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VOLUNTARISM AND THE STATE IN BRITISH SOCIAL
WELFARE
1914 - 1939

IRVINE WALLACE TAIT

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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & SOCIAL HISTORY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

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ABSTRACT

The New Right's critique of the welfare state has generated considerable interest in the history of alternative forms of welfare provision. Recent work has focused upon the continued existence of voluntarism alongside the growth of twentieth century state welfare. In doing this, it has reacted against the tendency of post-war social welfare writing to concentrate exclusively on the statutory social services.

This thesis, therefore, adds to a growing body of writing on inter-war voluntary social action. However, it differs from the work of others by focusing upon the interplay of voluntary and statutory sectors in the face of war, industrial unrest and mass unemployment: in other words the upheavals of the early twentieth century. The main body of the research not only deals with the part played by both sectors in the delivery of social services, but also places voluntarism in a wider social context by exploring its ideological response to working-class assertiveness. Indeed, the belief in a British national community with interests that transcended class or sectional divisions was a common feature in voluntarism's attitude towards the above challenges and their implications for social stability. Thus, by highlighting the class objectives of the middle-class volunteer, this thesis avoids treating voluntary groups as simply the deliverers of social services in partnership with the state. As middle-class organisations operating within civil society, the charities covered in the pages ahead are placed alongside the state and capital in the defence of the existing economic and social order. Differences may have existed amongst charities over the correct mix in the statutory-voluntary welfare mix, but, as this thesis seeks to prove, this should not blind us to voluntarism's commitment to an over riding class interest.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| COQ | Charity Organisation Quarterly. |
| COR | Charity Organisation Review. |
| COS | Charity Organisation Society. |
| CPGB. | Communist Party of Great Britain. |
| LGB | Local Government Board. |
| NCSS | National Council of Social Service. |
| NRF | National Relief Fund. |
| NSPCC | National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. |
| NUWM | National Unemployed Workers' Movement. |
| OMS | Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies. |
| PEP | Political and Economic Planning. |
| SSFA | Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association. |
| SSHS | Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society. |
| STUC | Scottish Trades Union Congress. |
| TUC | Trades Union Congress. |
| UAB | Unemployment Assistance Board. |
| YMCA | Young Men's Christian Association. |
| YWCA | Young Women's Christian Association. |
| WRG | War Refugees Committee. |

INTRODUCTION

In the quarter century after World War Two, British politics was characterised by a cross-party consensus on the mixed economy and the welfare state. William Beveridge's famous report of 1942 had called for a universal national insurance scheme which covered people "from cradle to grave."¹ Alongside this scheme, Beveridge advocated a national health service, family allowances and a commitment by governments to full employment. Between 1945 and 1948 most of these measures were implemented by Attlee's first Labour Government, and this laid the basis for a long period of agreement amongst policy makers on the desirability of state welfare.²

This commitment to the welfare state was explained in a variety of ways. Fabian academics like Richard Titmuss, Anthony Crosland and T. H. Marshall justified statutory provision by reference to such objectives as social integration, the promotion of equality and citizenship.³ For Conservatives who were less enthusiastic about some of these aims, support for the welfare state could be explained as a continuation of the paternalism which had been a feature of British Tory thought since Disraeli if not before. The value of welfare to the right was also picked up by John Saville who produced one of the earliest Marxist interpretations of the welfare state. Writing in 1957, Saville rejected the view that statutory social services were solely the product of the working-class movement and its social democratic governments. Although Saville did believe that class struggle was one factor behind the welfare state, he also

¹ Social Insurance and Allied Services: Report by Sir William Beveridge, (London: HMSO, 1942) Cmd, 6404.

² Paul Addison argues that the convergence between the two parties was largely complete by the end of the 1940s. See P. Addison The Road to 1945, (London: Quartet Books, 1977), p 275. Support for a consensus in post-war politics can be found in D. Kavanagh & P. Morris, Consensus Politics from Attlee to Thatcher, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989). Some recent research has, however, attempted to discredit this view. See, for example, N. Rollings 'Poor Mr Butskell: A Short life Wrecked by Schizophrenia?' Twentieth Century British History, Vol 1, No 2, 1994, pp 183 - 205.

³ R. Titmuss, Essays on the Welfare State, (London: Unwin, 1963), p 39, C. A. R. Crosland, 'The Transition from Capitalism', in New Fabian Essays, (London: Turnstile Press, 1952), p 39, and T. H. Marshall, The Right to Welfare, (London: Heinemann, 1981), p 93.

pointed out that sections of the middle class could justify social reform on grounds of economic efficiency and political stability.⁴ As these considerations were not without significance in the mid 1940s, statutory provision had to be partially seen in relation to the requirements of industrial capitalism.

The existence of what appeared to be a stable welfare state had important implications for writing on the history of the social services in Britain. During the 1960s commentators such as Maurice Bruce and Gertrude Williams set about explaining the origins and development of the post-war welfare settlement.⁵ Works like Bruce's The Coming of the Welfare State provided the background to an institution which had become part of the accepted political vocabulary of the time. As Geoffrey Finlayson argues, the tendency to work the words "welfare state" into the titles of books, "reflected a dominant cultural and political characteristic" centring around the acceptance of an established and apparently lasting set of welfare institutions.⁶

However, according to Finlayson, one of the problems with this concentration on statutory provision was its marginalisation of those voluntary social services which, even in the post-war period, continued to exist alongside the state. Throughout the twentieth century there existed what might be called a welfare mix, with voluntarism playing a part in the overall pattern of social service provision. This fact was emphasised by David Owen in his 1965 study, English Philanthropy 1660 - 1960.⁷ By concentrating on philanthropy rather than the state, Owen was swimming against the tide of writing on social welfare. Nevertheless, whilst recognising the inadequacy of charity in

⁴ J. Saville, 'The Welfare State: An Historical Approach', in Social Welfare in Modern Britain E. Butterworth and R. Holman (eds) (London: Fontana, 1975) pp 57 - 69. For later Marxist work on the welfare state see I. Gough, The Political Economy of the Welfare State, (London: Macmillan, 1979) and N. Ginsburg, Class, Capital and Social Policy, (London: Macmillan, 1979).

⁵ M. Bruce, The Coming of the Welfare State, (London: Batsford, 1961), and G. Williams, The Coming of the Welfare State, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967).

⁶ G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare in Britain 1830 - 1990 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p 1.

⁷ D. Owen, English Philanthropy, 1660 - 1960, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1965), p 543.

comparison with the needs of a modern industrial society, he optimistically concluded that the welfare state of the 1960s had left, and would continue to leave, room for "considerable voluntary resources both human and financial."⁸

In the 1950s, sixties and even the seventies, then, many social welfare writers were willing to overlook twentieth century voluntarism because of its junior status in the delivery of social services. Of course the same could not be said for historians of Victorian welfare who recognised that charity was an important source of poverty relief alongside the Poor Law.⁹ Yet although this period was something of a golden age for charity, it was frowned upon by post-war writers who associated the Victorian volunteer with evangelical zeal and middle-class social control. Derek Fraser pointed out in 1973 that much Victorian philanthropy was motivated by both a fear of revolution and a desire to spread the self-help ethos,¹⁰ while, two years earlier, Gareth Stedman-Jones applied this argument to the Charity Organisation Society whose notoriety stemmed from its desire to bridge the separation of the classes through the social control of the lower orders.¹¹ The manner in which the Victorian volunteer had carried out this regulation of the poor¹² - together with an awareness of voluntarism's inability to cope with distress during the inter-war years - led many in the post-war labour movement to the conclusion that charity was a word which thankfully belonged to a past age.

⁸ Ibid, p 597.

⁹ See for example, M. Rose, The Relief of Poverty, (London: Macmillan, 1972), p 25, and D. Fraser, The Evolution of The British Welfare State, (London: Macmillan, 1973) p 114.

¹⁰ D. Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State, p 119. This is not to suggest that Victorian charity should be seen solely in terms of stern individualism. As Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant point out in their work on the Charity Organisation Society, figures such as CS Loch, the Society's Secretary and Bernard Bosanquet, its leading philosopher, believed that character and independence helped realise the common good in the social organisation. See A. Vincent and R Plant, Philosophy Politics and Citizenship, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp 98 & 104.

¹¹ G. Stedman-Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p 257.

¹² J. Fido, 'The Charity Organisation Society and Social Casework in London 1869 - 1900', in A. P. Donajgradzki, (ed), Social Control in 19th Century Britain, (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp 207 - 227.

However, the influence contemporary events can have on historians is as true of the 1980s, as it was of the sixties and seventies. The confidence felt by business in advanced capitalist countries during the boom years was gradually undermined from the 1960s onwards by a number of factors including a fall in the rate of profit, worsening industrial relations, international financial uncertainty and the OPEC oil shock of 1973.¹³ Especially after the crash of 1974, governments in the west found it increasingly difficult to uphold their commitments to full employment and the welfare state. Moreover, against this background there emerged a more confident New Right critique of the post-war consensus and its support for the public social services. As we shall see shortly, these factors have provided a favourable context for recent research to challenge some of the negative connotations previously attached to voluntarism's past.

The term New Right refers to a wide range of opinion.¹⁴ On the one hand it includes thinkers like Robert Nozick, Friedrich Von Hayek and Milton Friedman, all of whom emphasise the importance of individual liberty and the market; while, on the other, it encompasses Conservatives like Roger Scruton who view private property as a prop for a strong state with authority which must take precedence over the liberty of the individual. However, regardless of these differences, the New Right was able to sharpen its criticisms of the welfare state during the economic downturn of the 1970s. There were, for example, those who agreed with Milton Friedman that many of the state's welfare activities had, far from encouraging economic growth, actually stifled wealth creation through the imposition of high taxation upon industry. Meanwhile, other writers, such as the American sociologist Charles Murray, attempted to undermine state

¹³ Between 1968 and 1973 the profit rate for advanced capitalist countries as a whole fell in business and manufacturing by one fifth. See P. Armstrong, A. Glynn and J. Harrison, Capitalism Since 1945, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp 182 - 183.

