he insisted that any genuine and long-term improvement in industrial relations could only be secured through "*persuasion and by constant appeal to common sense and common interest*". He reiterated this argument when faced with demands to establish a Royal Commission to examine the relationship between trade unions and the law, and whether the latter needed to be strengthened.³⁵

32 Hare's successor, in 1963, was Joseph Godber, and although he was only Minister of Labour for one year (the Conservatives narrowly losing the 1964 general election) he was clearly committed to maintaining the conciliatory policy, much to the chagrin of the Party's Right (see previous page for examples) who not only believed that sundry economic and industrial problems warranted immediate legislation to tackle alleged trade union irresponsibility and militancy, but that such a change of policy would be popular among millions of voters with an election imminent. Godber, however, not only adhered to the existing voluntarist policy as a matter of principle, but also due to the pragmatic calculation that pledging radical reform of industrial relations might alienate some voters, especially moderate trade unionists.³⁶

33 This continued conciliatory stance was strongly endorsed by the Conservative Party's labour committee³⁷, which was adamant that "*the law and its apparatus of injunctions, damages, fines, penal sanctions, etc, has little to contribute to the solution of the problems of industrial relations*". On the contrary, the committee insisted laws which attempted to determine which trade union activities were legal or illegal, and in what circumstances or under which circumstances, "*have been shown from experience to be almost totally unenforceable and to do more harm than good*".³⁸

34 What further reinforced this voluntarist approach to industrial relations and trade unionism during the 1950s and early 1960s was the in-house or institutional philosophy of the Ministry of Labour itself. It interpreted its role as being to promote closer co-operation and partnership between managers and workers, a scenario which could not be achieved by imposing prescriptive rules and regulations, or restrictive legislation. Even when the Ministry was called upon to intervene in a major industrial dispute, it resolutely tried to maintain an impartial role as a neutral mediator between the two sides of industry by promoting conciliation and compromise. From 1944 to 1956, its Permanent Secretary³⁹ was Sir Godfrey Ince, who explained that the Ministry's perspective was "*that industry should be given the fullest encouragement to settle its own affairs*", with the State only intervening when asked to do so by both sides of industry, or when there existed no established institutional machinery for resolving serious disputes (or perhaps the machinery had somehow broken down). This voluntarist policy, he insisted, "*has been eminently successful*".⁴⁰

The tide slowly begins to turn, 1970-79

35 Although Edward Heath's 1970-74 Conservative Government implemented the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, which imposed a comprehensive legal framework on the trade unions, the more consistent and systematic abandonment of One Nation Conservatism really came later, under Margret Thatcher's leadership, and even then, the process was initially slow. With hindsight, what was most notable about the 1971 Act, in the context of this article, was the haste with which it was abandoned when it prompted

widespread trade union opposition and non-compliance, and Heath's Government also encountered unfavourable judicial decisions when legal challenges ensued. These responses convinced many One Nation Conservatives that the Industrial Relations Act had either been a mistake, by appearing too draconian or radical.⁴¹ By 1972, the Heath Government was abandoning most of the seemingly Right-wing programme on which it had contested the 1970 general election, and instead sought to return to the type of One Nation policies which the 1951-64 Conservative Governments had consistently pursued, including communication, co-operation and partnership with the trade unions.