¹⁴ For more on the New Right see N. Bosanquet, After the New Right, (London: Heinemann, 1983), D. S. King, The New Right: Politics Markets and Citizenship (London: Macmillan, 1987), A. Gamble, The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism, (London: Macmillan, 1988), and S. Hall and M. Jacques, The Politics of Thatcherism, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983).

provision by linking it to dependency and the erosion of work habits amongst recipients. In his book, Losing Ground, Murray blamed President Johnson's Great Society Programme for damaging the will to work amongst able-bodied individuals. His solution to this problem involved scrapping the Federal welfare and income support system so as to force people of working age to either enter the labour market, or rely upon the support of family or friends.¹⁵ Another popular theme on the right pointed to the supposed inefficiency of the welfare state. This position drew upon Friedman's contention that public welfare services lacked the close concern with cost and the detailed attention to consumer wants which supposedly characterise market provision.¹⁶

For our purposes the most important argument put forward by the New Right was that the state had hindered the development of alternative sources of welfare supply. According to Arthur Seldon of the right-wing think tank, the Institute for Economic Affairs, market, family and voluntary sources had all suffered at the hands of a state which had both utilised available money and pre-empted the demand for alternative provision. In such aptly titled works as, Wither Welfare State and Welfare Without the State,¹⁷ Seldon concluded that, had they been given the chance, other sources of supply would have far "outshone the standardised, unresponsive and politically distorted institutions of the welfare state."¹⁸ This was allegedly the case in the field of health where the NHS had hindered the growth of more spontaneous, local and organic forms of provision which would have arisen due to rising incomes and technological development.¹⁹

¹⁵ K. Joseph, Stranded on the Middle Ground: Reflections on Circumstances and Policies, (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1976), C. Murray, Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950 - 1980, (New York: Basic Books, 1984), pp 228 - 229.

¹⁶ See M. Loney, The Politics of Greed: The New Right and the Welfare State, (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p 9.

¹⁷ A. Seldon, Wither the Welfare State, (London: Institute for Economic Affairs, 1981), and R. Harris & A. Seldon, Welfare Without the State: A Quarter Century of Suppressed Public Choice, (London: IEA, 1987).

¹⁸ A. Seldon Wither the Welfare State, p 16.

¹⁹ Quoted in V. George and P. Wilding, Ideology and Social Welfare (London: Routledge, 1989), p 40.

It is not difficult to challenge many of the claims made by the New Right about statutory provision. On the issue of state welfare and economic efficiency, Martin Loney argues that Britain's economic growth rates in the 1970s went hand in hand with levels of social expenditure which were lower than those of some countries with more impressive economic performances.²⁰ The supposed inefficiency of the welfare state has been challenged by evidence which suggests that central government budgetary control and delivery of health services is conducive to cost containment in health care.²¹ This case is supported by the experience of the United States where significant cost inflation applies to the country's predominantly private health care system.²² In addition, Seldon's argument about the superiority of voluntary over state provision has failed to convince many social policy writers. Vic George and Paul Wilding, to take two examples, argue that Seldon's argument is flawed because, "the need for social services has been created through economic, social and demographic changes, and the satisfaction of that need cannot be left either to the private market or to the family".²³ Consequently, they argue, withdrawal of state services would result in a substantial increase in suffering.

Nevertheless, the anti-collectivist arguments of the New Right coincided with important developments at the level of policy making. Even before 1979, and the election of a Conservative party influenced by New Right ideas, the state had recognised the value of a revival in voluntary provision.²⁴ In 1971 and 1975 the then Prime Ministers, Edward Heath and Harold Wilson, told the

²⁰ Like, for example, West Germany who spent 31.5% of GDP on social expenditure in 1981 as opposed to the UK's 24.9%. See M. Loney, The Politics of Greed: The New Right and the Welfare State, pp 19 - 20.

²¹ B. Abel-Smith, Cost Containment in Health Care (London: Bedford Square Press, 1984).

²² C. Pollit 'Inequalities in Health Care' Course D355, Social Policy and Social Welfare, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1983).

²³ V. George and P. Wilding, Ideology and Social Welfare, p 138.

²⁴ Of course in the sixties some volunteers were critical of the welfare state from a left-wing perspective. Organisations such as Shelter and the Child Poverty Action Group recognised the inadequacy of public provision and acted as a pressure group on the state. See M. Brenton, The Voluntary Sector in British Social Services, (London: Longman, 1985), p 39.

National Council of Social Service of the importance they attached to the voluntary sector. During the latter year the Labour peer, Lord Harris, spoke for the Government when he remarked that, as the statutory services were under more pressure than at any time since 1945, the need for voluntary effort was greater than ever.²⁵ Such influential support from government spokesmen was not restricted to rhetoric as central government grants to voluntary bodies grew from £2.5 million to £20 million between 1971 and 1976, and local authority social service grants increased from £2.5 million to £8 million between 1972 and 1976.²⁶ Furthermore, the growth of voluntary provision in the NHS was illustrated by the fact that whilst in 1967 there were only 14 voluntary service co-ordinators, by 1973 there were over 200 such individuals.²⁷ The latter year also saw the creation by the Home Office of the Voluntary Services Unit which aimed to serve as a link between voluntary groups and government departments.²⁸ The Unit's functions remained untouched by the incoming Labour Government, and the Home Office even announced plans to strengthen its activities in 1978.²⁹

The growing admiration for voluntarism within governing circles was not welcomed by all. Some workers in the NHS feared that voluntary effort could threaten paid employment, with the result that in the early 1970s the union COHSE passed a resolution calling for a ban on all volunteers in hospitals. Relations between the trade unionist and the volunteer were hardly improved by the participation of the latter in strike-breaking. In November 1973, for example, 400 volunteers were deployed by Durham County Council to break a strike by ambulance drivers, and during the winter of discontent in 1978-79, the unions reacted angrily to the Department of Social Security's call for health

²⁵ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (House of Lords), 5th Ser, 25 June 1975, Vol 361, Col 1411.

²⁶ M. Brenton, The Voluntary Sector in British Social Services, p 43.

²⁷ See J. Davis-Smith, 'An Uneasy Alliance: Volunteers and Trade Unionists in Britain since 1945', Paper for The Volunteer Centre, 1991, p 1.

²⁸ G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, pp 321 - 322.

²⁹ Ibid, p 322.

authorities to use volunteers in the maintenance of services.³⁰ Although Justin Davis-Smith has suggested that union claims of strike breaking in hospitals were overstated, it is interesting to note that the then Leader of the Opposition, Margaret Thatcher, saw voluntarism as a national tradition which would resist the bullying of strikers when mobilised by the state.³¹

This was not the last time Mrs Thatcher praised the voluntary sector. In fact one might say that the tributes paid to voluntarism by Heath and Wilson were modest when compared with the utterances of Mrs Thatcher and some of the Ministers in her first Government. Even before assuming office the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, Patrick Jenkin, had indicated that cutting income tax, public spending and bureaucracy would leave more room for voluntary action. Mrs Thatcher went even further when she articulated a vision in which the post-war welfare mix would be reversed, with voluntarism supplanting the state as main provider. Speaking to the Women's Royal Voluntary Service in 1981, she viewed the state as a supporter, gap filler and helper to the helpers.³²

Despite the rhetoric, however, the Thatcher Governments were forced to exercise some caution when dealing with the welfare state. True, the first Thatcher administration abolished some benefits like Earnings Related Unemployment Supplement, and de-indexed certain others from movements in wages. It also privatised certain aspects of social security provision and ancillary services within the NHS, whilst giving encouragement to both private medicine and the sale of council houses. But the continuing public support for the welfare state highlighted in opinion polls acted as a counter to the launching of a "full frontal assault" upon statutory provision. This was clearly highlighted in September 1982 when cabinet ministers were forced to distance themselves from a report by the Government's think tank, the Central Policy Review Staff.

³⁰ J. Davis-Smith 'An Uneasy Alliance' p 3.

³¹ Ibid, p 3.

³² Quoted in G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, p 359.

The Review Staff had caused much public unease with its call for a move towards private health insurance and the termination of state support for higher educational institutions.³³

Although the Government's caution disappointed some on the New Right, it did not prevent the voluntary sector from being propelled into a more prominent role in certain areas of provision. These included health care, community work for the unemployed and the operation of the social fund which was introduced in 1988 to replace supplementary benefit. As this expanded role was sometimes at the expense of state provision, much criticism was generated within left-wing circles. Martin Loney, for example, condemned the decision to hand over Tadworth Children's Hospital to a voluntary consortium, after a decision on closure had been made by the health authority.³⁴ Not only did workers at the hospital lose negotiating rights with management, but the basis of entitlement moved from universality within the NHS to qualification at the Trustees' discretion. The use of charity to strip the welfare state was also attacked by Labour's Gordon Brown in his comments on the Social Fund. The obligation placed upon the dispensers of the Fund to ensure that private benevolence had been considered was, Brown argued, a "fig leaf" for conservative underfunding.³⁵

Although voluntarism accorded well with Government plans to introduce welfare cuts, elements within the sector did express some dissatisfaction with the drift of official policy. There was concern amongst bodies dealing with the elderly and disabled about Government plans to shift more of the burden of care away from the local authority on to the voluntary and family sectors. According to Mark Clynder of Age Concern, cuts in public expenditure posed "a major dilemma for many voluntary agencies" who felt an obligation to clients in need on the one hand, but a desire not to let the state "off

³³ M. Loney, *The Politics of Greed*, pp 94 - 95.

³⁴ Ibid, p 101.

³⁵ *The Times*, 3rd May, 1988 p 16.

the hook" on the other.³⁶ Moreover, in 1984 the Spastics Society announced that it planned to close waiting lists for residential care due to the difficulty of dealing with those seeking to escape inadequate provision for handicapped people living in the community. In November 1989 the Society went as far as issuing a statement opposing the view that care of the disabled could, in the main, be adequately provided by family and voluntary sectors.³⁷

From this one might argue that the voluntary sector was being handed a poisoned chalice by the Government. There was the old question of voluntarism's ability to cope, not to mention the political dangers of taking over public responsibilities at a time when the welfare state remained immensely popular. Still, the more visible role of voluntarism in the 1970s and eighties has finally had some effect upon social historians. Writers such as Frank Prochaska and Geoffrey Finlayson have used the changed economic and political climate of the latter decade to justify research into the history of charity. In his work, The Voluntary Impulse, Prochaska suggests that the decline of voluntarism has been exaggerated and "with collectivism in retreat, and the growing uncertainty surrounding welfare provision, this fact is beginning to sink in."³⁸ Similarly, Finlayson remarks in his book, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, that the appearance of recent studies dealing with voluntarism is probably related to the political climate in which they are written. This observation is echoed by Bernard Harris who, in justifying his work on unemployment and charity in the South Wales coalfields between the wars, remarks that "recent Conservative Governments have demonstrated the method of providing services is as much a matter of ideological choice as the decision to provide services at all."³⁹ The most recent contributor to this field, Jane Lewis, agrees when she speaks of the

³⁶ The Guardian 11 February, 1984, p 5.

³⁷ See G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, p 387.

³⁸ F. Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain, (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), p 1.

³⁹ B. Harris, 'Unemployment and Charity in the South Wales Coalfield between the Wars' p 2, Paper presented to the Summer School of the Institute for Contemporary British History, July 1991, and kindly provided by the author.

"linear development and progress" of the welfare state being questioned by the "apparent reversal" of the 1970s, which continued into the Thatcher years of the 1980s.⁴⁰

Some of the above writers have not been content simply to unearth a previously neglected area of historical research. They have also attempted to challenge many of the negative assumptions that were attached to voluntarism during the heyday of the welfare state. Frank Prochaska disapproves of those socialist critics in the 1950s and sixties who saw charity as the "residue of a discredited Victorian liberalism" which was best swept aside by a more efficient and egalitarian state.⁴¹ One such critic, Richard Crossman, had already reached this conclusion in the 1930s when, as a young man, he viewed philanthropy as an "odious expression of oligarchy and churchy bourgeois attitudes."⁴² It is precisely this line of argument which Prochaska aims to refute. By defining philanthropy as human kindness, he uses the term to describe benevolence within working-class families and communities, as well as between classes. This supposedly helps us avoid the "misconceptions inherent in assuming that charity is invariably a relationship between rich and poor, particularly the view still current among social historians that through philanthropic agencies the wealthy simply foster a subservient class of Mr Pooters."⁴³ Prochaska concludes by stating that although voluntarism has always alienated people who seek human improvement through a more radical distribution of wealth, the problems faced by the centralised welfare state will produce "a more balanced view of the contribution philanthropy has made to British life"⁴⁴

⁴⁰ J. Lewis, The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain: The Charity Organisation Society/ The Family Welfare Association since 1869, (London: Edward Elgar 1995), p 2.

⁴¹ F. Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse, p 1.

⁴² R.H.S. Crossman, 'The Role of the Volunteer in the Modern Social Service', in Traditions of Social Policy: Essays in Honour of Violet Butler, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1976), pp 264 - 265.

⁴³ F. Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse, p 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p 88.

The importance of bringing balance to interpretations of voluntarism's past is also stressed by Finlayson, although he is more forward than Prochaska in recognising the defects of charity. Nevertheless, one of the main purposes of his research is to recognise the "positive contribution of voluntarism within the mixed economy of welfare." Voluntarism, he contends, has a "pioneering and specialist function" and a capacity to draw people into the satisfaction of needs through "service to the community."⁴⁵ This point is also emphasised by Harris in his more specific research on South Wales charity in the 1930s. After rejecting the view that occupational centres for the unemployed were middle-class agents of social control, Harris stresses the positive contribution they made to the lives of men and women in the mining communities.⁴⁶

Prochaska, Finlayson and Harris feel that post-war opinion has been overly critical of the volunteer's role in history, and so they are partly motivated by a desire to rehabilitate him or her. In doing this they have concentrated upon the interplay of charity and the state in the delivery of social services. It is the aim of this thesis to adopt a broader social perspective by placing a number of high profile voluntary welfare organisations within the context of a capitalist society divided by social class and faced with the upheavals of war, industrial unrest and mass unemployment. Considerable attention will be devoted to analysing the ideological objectives of voluntarism. Could it be said that as associational, religious and educational institutions operating within civil society, voluntary organisations attempted to counter the potential for militancy amongst workers, by emphasising the primacy of nation, community and citizenship over class?⁴⁷ In other words are these voluntary bodies part of a

⁴⁵ G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, p 11.

⁴⁶ B. Harris, Unemployment and charity in the South Wales Coalfield between the Wars, 1991. Harris's conclusion is supported by J. Stevenson and C. Cook who argue that voluntary welfare provided an outlet for the unemployed in the most heavily depressed regions. J. Stevenson and C. Cook, Britain in the Depression: Society and Politics, 1929-39, (London: Longman, 1994), p 84.

⁴⁷ Of course these themes were found in 19th century Idealist and New Liberal thought. T. H. Green believed in a common good which applied to members of all classes. Bernard Bosanquet developed a similar argument in his Philosophical Theory of the State. He believed

process in which the ruling class equates its own interests with those of society at large? By asking these questions about inter-war voluntarism, this thesis will explore, in a more recent context, the relationship between charity and middle-class ideas which has been a feature of writing on the Victorian period.

Prochaska, as we have just seen, is dismissive of this approach. However, the definition of philanthropy he gives is unacceptable to this thesis. Voluntarism - a term which will be used interchangeably with charity - is not viewed as human kindness between members of both the same and different classes.⁴⁸ Consequently, this study is not concerned with what might be called the strategies for survival adopted by working-class families in times of distress.⁴⁹ Instead, it is interested in institutional charity that was directed by members of the middle class and active in working-class communities. The activities of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association during World War One, the Young Men's Christian Association during post-war reconstruction and the National Council of Social Service during the mass unemployment of the 1930s all fall into this category.

There is of course a good deal of theoretical debate surrounding attempts to link voluntary institutions of any sort to the discouragement of militancy

that sound political theory centred around the idea that each class in the community had a type of mind which fitted its members for their functions, and that within this community these types were connected with each other. This connection constituted their subordination to the common good. Meanwhile, J. A. Hobson feared that the Labour Movement might pursue the sectarian class struggle rather than the common good. As Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant point out the idealist commitment to a common good has been criticised by Marxists as a form of bourgeois moralism which endorses the market and its inequalities. See T. H. Green, Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation, (London: Green & Co, 1948), pp 121 - 141, B. Bosanquet, The Philosophical Theory of the State, (London: Macmillan, 1930), p 6, and J. A. Hobson, Confessions of an Economic Heretic, reprint (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976), p 126. For an exploration of these ideas and the criticisms they have attracted see A. Vincent, and R. Plant, Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship, pp 35 - 94 and 163 - 183.

⁴⁸ There is of course some complexity surrounding terms such as voluntarism, charity and philanthropy. For example C. S. Loch and Bernard Bosanquet believed that charity should be distinguished from philanthropy as the former was not simply a transfer of resources from rich to poor, but an act entailing a social purpose through the promotion of a sense of community membership. See J. Lewis, The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain, p 25.

⁴⁹ D. Vincent, Poor Citizens: the state and the poor in twentieth century Britain, (London: Longman, 1991) p 84.

through the promotion of consensual ideas.⁵⁰ One could argue that the continued existence of capitalism is partly due to some level of agreement upon fundamental economic and political questions which acts as a counter to conflict arising from the material reality of class society. This view has been associated with the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci, although his writings suggest that there can exist a contradiction between the conscious thoughts of workers and the values implicit in their actions. Indeed, Gramsci spoke of workers exhibiting a contradictory consciousness with one embryonic form manifesting itself in activities like strikes, and another, which had been inherited from the past and absorbed from elsewhere, encouraging moral and political passivity.⁵¹ This suggests that people find it difficult to translate disaffection stemming from experience into a conception of the world which challenges the hegemonic culture. Still, it also suggests that although a ruling class seeks to legitimise certain ideas and values, it can never manufacture consent in a manner which excludes the possibility of antagonistic expression stemming from the experience of the subordinate class. Either way, it is important for our purposes to observe that Gramsci related hegemony to such institutions as churches, schools and the media, and subsequent writers have added charities to the list.⁵²

This argument has been criticised by other Marxists such as Perry Anderson who agrees that some level of consent is important to capitalist stability, but feels that the institutions identified by Gramsci and his followers

⁵⁰ The word consensual applies in this instance to the use of a common good which seeks to overcome class conflict. Jose Harris has argued that the idealism of such Edwardian Platonists as Bernard Bosanquet, James Seth and Edward Urwick "generated a vocabulary of social reform that transcended political parties", and exerted influence within inter-war voluntary bodies such as the NCSS. For Harris, idealism's cohesive community glossed over structural inequalities, lacked adequate reference to a framework of class and neglected human conflict. See B. Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, (London: Macmillan, 1930), p 6, and J. Harris 'Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870 - 1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy', *Past and Present*, Number 135, May 1992, pp 116 - 142.