- 36 Even when the Heath Government's incomes policies were challenged in 1972 and early 1974 via strikes by the National Union Mineworkers – the latter dispute prompting Heath to call a general election on the theme of “who governs Britain; democratically-elected governments or unelected militant trade unions?” – One Nation Conservatives still refused to abandon their conviction that better industrial relations and the trust of the unions could best be secured via a constructive and conciliatory approach by Ministers towards trade unions, and by encouraging the two sides of industry to work more closely together, however long this might take; pragmatism and patience were essential. When the Conservative Right cited the unhappy experiences of the Heath Government in support of their demands for another legislative programme to restrain and regulate the trade unions – following the 1974 election defeats, one critic of the Party's conciliatory approach insisted that “*bashing the unions is indeed the task that lies before the Conservative Party*”,⁴² – the Party's One Nation Tories responded that the experiences of the Heath Government were clear proof that the industrial strength of the unions was too great to be curbed by restrictive or punitive legislation, and that, instead meaningful discussions and dialogue, not Ministerial diktats and decrees, were essential if more harmonious industrial relations were ever to be established (see, for example, Douglas Hurd,⁴³ Ian Gilmour,⁴⁴ and James Prior⁴⁵). That a conciliatory approach had not been entirely successful until this juncture did not invalidate the rationale for such a policy, it actually made it necessary to pursue it with even more energy and determination.
- 37 In pursuit of this approach, Peter Walker suggested “the creation of an assembly of industry” in which trade union and business leaders would meet regularly “to discuss matters relevant to immediate economic and industrial conditions of our nation”, and which “could make a substantial contribution to the creation of a new climate in industry”.⁴⁶ A similar institution was proposed by Ian Gilmour.⁴⁷ Such proposals clearly reflected the continued One Nation conviction that the key to improved industrial relations, and thus fewer strikes, was further incorporation of trade unions, via their leaders, into national-level and neo-corporatist forums in which economic and industrial policies would be regularly discussed. This would give institutional impetus to the goal of establishing one nation between capital and (organised) labour, and by facilitating frequent communication and consultation between the two sides of industry, was intended to assuage the distrust and suspicion which were still thought to underpin much of the class conflict in the workplace.
- 38 Although One Nation Conservatives were genuinely committed to these policies to foster industrial harmony and partnership between capital and labour, and therefore resisted Right-wing demands for legislation to restrict the activities and impact of trade unions, there was also an electoral consideration. In the 1974 general elections,

Labour had seemingly convinced many voters that it was the only Party which could work harmoniously with the trade unions due to mutual trust and shared policy objectives. The clear implication was that the return of a Conservative government would herald a renewed salvo of class warfare via more anti-trade union laws, reflecting the Left's claim that the Conservatives were the Party of big business and bosses, and thus inherently hostile to trade unions and workers' rights.

- 39 The One Nation Conservatives were determined to refute these allegations and suspicions by continuing to promote policies to secure industrial partnership and the incorporation of the trade unions (via their leaders) into national-level discussions and decision-taking, and *inter alia* assuage voters' apparent fears that Conservative governments and the trade unions would permanently be embroiled in bitter conflicts and industrial warfare. As Douglas Hurd emphasised, there was "no way" that the Conservative Party could "*prosper by setting class against class, however many warlike telegrams its supporters might send*".⁴⁸
- 40 The fatalistic assumption that the strength of trade unions was a simple fact of economic industrial life which Conservatives needed to accept was partly reinforced when a confidential 'authority of government' group in the Party considered issues pertaining to industrial relations and trade unionism between 1975 and 1978.⁴⁹ Although its membership was ideologically eclectic, it was chaired by a senior One Nation Conservative, Lord (Peter) Carrington, and also included another prominent One Nation amongst its membership, Ian Gilmour. The ideological diversity of the Group's membership was clearly reflected in its report, which contained a series of proposals about how the next Conservative government should attempt to avoid confrontation with the trade unions, and another set of recommendations about what it could or should do if (or when) it did face such a direct challenge – on the Right, Nicholas Ridley in particular, believed that the latter scenario was almost inevitable, the issue not being *whether* the next Conservative government would face a major industrial confrontation, but *when*, from *who*, over *what* specific issue, and *how* Ministers should prepare for, or respond to, such a challenge?⁵⁰
- 41 These questions were addressed by two other "secret" policy review groups during this time, the membership of which was more ideologically sympathetic to Thatcher's perspective, and thus more determined to overcome the "defeatism" of the One Nation Conservatives who insisted that trade union power was an immutable fact of industrial life which the Conservatives had to accept and live with. One of these policy groups, the "Stepping Stones" group, was very loosely and informally organised – maybe referring to it as a group overstates its organisational strength or structure – and comprised Sir John Hoskyns (a businessmen alarmed by the direction of British politics in the 1960s and 1970s and *dirigiste* economics), Keith Joseph, Alfred Sherman (whose parents had fled the Soviet Union; Sherman was closely involved in the Right-wing think tank the Centre for Policy Studies, established by Thatcher and Joseph in 1974), and Norman Strauss (another senior businessman who shared Hoskyns' grave concerns about increasing State intervention in the economy and the power of the trade unions). They were later joined at some of their informal meetings by Thatcher herself, and occasionally, Geoffrey Howe.
- 42 Needless to say, Hoskyns was highly critical of Prior's archetypal One Nation approach to the trade union, describing him as "A nice ... man, hoping to meet stupidity and ruthlessness with concessions and pragmatism".⁵¹ Yet Hoskyns and Strauss were adamant