⁵¹ A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith, (eds) (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), pp 326 - 327.

⁵² Terry Eagleton specifically mentions the Boy Scouts and British Legion when talking of hegemonic apparatuses which aim to bind people to the existing order by consensual rather than coercive means. See T. Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), pp 113 - 114.

are secondary in importance to the democratic state which is the "ideological linchpin of western capitalism."⁵³ Moreover, Joseph Femia has accused Gramsci of underestimating the role of rising living standards in promoting social stability:⁵⁴ a point which could be of importance to an inter-war Britain which, on the whole, enjoyed such standards. In this thesis comparatively little attempt will be made to determine how far voluntary welfare bodies succeeded in legitimising ideas of nation and community in the face of class conflict. From the views of Anderson, Femia and many others, it can be argued that a number of forces worked towards this end, with the result that it is difficult to weigh accurately the effectiveness of those bodies considered here.

This thesis is also aware of the critique of dominant ideology made by Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan Turner in their work The Dominant Ideology Thesis.⁵⁵ These writers criticise the idea that the apparent coherence of capitalist society is explained primarily by a dominant ideology which functions to incorporate the working class within a system which acts against its material interests⁵⁶ In analysing social order they emphasise the importance of economic control, quoting Marx's reference to "the dull compulsion of economic relations" as an explanation of how capitalism constrains workers who must "eat to live".⁵⁷ They also mention the coercive nature of law and politics in the control of subordinate classes.⁵⁸ Overall, Abercrombie and his collaborators contend that the role of ideology in upholding social order is insignificant when compared with the "integrative effects of the division of labour".⁵⁹

⁵³ P. Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', New Left Review, 100, November 1976 - January 1977 pp 5 - 78.

⁵⁴ J. Femia, Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1988) p 233.

⁵⁵ N. Abercrombie, S. Hill and B. S. Turner, The Dominant Ideology Thesis, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980).

⁵⁶ Ibid, p 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p 57.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p 57.

Yet Tom Bottomore has suggested in his foreword to The Dominant Ideology Thesis that it is hard to believe that ideologies have no effect at all. Ideology, he contends, might not bring about social integration, but it is plausible to assume that it could "inhibit and confuse the development of the counter ideology of a subordinate class."⁶⁰ Bottomore admits that a number of factors could also contribute to this confusion, but still feels that in so far as ideologies exert influence they should remain part of Marxist sociology. Obviously this debate is too extensive and complex to be covered effectively here. Nevertheless, these complexities will not prevent the following chapters from exploring the extent to which, regardless of their effectiveness, ideas were used by volunteers as a means of promoting social cohesion around some overarching goal. By avoiding claims about voluntarism's impact or effectiveness and concentrating upon its intent, it will hopefully be possible to avoid becoming embroiled in the above arguments concerning those factors which lie behind the apparent stability of capitalist societies.

It is an objective for this thesis, then, to look at the interplay between state and charity at the ideological level: that is the extent to which the position of both government and employers was legitimised in voluntarist thinking about nation and class. This does not mean that voluntarism's role in meeting welfare needs will be ignored as the interplay between charity and the state in the delivery of social services will also be covered. During the quarter century after World War One the entire voluntary sector was forced to respond to the ad hoc and uncoordinated growth of the state social services. Jane Lewis has noted that, although most writers during the 1930s looked upon charity as either a vehicle for research or the provider of complementary services,⁶¹ the situation in practice was undoubtedly more complex. This was certainly the conclusion reached by the liberal research organisation Political and Economic Planning in

⁶⁰ Ibid, p x.

⁶¹ J. Lewis, The Voluntary Sector, The State, and Social Work in Britain, p 86.

its 1937 Report on the British Social Services.⁶² PEP noted that while the majority of small local charities had no financial or administrative relations with any public authority, some voluntary bodies - like hospitals or prisoners' aid societies - received money on an agency basis for services rendered, while others had even succeeded in securing a presence within public administration.⁶³

Differing relationships also appear in the state and voluntary sector's responses to the upheavals of the early twentieth century. Some voluntary groups supplemented state provision by meeting needs which fell outwith its remit, whilst others acted as agents for government by delivering services that were a public responsibility. These relations are highlighted by the issue of unemployment in the 1930s. The development of occupational centres for the unemployed by the NCSS was an example of an agency relationship involving the expenditure of public money by a voluntary group; whilst the Personal Service League's role in distributing boots and clothing to unemployed families during the same period was often a supplementary relationship in which charity delivered a service that many felt should be a public responsibility. The dislocation caused by war, industrial unrest and unemployment was met, as we shall see, by a complex inter-play of voluntary and state provision with agency and supplemental relations appearing time and time again. The role of certain high profile voluntary bodies in forging these relations will be a major concern in the chapters ahead.

By now it will be clear that this thesis is selective in its choice of organisations for analysis. Given the sheer scale of voluntarism during the inter-war period this is unavoidable. Those bodies studied here were, for the most part, prominent national entities which involved themselves in meeting the

⁶² Political and Economic Planning, Report on the British Social Services: A Survey of the Existing Public Social Services in Great Britain, with Proposals for Future Development, (London: Political and Economic Planning, 1937).

⁶³ Ibid, p 172.

material and mental welfare needs caused by the central problems of war, industrial unrest and unemployment. The frequent appearance of organisations such as the NCSS, the SSFA and the YMCA in government papers and the national press reflect this fact. This narrowly defined context inevitably gives little or no attention to some important organisations such as the voluntary hospitals, the Boys' Brigade and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, all of which are already well documented.⁶⁴ Enough material is included, however, to allow us to reach some meaningful conclusions about the relationship between voluntarism and the state in the face of the above problems. By looking at this allegiance in terms of ideas as well as the supply of welfare services, this study will add a dimension to the subject which has been largely ignored by others.

Overall two main themes run through all but a couple of the chapters: the shifting relationship between voluntarism and the state in social service provision during national emergencies, and the ideology which accompanied such work. Chapter one diverges from this pattern by providing an overview of voluntarist thinking on state provision during the early twentieth century. It explores the debate within the voluntary sector on the ad hoc and uncoordinated growth of statutory welfare provision. This involves contrasting the arguments of those within the COS who were suspicious of this development as they felt it threatened charity, individual self-dependence and the common good, with the position of the NCSS and a number of social workers and academics who viewed voluntarism's future in terms of a growing convergence with public provision. According to this latter perspective, the expanding statutory sector was compatible with the existence of charity, and the promotion of both character and the common good.

⁶⁴ See for example, B. Abel-Smith, The Hospitals, 1800 - 1948, (London: Heinemann, 1964), B. Ashley, A Stone on the Mantelpiece: The Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985) and J. Springhall, Youth, Empire and Society, (London: Croom Helm, 1977).

Chapter two is structured according to the dual approach outlined above. Attention will be focused on the twists and turns of the statutory-voluntary relations involved in meeting welfare needs created directly by the First World War: notably the relief of distress caused by the outbreak of hostilities, the well-being of servicemen's dependants, auxiliary hospitals for injured troops and the plight of Belgian refugees. Particular attention will be paid to the issue of whether or not voluntarism possessed the ability and depth of resources to fulfil these functions, and the effect this question had on its relationship with the state. The ideological and moral objectives which lay behind much of this work will also be considered, especially the manner in which bodies like the National Relief Fund, the YMCA and the SSFA linked the national interest to the fight against both class division, and promiscuous sexual behaviour on the part of troops and their wives.

The challenge of post-war reconstruction provides the subject matter for chapter three. The manner in which charity supplemented state provision for ex-servicemen and the unemployed is dealt with, as are the ideological objectives which underpinned much of this work. The focus then shifts to charitable attitudes towards the industrial militancy which Britain experienced in the three years after 1918. Some historians have argued that fear of revolution amongst governing politicians was an important reason behind state intervention in the spheres of unemployment insurance and housing.⁶⁵ Given this, could it be said that similar concerns were expressed in groups like the YMCA and the NCSS, thus forcing them to re-affirm the same commitment to national unity which they had promoted during war? In other words, were the same fears which ruling-class politicians exhibited in this period of unrest, shared by middle-class institutions within civil society?

⁶⁵ M. Swenarton, 'An Insurance Against Revolution', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, LVI (1981), pp 87 - 101, and D. Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State, pp 171-172.

Chapter four deals with the General Strike and coal strike of 1926. Again, two main themes are explored. The first is the manner in which industrial unrest allowed voluntarism to enter into partnership with the national and local state in maintaining essential services and relieving distress. The actions of organisations like the Red Cross and the YMCA are mentioned in this context, although more attention is devoted to charity's role alongside the Poor Law in relieving hardship amongst miner's dependants. The second theme examines the ideological debates within voluntarism surrounding both the Strike and the relief of distress. Was the national interest or good of the community best served by a compromise settlement, or the unequivocal defeat of the strikers? Were organisations like Save the Children unconsciously prolonging the dispute and damaging the common good by aiding miner's dependants in the hope of removing bitterness and isolation? As we shall see these questions were eagerly discussed within the charitable world.

Chapters five and six tackle the issue of mass unemployment during the 1930s. In chapter five the familiar themes mentioned above appear once again. The extent to which the inadequacy of state provision left room for voluntarism to meet certain material and mental needs is covered in the first section, whilst the second examines how the supply of boots, clothes and occupational centres was justified by the argument that Britain was a benevolent national community that had not forgotten its less fortunate members.