that curbing trade union power was a prerequisite of pursuing the broader changes in political economy which Britain apparently needed; unless the unions were significantly and permanently weakened, they would be able to veto or otherwise undermine any policies which they disagreed with: “*Any strategy which does not address this problem of the trade union role from the outset, ensures failure in office*”.⁵² It was thus deemed vital that the next Conservative government was fully prepared to tackle trade union power, even if it meant a head-on confrontation between Ministers and the unions. How it should seek to pursue this crucial objective was outlined in 68-page “stepping stones” report, submitted to Thatcher in November 1977.⁵³

- 43 The other secret policy group convened to consider how the next Conservative Government should deal with a major challenge from the trade unions (or even from an individual, but powerful, union) was the “nationalised industries” policy group (which was effectively a sub-committee of the ‘economic reconstruction’ group), chaired by the Thatcherite future Cabinet Minister, Nicholas Ridley. When it published its conclusions and recommendations in 1977, he added an “appendix” titled “Countering the Political Threat”, which subsequently became known as “the Ridley Report”, in which he outlined how the next Conservative government should make long-term plans for a major strike by workers in a key nationalised industry or public utility.
- 44 Elsewhere in the Conservative Party, trenchant criticism of the trade unions emanated from some MPs who subsequently became prominent Ministers and close allies of Thatcher in the 1980s, to the extent that they actively promoted and pursued “Thatcherism” and strongly denounced the One Nation Tories. One prominent critic was Norman Tebbit, who later became an Employment Secretary with responsibility for pursuing trade union reform. On one occasion, when the Conservatives were in Opposition, he referred to “*big, greedy, arrogant, powerful mobsters masquerading as trade unionists*”, then just three days later, claimed that there were people in the Conservative Party with the morality of Laval and Petain who hoped to profit personally from a policy of appeasement, rather than fighting evil.⁵⁴ Another future Cabinet Minister, David Howell, referred to “*the self-interested mafia*” and “*well-heeled princes of trade union officialdom*” who wielded such immense power both over their members, and British governments.⁵⁵
- 45 It was clear that by the second half of the 1970s, a shift was underway inside the Conservative Party, which was ideological and demographic. The conciliatory and consensual One Nation Conservatives were increasingly being challenged and forced on the defensive by more combative Right-wing Conservatives. The latter were generally younger and emanated from less privileged backgrounds; lower middle class or *petit-bourgeois*, and educated at grammar schools rather than elite fee-paying schools like Eton. This newer or younger cohort of Conservatives rejected the paternalism and *noblesse oblige* of the One Nation Tories, and shared the resentment of trade unions and “bolshie” workers which was common among the self-employed and small businesses. Thatcher herself personified this change, of course, and strongly identified with this strata of British society, who she viewed as the bedrock or backbone of British society; entrepreneurial, frugal, hard-working, individualistic, morally virtuous, and self-reliant. They, in turn, viewed her as a kindred spirit and political saviour who would rescue them from militant trade unions and Socialism.

One Nation Conservatism in relentless retreat, 1979-1990

- 46 The 11 years of Margaret Thatcher's premiership witnessed the steady and irreversible decline of the One Nation Conservatives in general, and their constructive approach to industrial relations and trade unionism in particular. Numerically, there were only slightly fewer One Nation Conservatives than Thatcherites among the Party's MPs throughout the 1980s, constituting 18% and 19% of the parliamentary intake respectively; most Conservative MPs were "loyalists", in that they were loyal to Thatcher as an electorally successful leader, rather than to her ideology itself.⁵⁶ However, despite their relative parity, the One Nation Conservatives, such as Ian Gilmour, James Prior, Francis Pym, and Chris Patten, suffered from four weaknesses during Thatcher's premiership, which meant that they exercised steadily diminishing influence over key economic and industrial policies.
- 47 The first problem they faced was simply that Thatcher and her ideological disciples were increasingly able to set the Government's agenda, and dominate the terms of debate, by confidently and consistently promoting neoliberalism.⁵⁷ Not only did this portray the principles and precepts of neoliberalism as natural and necessary – simple "common sense", and thus apparently non-ideological – it also depicted the conciliatory and consensual policies of the One Nation Conservatives (and Labour governments) as culpable for the economic and industrial problems afflicting Britain in the 1970s. In particular, the One Nation Conservatives' consistent rejection of legislation to "reform" industrial relations, and their apparent enthusiasm in previously abandoning the 1971 Industrial Relations Act in order to return to consensus politics and neo-corporatist industrial partnership, was deemed to be a major reason for the increased – and increasingly destructive – power of the trade unions, and the manner in which this strength had apparently rendered Britain ungovernable.⁵⁸ In this context, Thatcherites deemed the consensual and conciliatory policies of the One Nation Conservatives to have been thoroughly discredited, and thus their advocacy of renewed partnership or at least, dialogue, with the trade unions, were contemptuously dismissed, and viewed as evidence that they had learned nothing from the bitter experiences of the 1970s.
- 48 One of Thatcher's closest ideological allies and Ministerial colleagues, Norman Tebbit, subsequently characterised the One Nation Conservatives as "*the weaker-willed, the craven-hearted, the embittered failures*" in the Conservative Party who wanted Margaret Thatcher to depart so that they could revert to the failed policies of the recent past.⁵⁹ Thatcher held the One Nation Conservatives in similar contempt, accusing them of being "*political calculators who see the task of Conservatives as one of retreating gracefully before the Left's inevitable advance*".⁶⁰ In effect, the One Nation Conservatives were viewed by the Thatcherites as "Yesterday's Men", a mostly older generation nostalgically yearning for a return to the policies of the post-war consensus in British politics, and apparently unable or unwilling to accept change, or their own increasing political impotence.
- 49 Not surprisingly, during his tenure as Employment Secretary, Prior was under constant pressure from Thatcher and her ideological allies to go further and faster in initiating the Government's proposed reform of industrial relations and the trade unions. Although Prior and other One Nation Conservatives now acknowledged – after the

“winter of discontent” – that some reform of trade unionism was necessary to prevent a repeat of such industrial disruption and the public inconvenience it caused, he was still determined to keep prescriptive or punitive legislation to the absolute minimum, and retained his hope that more moderate and responsible trade union behaviour could be secured through dialogue and discussion with trade union leaders. He also hoped that as far as practicably possible, codes of practice could be adopted to influence trade union activities and conduct, rather than statutory restrictions. This softly-softly approach, of course, infuriated Thatcher and her closest allies in the Cabinet, and some of her Special Advisers in the Prime Minister’s Policy Unit.⁶¹