Chapter six adopts a different approach by focusing entirely upon the attitude of the left towards the aforementioned voluntary activities. As the left-wing press, Labour MPs and Communists have provided more recorded material on this aspect of voluntary welfare provision than probably any other covered in the thesis, it is possible to throw some light upon the ideological response to a voluntary initiative from a class-conscious section of the working class. Rather than starting with voluntarism and its objectives, the chapter is concerned with surveying the attitudes to occupational centres within labour and

communist circles. It does not aim to undertake the difficult task of constructing a comprehensive account of unemployed attitudes towards occupational schemes, but merely to reveal whether or not there existed a coherent response to the ideas associated with voluntarism, and, if so, where on the left this response could be found.

This thesis explores a welfare area which has attracted the attention of historians who have been influenced by events in the 1970s and 1980s. It aims to put the voluntary sector in a wider context by going beyond the simple delivery of social services to consider ideology and the question of social class. In doing this it will test the validity of R.H.S. Crossman's criticism of inter-war voluntarism, and the negative connotations which much post-war socialist opinion attached to charity's past.

CHAPTER ONE: VOLUNTARISM AND THE STATE

Over the centuries the charitable impulse in Britain has existed alongside a sequence of generations motivated by a variety of philosophies. In 1945 the socialist historian G. D. H. Cole touched upon the historical complexity surrounding charity when he argued that it had been inspired by motives and impulses which differed greatly from age to age. At various times, he contended, Philanthropists had been "ready to attribute the sufferings of the poor to vice, or to misfortune", and had been either "otherworldly" or "this worldly" in their attitude to the problems of mankind. With his eyes on the Victorian period, Cole also spoke of philanthropists who believed in the "sovereign virtues of an economic system of laissez-faire".¹

Cole's use of the words "other worldly" drew attention to the close relationship between charity and religion. The concept of charity in Britain stems from the Judaic-Christian tradition, and its intimate association with religion has been present in centuries of British history. In medieval times particular emphasis was laid upon charity as a Christian duty: one which could aid salvation by cleansing the soul of the faithful from the scourge of avarice. As the 1952 Nathan Committee Report on Charitable Trusts said of this period: "The poor were always there - an aid to salvation rather than a challenge to action."² Of course the association between charity and religion carried over into the age of industrialisation and urbanisation. Evangelicalism, in particular, stimulated Christian charity and encouraged philanthropists like Andrew Reed to save souls in the belief that the "Divine image was stamped upon all".³ This spirit could, therefore, justify charitable activity amongst the deprived as Reed's concern for orphans and lunatics revealed. Moreover, one might also argue that

¹ G. D. H. Cole, 'a Retrospective of the History of Voluntary Social Service' in A. F. C. Bourdillon (ed), Voluntary Social Services: Their Place in the Modern State, (London: Methuen & Co, 1945), p 12.

² Report of the Committee on the Law and Practice Relating to Charitable Trusts (London: HMSO 1952), Cmd 8710, p 8.

³ D. Fraser, The Evolution of the Welfare State, p 118.

Christian charity responded to change by trying to reconcile a sense of duty with the spirit of progress. As Frank Prochaska remarks: "British Protestants increasingly assumed that individual behaviour determined spiritual progress, a view very much in time with the laissez-faire ethos of the secular world in which material success corresponded to salvation".⁴

So during the nineteenth century social and political developments linked to the rise of industrial capitalism presented charity with aims that corresponded to the laissez-faire ethos mentioned by Cole. As one commentator has argued, laissez-faire doctrine recognised the necessity of a fit and willing workforce, revolving around the division of urban dwellers into paupers and workers. Given this:

State policies with regard to relief and the policies of private philanthropy in income maintenance, education and other forms were dominated by these twin aims of differentiating between workers and paupers, and inducing any poor but able-bodied person by economic coercion and ideological means to come as a free worker to sell his labour power to the industrial capitalist.⁵

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 and its attempt to eliminate outdoor relief, together with the support given by individuals like Harriet Martineau for the rationalisation of charitable action, all served as evidence of how assistance given within both the state and civil society could help meet the requirements of a capitalist mode of production.⁶ While in practice relief was often granted to the able-bodied on more generous terms than either the poor law commissioners or Harriet Martineau would have liked,⁷ charity - with the discretion it yielded the giver and lack of rights the receiver - was well placed to stress the importance of independence through work in a capitalist economy.

⁴ F. Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse, p 24.

⁵ M. Chesterton, Charities, Trust and Social Welfare, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1973), p 41.

⁶ A. D. K. Owen, English Philanthropy 1660 - 1960, pp 136 - 137.

⁷ M. Rose, The Relief of Poverty, p 11.

The importance of a clear relationship between charity and the Poor Law was emphasised by the Charity Organisation Society which aimed to counter the demoralisation of individuals by encouraging greater co-ordination in the distribution of relief.⁸ The COS supported the Poor Law Board's Goschen Minute of 1869 which, following the principles of the 1834 Amendment Act, attacked generous practices of poor relief and stressed the importance of the deterrent workhouse. The Society's view of the ideal relationship between the Poor Law and charity complemented the thinking of the Board as paupers fell within the remit of the workhouse, while charity dealt with selective cases where self-reliance could be recovered. The deserving were to be separated from the undeserving with charity, in the words of Kathleen Woodroffe, encouraging "independence, strength and character."⁹

In theory, then, the COS was committed to a neat division between charity and the Poor Law which corresponded to an equally stark separation between the deserving and the undeserving poor. But in practice these tidy and convenient distinctions were often difficult to maintain. In some areas of London, like Stepney and Whitechapel, there was active co-operation between the Poor Law and COS branches, while in other parts of the country, such as the North East and West Hartlepool, lack of co-operation was probably more common than partnership.¹⁰ Indeed, in the latter union the guardians actually worked in complete ignorance of the charitable societies. According to Geoffrey Finlayson this revealed how "the formula of the Goschen Minute, with its neat synthesis between statutory and voluntary agencies around the principle of self-maintenance, proved impossible to put into effect in all places and at all times."¹¹

⁸ K. Woodroffe, From Charity to Social Work in England and the USA, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p 26.

⁹ Ibid, p 32.

¹⁰ G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, p 149.

¹¹ Ibid, p 150.

This unsatisfactory situation was linked to the difficulties the Society faced in defining terms such as "deserving" and "undeserving". In 1878 district committees of the COS expressed many different views on eligible conditions for the granting of pensions, with Hampstead warning against an over emphasis on character in cases where conditions worked against the development of this attribute, and Poplar exhibiting a general dislike of pensions in their entirety. The council attempted to surmount this obstacle in the same year by laying down certain principles governing relief, including the rejection of cases involving wilful thriftlessness, and the restriction of help to deserving cases where permanent improvement was likely. Nevertheless, this did not stop one editorial in an 1883 edition of the Charity Organisation Reporter from casting doubt on these conditions by calling for flexibility in their application.¹²

Developments within district committees could pose additional problems for the Society.¹³ In 1875 two members of the Council distributed a pamphlet attacking some district committees for bad organisation and office work, while there remained the additional difficulties of raising funds and mobilising volunteers in poor districts. In order to surmount these latter obstacles a district sub-committee was appointed at headquarters to facilitate the distribution of helpers between rich and poor districts and help centralise funds. It should also be remembered that in the mid-1870s the Society was heavily concentrated in London despite having a dozen regional affiliates, although in the following two decades it began to look like a national body with 32 provincial societies securing representation at the 1896 Leicester conference. In order to maintain relations between the centre and periphery a provincial sub-committee was set up in 1892.¹⁴

¹² K. Woodroffe, From Charity to Social Work, pp 36 - 37.

¹³ See C. L. Mowat, The Charity Organisation Society, 1869 - 1913: Its Ideas and Work, (London: Methuen & Co, 1961), p 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p 93.

The COS's association with relief which was both "personal and reformatory" helped it obtain a reputation based upon a ruthless commitment to character and self-reliance. However, some recent writers have warned against simply viewing the COS in terms of "stern individualism" or the "liberal economic man". Raymond Plant and Andrew Vincent seize upon Bernard Bosanquet's distinction between atomistic and higher individualism to suggest that there was more to the COS than simply laissez-faire thought.¹⁵ As they point out, Bosanquet believed that the higher form of individualism applied to men who accepted their stations and duties in society, and were thus responsible to others. Similarly, in her recent work on the COS, Jane Lewis has warned against excessive reliance upon economics in explaining Victorian charity. Lewis points out that although COS members such as W. A. Bailward emphasised the laws of political economy when thinking of charity, other leading members like C. S. Loch and Bernard Bosanquet viewed their work as more than the mere application of economic theory.¹⁶ Whilst neither rejected the laws of political economy, they did emphasise that an important ethical goal for charity was the promotion of societal membership which depended upon the existence of self-sufficient citizens. As Lewis shows Loch and Bosanquet connected charity to a principle of reciprocity¹⁷ which allowed both the rich and poor to fulfil certain duties to one another: the former by planning the restoration of the poor to self-dependence, the latter by responding to this plan.

It is difficult to see the relationship between the COS and the poor as being anything other than one of donor to recipient in which, given prevailing material conditions, the latter often found it difficult to sustain the independent lifestyle being promoted. This suggests yet another divergence between the ideal and the actual. The same could also be said for the organisation's view of the role of the state in society. As we shall see in the pages ahead, all sections

¹⁵ A. Vincent, and R. Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship*, p 100.