- 50 The second problem that the One Nation Conservatives faced in countering the Thatcherites in government during the 1980s was Thatcher’s allocation of Cabinet posts and Ministerial portfolios. With the initial exception of James Prior as Employment Secretary, Thatcher placed her ideological acolytes in the key economic Ministries like the Treasury, and the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Department of Employment, from where the neoliberal economic revolution could be pursued, entailing cuts in direct taxation, privatisation, deregulation, curbs on public spending, attempts at controlling the money supply (monetarism), and, crucially for this article, weakening the trade unions. Thatcher had retained the conciliatory One Nation James Prior to assuage public concerns before the 1979 election, and also to pre-empt trade union allegations, that a Thatcher-led Conservative government would herald a major assault on organised labour and workers’ rights, but in her first Cabinet reshuffle in September 1981, Prior was replaced by Norman Tebbit, and although he was more cautious in reforming trade unions and employment (protection) laws than some of his supporters had hoped, he nonetheless went rather further than Prior had done; both men adopted a step-by-step policy to regulate trade union activities and curb their power, but Tebbit’s strides were longer than Prior’s, and he clearly intended to travel much further.
- 51 The third weakness which the One Nation Conservatives encountered regarding the Thatcherite pursuit of trade union reform was the extent to which Thatcher and her closest colleagues, as we noted above, had previously planned and prepared, while in Opposition, both for trade union reform, and the likelihood of another major industrial confrontation or strike. As such, the Thatcher Governments’ pragmatic, step-by-step, approach to reforming industrial relations and *inter alia* weakening the trade unions was strategic and had been carefully planned in advance – it was not the usual “muddling through” which incrementalism often entails – with much of the groundwork having been undertaken, prior to 1979, by the “authority of government” group, the ‘stepping stones’ group, and via the “Ridley report”. The last of these especially provided the basis and framework for the Thatcher Government’s preparation for, and consequent defeat of, the 1984-85 strike led by National Union of Mineworkers against the large-scale closure of ‘uneconomic’ coal mines in lieu of privatising the industry.⁶² Part of Ridley’s motivation was his strong suspicion that James Prior “*had no intention of carrying out any serious reforms of trade union law*”.⁶³
- 52 Whereas the One Nation Conservatives would almost certainly have attempted to avoid such head-on confrontation, probably by seeking an agreed and longer-term programme of pit closures and/or more generous redundancy or redeployment schemes, the Thatcherites relished the opportunity to confront the NUM and “stand firm” until the strike was abandoned after 12 months, with no concessions granted. By

defeating Britain's erstwhile strongest trade union in this manner, Thatcher and her ideological acolytes gleefully sent a signal to all other trade unions that if they challenged the Government, they too would be humiliatingly defeated, and their members forced to return to work empty-handed. The One Nation strategy of co-operation, conciliation and compromise with the trade unions was now over, consigned to history.

- 53 In this context, the continued hope of some One Nation Conservatives that weakened and chastened trade unions could once again be invited into a partnership of a quasi-corporatist kind was not to be realised.⁶⁴ On the contrary, Thatcherites were ideologically opposed to granting the unions any role whatsoever in economic or industrial discussions or decision-taking, and having irrevocably weakened them, saw no need to establish a renewed partnership with them; they could now be totally ignored. The only views which Thatcherite Ministers were willing to listen to (and respond favourably) were those of employers and entrepreneurs, the latter venerated as heroic "wealth-creators" or new deities.
- 54 The fourth weakness which the One Nation Conservatives faced *vis-à-vis* the Thatcherite approach to industrial relations and trade union reform in the 1980s was the discourse deployed by Thatcher and her closest Ministerial colleagues to legitimise and popularise their legislative curbs. To avoid or deny allegations that they were attacking or suppressing trade unions *qua* institutions, Thatcherites incorporated "individualism" (instead of collectivism) into the discourse deployed to explain and legitimise trade union reform. Hence Ministers' claims that the Thatcher Governments were 'handing the unions back to the members' when enacting legislation requiring secret ballots to be conducted both before strike action, and to elect union leaders: these ballots were also depicted as being motivated by a drive to "democratise" the trade unions and thereby empower ordinary trade unionists.
- 55 Of course, Thatcherites were not interested in "democratising" the workplace more generally by granting workers a voice in company or corporate decisions which affected them - on the contrary, Thatcherites insisted on "management's right to manage" and restoring employers' authority in the workplace, in order to secure "labour market flexibility", all of which meant weakening employment protection and workers' rights. The increased power which trade unionists were granted *vis-à-vis* their union leaders was vastly outweighed by the much greater power which Thatcherites took away from them *vis-à-vis* their employers.
- 56 Similarly, when outlawing the closed shop⁶⁵, Ministers couched this in the discourse of extending individual liberty to workers, and freeing them from the "tyranny" of being compelled to join a union against their wishes; the latter being portrayed as a form of coercion or industrial conscription.⁶⁶ Besides, Ministers implied, if a trade union was doing a good job, surely workers would want to join voluntarily to enjoy the benefits; they surely should not need to be coerced as a contractual condition of employment? This argument, of course, overlooked the extent to which many workers would automatically benefit from improved terms and conditions of employment (including pay) negotiated by a trade union, even when those workers were not union members paying their subscription fee, because the improvements attained via collective bargaining would usually apply to the whole workforce; the classic free-rider problem.
- 57 For all these reasons therefore, the One Nation Conservatives proved powerless to resist the Thatcher Government's weakening and marginalisation of the trade unions