¹⁶ J. Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, The State and Social Work*, p 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 31.

of the COS rejected the mechanistic state transfer of resources which undermined self-reliance, emphasising instead the importance of charity in strengthening voluntary obligation within the community. Yet from the 1880s onwards the existing balance between poor law and charity came under attack from more collectivist forms of thought. Spurred on by economic, imperial and social pressures, the Edwardian and inter-war years saw the state adopt a more positive role in social welfare: one which transferred a great deal of welfare provision from charity to statutory authority.¹⁸ The Chamberlain Circular of 1886 permitting local authority public works, and campaigns for the removal of school fees and the provision of school dinners in the 1880s, were all signs of prevailing trends.¹⁹ But it was the 1906 Liberal Government's creation of new public institutions dealing with school meals, care of the elderly and the unemployed which added greater urgency to the COS's discussions on the future role of the state in welfare provision.

The Liberal welfare reforms can be explained by a number of factors which undermined the economic and imperial confidence of the mid-Victorian period. Britain's relatively poor economic performance in the late nineteenth century, and her sluggish performance in the Boer War, generated much discussion about national decline and the measures required to reverse it. Roy Hay has shown how many employers viewed social reform as a means of improving economic efficiency.²⁰ The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, for instance, urged the Board of Trade to introduce labour exchanges in 1905, and also called for national insurance against sickness and old age a year later. The value of social reform to the military side of the national efficiency debate was clearly revealed in the famous Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. The deplorable health endured by working-class recruits

¹⁸ See P. Thane, The Foundations of the Welfare State, (London: Longman, 1982), pp 7 - 47.

¹⁹ J. Lewis, The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain, p 61.

²⁰ J. R. Hay, The Origins of the Liberal Welfare Reforms 1906 - 1914, (London: Macmillan, 1975), p 32.

for the Army prompted the Report to advocate both the feeding and medical inspection of schoolchildren within the state educational system.²¹

If employers and politicians felt uneasy about the international situation, much the same could be said for their view of the domestic scene. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the development of a mass labour movement in Britain.²² While only 4% of the occupied population were unionised in 1880, the corresponding figure for 1914 had risen to 25%.²³ Moreover, the 1880s and nineties saw the emergence of socialist organisations such as the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party, both of which became involved in the attempt to secure independent working-class representation in parliament through the formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900. For some far-sighted ruling-class politicians social reform was viewed as a means of ensuring that the rise of labour did not veer off in a socialist direction. In 1895 the future Conservative Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, made his famous remark that social legislation was the most effective antidote to socialism.²⁴ Balfour was forwarding an essentially Bismarckian strategy which was shared by Joseph Chamberlain and Lloyd George amongst others.

By the late nineteenth century liberal political philosophy was responding to these changing conditions. The idealist philosopher T. H. Green argued that state intervention in limited circumstances could aid individual self-realisation and was thus compatible with liberty. Green's ideas were developed by thinkers like L. T. Hobhouse and J. A. Hobson who argued for a moralised and reformed capitalism involving the removal of at least some obstacles to the

²¹ Report of the Inter - Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, Cd, 2174, 1904.

²² See for example J. Hinton, Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement 1867 - 1974, (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1983), pp 24 - 39 & 41 - 63, and J. Callaghan, Socialism in Britain, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp 2 - 29, 30 - 41, & 45 - 61.

²³ J. Hinton, Labour and Socialism, p 25.

²⁴ D. Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State, p 129.

development of individual capabilities.²⁵ The economic and social nature of these obstacles was revealed in the studies of Booth and Rowntree,²⁶ whose findings on the role of low pay, unemployment and sickness in causing distress, went some way to undermining the character deficiency approach to poverty associated with the early Victorian period.

It was within the context of these pressures that new forms of voluntary welfare organisations emerged in the 1900s. This decade saw the Guilds of Help and Councils of Social Welfare take their place alongside the COS in the debate on voluntarism's future. The first Guild of Help was formed in Bradford in 1904 and amongst its founders were two local liberals, F. H. Bentham and H. B. Priestman, both of whom had a consistent record of fighting the local Independent Labour Party on matters such as municipal schoolmeals and the relaxation of outdoor relief regulations. The Guild was inspired by a civic consciousness which aimed to mobilise the community in a city wide attempt to voluntarily aid the poor. With the Mayor as chairman the Guild called for working-class support, although according to Michael Cahill and Tony Jowett this appeal was largely unsuccessful, thus creating organisational problems for the Guilds in areas without a strong middle class and artisanal presence. Like the COS the Guild was a visiting body which dealt directly with the poor and expected a positive response from recipients of relief. Nonetheless, unlike the COS, it was willing to move away from its early hostility to state provision, especially after the failure of its own initiatives to meet needs in areas such as school feeding.²⁷

²⁵ For an exploration of these ideas see M. Freedman, The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), and P. Weiler, The New Liberalism: Social Theory in Great Britain 1889 - 1914, (London: Garland, 1982).

²⁶ C. Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London, 17 vols, 3rd edition, (London: Macmillan, 1902), and B. S. Rowntree, Poverty: A Study in Town Life, (London: Macmillan, 1901).

²⁷ M. Cahill and T. Jowett, 'The New Philanthropy: The Emergence of the Bradford Guild of Help', Journal of Social Policy, 9, 3, 1980, pp 359 - 382, esp p 379.

By 1911 the Guilds could claim around 70 bodies in England and Wales with a membership of over 8000.²⁸ According to Michael Moore they articulated a more progressive outlook than the COS by appealing for working-class support and accepting more readily the liberal welfare reforms.²⁹ Moreover, with regard to working-class participation, the situation in some areas may have been more optimistic than it was in Bradford. In 1911 a Local Government Board Report noted that "in a few Guilds half, or more than half, are men and women of the working classes."³⁰ Although there was some division within the movement over the extent to which it was desirable to accept government finance, the Guilds did not follow the COS in fiercely opposing the Liberal welfare reforms, preferring instead to emphasise the opportunities available to voluntarism through the new measures.³¹

The Guilds were not alone in responding to changed circumstances. It was in the first decade of the century that the social welfare movement appeared, most notably through the Councils of Social Welfare in Hampstead and Liverpool. The leading figure in the former body was Thomas Hancock Nunn who had not only been involved in the founding of the Toynbee Hall Settlement and the Hampstead COS, but was also a Poor Law guardian and borough councillor. Nunn had little time for the Goschen formula associated with the COS, recognising instead the inter-relationship of statutory and voluntary provision and the need for machinery to bring them together.³² The Hampstead Council emphasised the importance of community organisation

²⁸ M. J. Moore, 'Social Work and Social Welfare: The Organisation of Philanthropic Resources in Britain, 1900 - 1914', *Journal of British Studies* XVI, No 2, Spring 1977, p 94.

²⁹ Moore points out that there were working men in the COS who acted as referents and conducted initial enquiries, although they were seldom mentioned in the Society's daily affairs. The guilds, however, did not differentiate between their middle class and working-class helpers. *Ibid*, p 92.

³⁰ Report of the President of the Local Government Board on the Guilds of Help, Cd 5664, 1911, p 5.

³¹ J. Lewis 'The Boundary Between Voluntary and Statutory Social Service in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', 1994, Unpublished paper kindly supplied by the author, p 18.

³² *Ibid*, p 15.

which meant co-ordinating public and private services in order to satisfy needs and promote programmes for the benefit of the locality.³³ The Council's Executive Committee included representation from both public and private bodies in the borough, and, as Margaret Brasnett argues, this recognition of the need to secure the support of the civic side drew the Councils and Guilds of Help closer together.³⁴

During the Edwardian period, then, new voluntary institutions were emerging which recognised the need to co-ordinate provision and channel it towards co-operation with an enlarged social service state. The Guilds, Councils of Social Welfare and local COS branches were all involved in the relief of distress through local committees during World War One, but it was former organisations which enthusiastically embraced the creation of a national body to bring voluntary groups into closer co-operation with government departments in the post-war world. The National Council of Social Service was formed in 1919 with a large proportion of its local affiliates being reformed Councils of Welfare or Guilds of Help.³⁵ At central level representation was granted to the Local Government Board as well as to a number of voluntary bodies including the guilds, the councils, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society.

In May 1919 the Council issued a preliminary memorandum which committed it to the systematic organisation of voluntary work at both the local and national level, and co-operation with state agencies working in the same field. It advocated the creation of welfare bodies which would coincide with areas of local government and include representatives from both official and voluntary sectors.³⁶ By December 1920 around 45 councils were operating, often in areas where Guilds of Help or Councils of Social Welfare had laid the

³³ M. Moore, Social Work and Social Welfare, p 100.

³⁴ M. Brasnett, Voluntary Social Action, (London: NCSS 1969), p 8.

³⁵ Ibid pp 19 - 22.

³⁶ Ibid, p 23.

groundwork. In the course of the 1920s and thirties the Council's work alongside both the local and central state varied considerably: after-care work in connection with tuberculosis, involvement in anti-VD campaigns and, as we shall see in chapter five, the development of occupational centres for the unemployed all provided opportunities for statutory-voluntary co-operation.

It is the response of voluntarism to the growth in collectivism over the first four decades of the century which forms the subject matter for the rest of this chapter. Throughout these years of piecemeal social reform, emerging sections of the voluntary world looked to a future of greater partnership with the state,³⁷ whilst others, most notably the COS, continued to exhibit suspicion towards statutory provision long after the supposedly neat distinction between the Poor Law and charity had been superseded by a growing number of public welfare institutions. Indeed, the growing marginalisation of the COS as a force was related to this tendency of inter-war voluntarist thinking to envisage a future of closer co-operation with the state.