throughout the 1980s. Indeed, the One Nation Conservatives found themselves also weakened and marginalised, intellectually and organisationally, as their arguments and proposed policy alternatives were brusquely dismissed and derided, and they were either returned to the relative impotence of the backbenches in the House of Commons, or appointed to Ministerial posts which denied them any influence over policies towards industrial relations and trade unionism; they were kept well away from these spheres, thus ensuring that economic and industrial affairs were dominated by Thatcherites, or at the very least, Ministers who Thatcher trusted to behave faithfully and loyally in enacting her neoliberal policy agenda. Thatcher (and her ideological allies) had almost as much contempt for the One Nation Conservatives as she did for the trade unions, and was thus determined to eviscerate both. Moreover, both continued to decline inexorably after Thatcher's 1990 resignation; her political departure did not herald any recovery or revival, either of the trade unions, or the One Nation Conservatives.

Conclusion

- 58 The zenith of One Nation Conservatism in Britain was during the 1950s and early 1960s, and this was reflected in the economic and industrial policies pursued by senior Conservatives during his epoch. The Party was dominated, intellectually and organisationally, by senior Conservatives who prioritised government by consent as far as practicably possible, and whose policies towards industrial relation and the trade unions were characterised by conciliation and the pursuit of partnership. This approach, they believed, was the only viable strategy for Conservatives to secure the trust the trade unions, and thereby persuade them to behave more responsibly, in terms of refraining from repeated strike activity or pursuing allegedly excessive wage increases. Furthermore, industrial partnership would give practical effect to the goal of creating "One Nation" and this harmony, both in the workplace, in industrial sectors, and nationally; at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels. However, One Nation Conservatives were adamant that the industrial co-operation and partnership they sought could not be attained via legislation to compel the trade unions to behave in desirable ways; on the contrary, any attempt by a Conservative government to regulate the trade unions would immediately exacerbate their latent or inherent suspicion of the Conservatives, and hereby destroy the prospect of closer cooperation and the development of trust.
- 59 However, this conciliatory approach, and the arguments upon which it was predicated, were seriously weakened by the serious economic problems and industrial conflicts which Britain experienced in the 1970s. Although the One Nation Conservatives still emphasised the need for a long-term strategy of conciliation and partnership both between the two sides of industry, and with governments, they increasingly found themselves being challenged, and forced on the defensive, by a new cohort in the Conservative Party, led by Margaret Thatcher, whose *petit-bourgeois* and ideological hostility to the trade unions was fully shared by a growing number of her parliamentary and (later) Ministerial colleagues, intellectually influential and ideologically aligned individuals who were not actually Conservative MPs, but were politically and personally close to Thatcher (Friedrich Hayek, John Hoskyns, Alfred

Sherman, Norman Strauss), and the burgeoning “New Right” think tanks such as the Centre for Policy Studies and Institute of Economic Affairs.

- 60 The proudly non-ideological One Nation Conservatives found it difficult to challenge or resist the ideologically-driven, neoliberal, and anti-trade union arguments and policies advanced by the Thatcherites, especially as Thatcher and her coterie of increasingly confident and assertive ideological allies contemptuously pointed to the apparent failings of the conciliatory and consensual approach to trade unionism in the 1970s: two major strikes by the NUM in 1972 and 1974, and the 1978-79 winter of discontent, were hardly shining examples of the industrial harmony and cooperation promoted by One Nation Tories. As such, during the 1980s, the One Nation Conservatives found that they, just like the trade unions, were viewed with disdain by Thatcherites and increasingly weakened and marginalised: cooperation was replaced by competition, conciliation was replaced by confrontation, and consensus policies were replaced by conviction politics.