Due to the thousands of voluntary welfare societies that existed in early twentieth century Britain, and the absence of any all inclusive system of registration, it is obviously impossible to analyse the attitude of the entire voluntary sector towards the state. Therefore, the rest of this chapter adopts a selective approach by focusing upon a few high profile bodies and writers who were at the forefront of discussions on voluntarism's future. The COS was of course only one body amongst thousands, but it still constituted a noisy minority

³⁷ Another aspect of the history of philanthropy is charitable law. The act which can be taken as the starting point for the modern law on charities is the 1601 statute of charitable uses. Its list of charitable purposes included relief of the aged, impotent and poor, and aid to schools of learning. Justice Romily argued in 1805 that charitable purposes should fall within the categories relief of the indigent, advancement of learning and religion and the encouragement of objects of public utility. Lord Macnaghten added "other purposes beneficial to the community" in 1891. Of course much of the controversy over charity law has centred around interpretations of what is in the community's interest. A related source of controversy is the exclusion from charitable status of bodies deemed political. Obviously these are important issues for organisations attempting to gain charitable status for taxation purposes. For more on charity law see F. Gladstone, *Charities, Law and Social Justice*, (London: Bedford Square Press, 1982), M. Chesterton, *Charities, Trusts and Social Welfare*, and B. Nightingale, *Charities*, (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

with a national reputation partly based upon hostility towards the expanding social service state. This reputation was enhanced by its ability to find representation on government commissions, most notably the 1905-1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Similarly, the Guilds of Help and later the NCSS were parts of the voluntary sector which remained aloof from countless thousands of local charities. Nonetheless, these organisations and their academic supporters are important as they articulated a supposedly progressive outlook towards the state which had implications for the voluntary sector as a whole.

CHARITY AND THE STATE: VOLUNTARISM'S DEBATE 1900-1939

At the 1931 conference of the COS one speaker, Mr T. E. Lloyd, pointed out that, " it is becoming more difficult to keep the state out of our discussions."³⁸ Speaking on ideals of social service, Lloyd made frequent references to the presence of the state in social welfare and thus highlighted the importance of this issue to the charitable world. It would be no exaggeration to suggest that this speech was part of a long running and vigorous debate within the Edwardian and inter-war charitable sectors upon how charity should respond to the greater role the state was assuming in the provision of social services. As will become clear the COS not only failed to follow the Guilds by committing itself to the New Liberalism before 1914, but also struggled to keep its distance from those groups and welfare academics who, during the 1920s and thirties, confidently looked to a future of voluntary co-operation with an enlarged social service state.

The COS commitment to what Jane Lewis calls "sturdy independence" was indeed prominent in its thinking on state welfare before, during and after World War One.³⁹ In 1933 the Secretary of the Society, John Pringle, looked back to the introduction of the liberal social reforms after 1906 as a landmark in

³⁸ T. E. Lloyd, 'Ideals of Social Service', Charity Organisation Quarterly, (hereafter COQ), Vol V, Jan 1931, p 16.

³⁹ J. Lewis, 'The Boundary Between Voluntary and Statutory Social Service', p 6.

the development of the belief that the state, rather than individual self-reliance, was the solution to social need.⁴⁰ Pringle clearly viewed this as an adverse development, and was thus articulating the concerns of a number of leading figures in the Edwardian COS before him, including the then Secretary, C. S. Loch. With his eyes clearly upon the legislative programme of the Liberal Government, Loch wrote a letter to MPs in April 1906 which warned against schemes of state relief as they "diverted attention from the duty of self-support" and "condoned the underpayment of labour."⁴¹ Instead of looking to the state to improve social conditions, he pointed to a number of positive economic and social developments including the continued existence of friendly society and insurance provision, and a "growing recognition in all parts of the community that their interests are connected."⁴² Loch's views were echoed in many of the contributions which were made to the London Society's 1906 Annual Meeting. One speaker, P. G. Gates from Kensington, emphasised the importance of working-class independence, but felt this objective was being thwarted by state social reforms which tended to sap independence and weaken responsibility.⁴³ According to this view, the strength of the community depended upon the existence of self-sufficient individuals, all of which was threatened by the state's detrimental effect upon mind and character.

The interests of individuals, families and the community featured prominently in the COS attack upon specific social policy measures.⁴⁴ The importance of the gift to character building which Judith Fido has emphasised

⁴⁰ J. Pringle, *The Nation's Appeal to the Housewife and Her Response*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1933), p 4.

⁴¹ C. S. Loch, 'Letter to MPs', *Charity Organisation Review*, (hereafter *COR*), XIX, April 1906, p 206.

⁴² *Ibid*, p 206.

⁴³ Report of the Annual Meeting of the London COS, *COR*, Vol XIX, June 1906, p 320.

⁴⁴ The family was an area of concern for COS thinkers like Helen Bosanquet who viewed it as a developer of character and producer of the rational citizens upon which the community depended. Both individuals and the community stood to lose, then, from any action by the state which weakened parental responsibility. In the *Philosophical Theory of the State*, Bernard Bosanquet stressed the role of the family in producing fully trained and equipped human beings. For an elaboration of these views see H. Bosanquet, *The Family*, (London: Macmillan, 1906).

arose in the society's thinking about the 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act.⁴⁵ This legislation allowed local authorities to finance free meals for needy schoolchildren off the rates. In July 1906 the Charity Organisation Review published a paper by a District Secretary of the Glasgow COS, Miss Mcknight, which attacked the measure on the grounds that state aid was inelastic and, unlike charitable feeding, could not be flexibly used to encourage parental responsibility.⁴⁶ This view was similar to that of C. S. Loch who wrote in the December 1906 edition of the COR that much of the underfeeding problem stemmed from a lack of parental responsibility in the home. Loch went on to attack the belief that state feeding would relieve parents of distress and thus leave more room for the development of responsibility. If anything, he argued, husbands would have a freer hand to spend money in a reckless manner. For the COS Secretary, the solution to the underfeeding problem lay in modifying the home conditions through charitable visiting, rather than the large scale state provision of meals which would render the home "less powerful for good".⁴⁷ Charity rather than the state, then, was in a position to reform character, bolster the family and promote social integration.

The COS also looked unfavourably upon proposals for non-contributory old age pensions. The Pensions Act of 1908 granted a pension of between one and five shillings a week to those over the age of seventy, providing, amongst other things, that they had not been imprisoned during the previous ten years, or been guilty of a habitual failure to find employment. Long before the legislation had reached the statute book, the COS was busy sharpening its criticisms. In May 1907 the COR printed an article entitled, 'The Case against Old Age Pensions', which argued that such provision implied that individuals were unable to prepare for old age on their own account. For the COS old age

⁴⁵ J. Fido, 'The Charity Organisation Society and Social Control in Victorian Britain', Social Control in Victorian Britain, p 209.

⁴⁶ M. Mcknight, 'The Feeding of Schoolchildren,' COR, Vol XX, July 1906, pp 30 - 41.

⁴⁷ C. S. Loch, 'The School Feeding Question, COR, Vol XX, December 1906, pp 309.

was seen as part of the discipline of life, requiring higher wages and thrift as a solution. Both trade union and friendly society schemes were admirable examples of such thrift which stood to be undermined by state provision. In pointing to the vitality of this spirit, the COR quoted the Registrar of Friendly Societies Report for 1904 which recorded an increase over the previous year in aggregate funds, even though working-class saving power was anything but exhausted as the 150 million pounds spent annually upon alcohol revealed.⁴⁸

The COS opposition to these measures - and to the compulsion of the 1911 National Insurance Act - was based on a commitment to individual and family responsibility, which was in danger of being undermined by the state.⁴⁹ The Society also pursued a familiar line when dealing with the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. The idea of charity working alongside a deterrent Poor Law concerned with the undeserving, continued to command support within the organisation even if some, like the Bosanquets, favoured changing the machinery in order to improve co-operation. Nonetheless, the Liberal Government's strategy of removing certain categories from an unchanged poor law forced the COS to face the thorny question of whether or not to co-operate with the new welfare legislation. The Society could either stand on the sidelines and simply protest, or try and influence the legislation and, to quote Jane Lewis, "make the best of a bad job."⁵⁰

Not surprisingly this issue took up much discussion time within the COS. One speaker at the 1908 Annual Meeting, Lord Elcho, explained the predicament the Society was in when he suggested that, due to the tendency and thought of social legislation, it was becoming increasingly difficult for volunteers to "maintain their principles intact."⁵¹ Yet although Elcho regretted

⁴⁸ The Case Against Old Age Pensions', COR, Vol XXI, May 1907, pp 242 - 252, esp p 245.

⁴⁹ C. S. Loch 'The National Insurance Bill', COR, Vol XXX, August 1911, pp 121 - 122.

⁵⁰ J. Lewis, 'The Boundary between Voluntary and Statutory Social Service', p 14.

⁵¹ Report of the 1908 Annual Meeting of the COS, COR, Vol XXIII, June 1908, p 287.

that people were being encouraged to look to the state for support, he felt that the Society should not adopt a policy of pure negation towards reform, but should rather "influence and divert, if not stop, the tide of social legislation."⁵² Elcho's position was similar to that of C. S. Loch who, despite his opposition in principle to the reforms, recognised a duty to improve the administration of legislation once it had been passed. Loch held that although the state had encroached upon the terrain of the volunteer, there was still a need to counter the pauperising tendencies of public relief through participation in the administration of legislation. The COS should keep in mind its commitment to a community of self-reliant, independent citizens, whilst at the same time loyally co-operating with ill-conceived social reforms.