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53. *Ibid.* For a detailed account of the development of the 'stepping stones' report, see Peter Dorey, 'The "Stepping Stones" Programme: The Conservative Party's Struggle to Develop a Trade-Union Policy, 1975-79', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 2014.
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56. Philip Norton, "'The Lady's not for turning'" but what about the rest?', 1990.
57. Peter Dorey, 'Neoliberalism in Britain: from Origins to Orthodoxy' in Nathalie Levy, Alexis Chommeloux, Nathalie A. Champroux, Stephane Porion, Selma Josso, Audrey Damiens (eds) *The Anglo-American Model of Neo-Liberalism and its Consequences*, pp. 97-116.
58. On the issue of (un)governability in Britain in the 1970s, see Anthony King, 'Overload: Problems of Governing in the 1970s', 1975; Anthony King (ed) *Why is Britain Becoming Harder to Govern?*, 1976; BBC; Robert Moss, *The Collapse of Democracy*, 1976; Richard Rose, 'Ungovernability: Is There Fire Behind the Smoke?' 1979.
59. Norman Tebbit, *Upwardly Mobile*, 1988, p. 181.
60. Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p. 104.
61. This impatience was expressed both in Cabinet or other Ministerial meetings, and via correspondence. See for example: TNA, PREM 19/70, Prior to Thatcher, 14 May 1979; TNA, PREM 19/70, Lankester [Thatcher's Private Secretary] to Fair [Prior's Private Secretary], 16 May 1979; TNA PREM 19/70, Joseph to Prior, 7 June 1979; TNA, PREM 19/70, Howe to Thatcher, 25 September 1979; TNA PREM19/262, Hoskyns to Thatcher, 5 February 1980; TNA PREM 19/261, Hoskyns to Howe, 28 January 1980', 29 January 1980: TNA, PREM 19/261, Howe to Thatcher, 4 February 1980: TNA, CAB 134/4442, E (80), 'Meeting of Ministerial Committee on Economic Strategy, 6 February 1980; TNA, PREM 19/265, Hoskyns to Thatcher, 28 November 1980; TNA, PREM 19/491, Hoskyns to Thatcher, 3 August 1981: TNA, PREM 19/491 'Trade Union Immunities' - record of meeting between Margaret Thatcher, James Prior, Michael Jopling and Norman St John Stevas, 2 September 1981.
62. Peter Dorey, 'It was just like arming to face the threat of Hitler in the late 1930s': The Ridley Report and the Conservative Party's preparations for the 1984-84 miners' strike', 2013.
63. Nicholas Ridley, *My Style of Government*, 1991, p. 14.
64. See, for example, Tony Baldry, 'Time to Talk', 1985, pp. 10-11; Ian Gilmour, *Britain Can Work*, 1983, p. 206; Chris Patten, *The Tory Case*, 1983, pp. 128-29; Francis Pym, *The Politics of Consent*, 1985, pp. 160-62, p. 182.
65. Compulsory membership of a trade union in some companies or industries, and which was therefore a condition of employment.
66. Peter Dorey, 'Individual Liberty Versus Industrial Order: Conservatives and the Trade Union Closed Shop 1946-90', 2009b.

ABSTRACTS

Although the relationship between the Conservative Party and the trade unions has often been characterised by mutual distrust and hostility, there was a unique period, from 1945 until the early 1960s, when senior Conservatives pursued a conciliatory and constructive approach to the trade unions, and insisted that harmonious industrial relations could not be secured by punitive legislation or political diktats. Instead, the paternalistic One Nation Conservatives who dominated the Party during this time, such as Rab Butler, Joseph Godber, Ian Macleod, Harold Macmillan, and Walter Monckton, emphasised that peace in industry could only be secured by developing trust via closer co-operation, dialogue and industrial partnership. This reflected the One Nation view that industrial conflict was often a consequence of workers feeling alienated, insecure and under-valued in large-scale, and impersonal, industries, where a growing gulf between workers and managers developed, and minor grievances smouldered. It was envisaged that this consensual and conciliatory strategy would result in reduced trade union militancy, and thus fewer strikes in pursuit of inflationary wage increases. This, in turn, would reduce the pressure from right-wing Conservatives for repressive legislation against the trade unions. From the 1970s onwards, though, this cohort of conciliatory One Nation Conservatives was superseded by a new generation of Conservative MPs and Ministers who heralded an ideological transformation in the Party. Often emanating from lower middle class or *petit bourgeois* backgrounds, many of these newer, younger, Conservatives were self-made men and women, and saw themselves as representatives or symbols of small businesses, individual entrepreneurs, and the self-employed especially. They were openly hostile towards trade unions, believing that they and their industrial militancy were responsible for many of Britain's economic problems, such as excessive wage increases, high inflation, low productivity, and management's inability to take tough commercial decisions, including the introduction of new working practices and technologies, due to the likelihood that these would prompt strikes by trade unions concerned with defending jobs. The decline of the One Nation Conservatives was therefore accompanied by a much more combative and confrontational approach by the Conservative Party towards workers and trade unions since the 1970s.

Bien que la relation entre le Parti conservateur et les syndicats ait souvent été caractérisée par une méfiance et une hostilité mutuelles, il y eut une période unique, de 1945 au début des années 1960, où les conservateurs de haut rang adoptèrent une approche conciliante et constructive à l'égard des syndicats, et insistèrent sur le fait que des relations industrielles harmonieuses ne pouvaient être garanties par une législation punitive ou des diktats politiques. Au lieu de cela, les conservateurs paternalistes One Nation qui dominaient le parti à cette époque, tels que Rab Butler, Joseph Godber, Ian Macleod, Harold Macmillan et Walter Monckton, soulignèrent que des relations pacifiées dans l'industrie ne pouvaient être garanties que par le développement de la confiance et d'une coopération plus étroite, le dialogue et le partenariat industriel. Cela reflétait le point de vue « One Nation » selon lequel les conflits industriels étaient souvent la conséquence d'un sentiment d'aliénation, d'insécurité et de sous-estimation des travailleurs dans des industries de grande taille et impersonnelles, où un fossé grandissant se creusait entre les travailleurs et les dirigeants et où des griefs mineurs couvaient. Cette stratégie consensuelle et conciliante devait permettre de réduire le militantisme syndical et, par conséquent, de diminuer le nombre de grèves visant à obtenir des augmentations salariales inflationnistes. Ceci, à son tour, réduirait la pression des conservateurs de droite en faveur d'une législation répressive contre les syndicats. À partir des années 1970, cependant, cette cohorte de conservateurs conciliants de type One Nation fut remplacée par une nouvelle génération de députés et de

ministres conservateurs qui entamèrent une transformation idéologique du parti. Souvent issus de la classe moyenne inférieure ou de la petite bourgeoisie, nombre de ces nouveaux conservateurs plus jeunes étaient des hommes et des femmes qui avaient réussi par eux-mêmes et se considéraient comme les représentants ou les symboles des petites entreprises, des entrepreneurs individuels et des travailleurs indépendants en particulier. Ils étaient ouvertement hostiles aux syndicats, estimant que ces derniers et leur militantisme industriel étaient responsables de nombreux problèmes économiques britanniques, tels que les augmentations de salaire excessives, l'inflation élevée, la faible productivité et l'incapacité de la direction à prendre des décisions commerciales difficiles, notamment l'introduction de nouvelles pratiques et technologies de travail, en raison de la probabilité qu'elles entraîneraient des grèves des syndicats soucieux de défendre les emplois. Le déclin des conservateurs One Nation s'est ainsi accompagnée d'une approche beaucoup plus combative et conflictuelle du parti conservateur à l'égard des travailleurs et des syndicats depuis les années 1970.

INDEX

Mots-clés: discussion(s), législation, gestion, partenariat, confiance, volontarisme/volontariste

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