There was also considerable discussion within COS circles on how this approach could be implemented. In an article entitled, 'The Place of Voluntary Workers under Social Legislation', Loch commended the work carried out by the COS on school care committees which had been set up by the London County Council to deal with the demands placed upon it under the 1906 and 1907 education acts. The Committee's activities included investigating applications for, and organising the provision of, school meals. Furthermore, despite opposing the 1911 National Insurance Act, Loch also wished to see a voluntary presence on district insurance committees set up under the legislation.⁵³ Loch had rejected the argument that insurance would reduce pauperism by pointing out that in Germany poor relief had increased concurrently with insurance relief. This merely sustained his central point that national insurance was a mechanistic scheme which did nothing to promote personal and social responsibility.⁵⁴ However, after surveying the structure of

⁵² COR, June 1908, p 287.

⁵³ C. S. Loch, 'The Place of Voluntary Workers Under Social Legislation', COR, Vol XXXII, July 1912, pp 45 - 55.

⁵⁴ C. S. Loch, 'The National Insurance Bill', COR, Vol XXX, December 1911, p 343.

the legislation, Loch did envisage volunteers performing an advisory role on the district committees by being appointed members from approved societies.

So in the years before World War One the COS was hostile to the state's greater presence in the welfare field, even if it was willing to follow a policy of reluctant co-operation. However, Bentley Gilbert has argued that it was the 1914 to 1918 conflict which made much of this hostility to the Liberal social welfare reforms appear absurd. Pointing to the school meals question, he suggests that the intrusions of the state into wide areas of economic and social life, "made ridiculous the furore over its assumption of the right to feed hungry schoolchildren."⁵⁵ Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that many within the COS continued to express misgivings about the state, especially within the context of war-time collectivism. One leading member, Arthur Clay, told readers of the COR in June 1917 that Britain's survival depended on a war in which individualism had, understandingly, been subordinated to collectivism. But Clay then went on to criticise those who sought to use the abnormal conditions of war to justify future instalments of social legislation which threatened personal responsibility. Here his concern revolved around both the arguments of state socialists like the Webbs, and the expectations of those who had received relief during war without the unpleasant restrictions of the Poor Law. These forces, Clay argued, wished to reconstruct the nation not on the basis of liberty, but of legislation which freed large groups of people from the "responsibility of life" and thus rendered them dependent on others.⁵⁶

Clay was vague about what specific policy measures fell into this category, although he was not alone in expressing this broad concern. A similar theme was emphasised by the former Honorary Secretary of the Bethnal Green Branch, Arthur Bailward, in a posthumous article published in the COR's June 1918 edition. Under the heading 'State Control and Reconstruction', Bailward

⁵⁵ B. B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain: The Origins of the Welfare State, (London: Michael Joseph, 1966), p 116.

⁵⁶ A. Clay, 'Social Organisation', COR, Vol LXI, June 1917, p 233.

argued that out of loyalty to the state, the COS had welcomed restrictions necessary for the prosecution of war. However, he went on to complain that these restrictions had given a forward momentum to the case for state intervention in peacetime. This was clear from the way in which certain "extremists" were using the war-time experience of state control in shipping, railways and mining to support the case for future nationalisation. This statist advance was, Bailward contended, a long drawn out process. Although the character of the British people had been formed in an early Victorian period which reacted against Stuart and Tudor restriction and emphasised the importance of freedom of contract and individual liberty, the pendulum had swung away from individual liberty during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as was clear from the compulsory element in the 1911 National Insurance Act. War had, he went on, contributed to this trend with the result that society now stood to receive "further object lessons in state control of many things which had previously been the function of private enterprise."⁵⁷

Of course numerous proposals for social reform emerged from the war only to fall victim to calls for economies in public expenditure.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, before these calls began to gather pace during 1921 the COS was forced to face the issue of social reform at a time of industrial unrest. As the Society had always believed that a healthy community depended upon economically independent individuals, it was felt in some circles that industrial unrest was panicking the state into introducing demoralising welfare legislation which stifled individual liberty and threatened the unity of society. This was the view of the Glasgow COS which attacked the civilian out of work donation in February 1919 for encouraging idleness and fraud and for, "subverting people's

⁵⁷ A. Bailward, 'State Control and Reconstruction', COR, Vol XLIII, June 1918, p 233.

⁵⁸ See R. Lowe, 'The Ministry of Labour 1916 - 24: A Graveyard of Social Reform?' Public Administration, Vol 52, 1974, pp 415 - 436, and P. Abrams, 'The Failure of Social Reform 1918-20', Past and Present, Vol 24, 1963, pp 43 - 63.

morale at a time when they are susceptible to bad influences."⁵⁹ The Glasgow Society warned the community to be on its guard for reforms which pauperised men and women. These reforms were, in the words of one member of the London organisation, Mr St Loe-Strachey, "a good foundation for the slave state which is the ideal of the communist."⁶⁰

St Loe-Strachey was probably not the most informed individual to have commented upon Marxist-Leninism. But his view is of interest as it suggests that social reform, far from being the saviour of society, might be an accomplice in its downfall. Still, some district committees in the COS comforted themselves with the thought that reconstruction was the response to a temporary state of affairs: with the return of trade and a reduction in industrial unrest popular opinion would turn away from an over-reliance upon government. The COS Council itself predicted in 1918 that once the country returned to a peace footing without disturbance, there would be a strong reaction in favour of the ideas the Society had traditionally stood by. In 1919 the Islington Committee of the COS adopted a similar position:

That this ideal has been lost sight of, and swamped by an overwhelming popular belief in the responsibility of the state is admittedly a fact, but the swing of the pendulum may still restore the balance of public opinion, so in the near future we may look for a reaction towards self help and independence, and away from an exaggerated reliance on state control.⁶¹

To John Pringle the calls for economy that culminated in the Geddes Report of 1922 revealed the wisdom of this argument. Pringle spoke of a growth in public assistance which was partly the result of rising popular expectations encouraged by rhetoric such as "homes fit for heroes". In March 1922 he told the COS Council that the Report called into question the existing balance between public and private provision and gave volunteers the

⁵⁹ Glasgow COS, Organised Help, February 1919, p 6.

⁶⁰ J. St Loe-Strachey 'Charity True and False', COQ, Vol 1, April 1922, p 5.

⁶¹ Report of the Islington District Committee of the COS, 1918 - 1919, p 6.

opportunity to exert influence by stressing the value of "sanity, efficiency and economy".⁶²

However, the harsh terms used by the COS against the state once again hid an underlying desire to "make the best of a bad job" by responding to circumstances as they were. In 1919 the Society's Annual Report stated that although many district committees were correct to criticise the out of work donation for sapping self-reliance, few would deny its necessity given the circumstances.⁶³ In addition, while a district committee like that in Camberwell and Dulwich could speak of the need to defend individualism in the face of a "grandmotherly government" supported by socialists,⁶⁴ the Council itself argued that the tide of state assistance did not have to drown the Society as it could be put to other uses.⁶⁵

Despite the economy measures of 1922, governments in the inter-war years still recognised the need for state intervention in areas such as health, housing and unemployment insurance. This development continued to be constrained by the simultaneous desire of the state to encourage business by limiting public expenditure,⁶⁶ thus creating a range of services which PEP described as, "a haphazard piling up of measures, the form of which have been indicated by temporary circumstances, financial and political considerations and by passing fashions of administrative method."⁶⁷

The COS's claim to respond to changed conditions did not prevent it from attacking the statist trend outlined by PEP. The writings and speeches of leading Society members during these years were marked by a fear of the state substituting dependency for the character of the individual. Many of the speeches at the 1924 Annual Conference of the COS and Kindred Societies

⁶² Proceedings of the Council of the COS, COQ, Vol 2, July 1922, pp 28 - 29.

⁶³ Report of the Council of the COS, 1918 - 1919, p 2.

⁶⁴ Report of the Camberwell and Dulwich Committee of the COS, 1919 - 1920, p 3.

⁶⁵ Report of the Council of the COS for 1918 - 1919 pp 3 - 4.

⁶⁶ P. Thane, The Foundations of the Welfare State, p 218.

⁶⁷ Political and Economic Planning, Report on the British Social Services, 1937), p 9.

touched upon this theme. One speaker, the Rev P. Propert, argued that growth in public assistance since 1906 was motivated by an ill-thought-out desire on the part of government to meet popular demand. Due to popular election Parliament had given up its role of "protector to the thrifty and energetic", in order to encourage "less desirable elements" in the population. Moreover, measures such as the 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act and the extension of unemployment insurance had, Propert continued, "produced an alarming rise in public expenditure" and "a corresponding reduction in the sense of individual responsibility on the part of the nation."⁶⁸

Similar thoughts were on the minds of those who attended the 1927 Annual Meeting of the Society. The meeting applauded a speech by the Headmaster of Harrow school, Cyril Norwood, on the array of community, insurance and assistance services that constituted the state side of social welfare provision. Norwood suggested that given the present position it was appropriate to pose the definite question whether or not the social services were undermining those qualities which enable nations to survive: namely self-help, self-reverence, and self-control.⁶⁹ The ex-Conservative MP, Geoffrey Drage, linked this development to the extended franchise in his speech to the National Conference of Charity Organisation and Kindred Societies during the same year. Drage argued that the extended franchise had, from the 1880s onwards, encouraged vote seeking politicians to substitute the state for the individual conscience. Here, he was re-iterating the point made by Propert about the role of popular demand in encouraging state intervention and creating a system in which, "man was not the captain of his own fate."⁷⁰ Appealing to economics, Drage went on to cite both Wheatley's 1924 Housing Act and the 1925 Widows, Old Age and Contributory Pensions Act, as pieces of legislation which had

⁶⁸ Report of the 1924 Annual Conference of the COS and Kindred Societies, COQ, I, August 1924, p 190.

⁶⁹ Report of the 1927 Annual Meeting of the COS, COQ, Vol I, July 1927, p 110.

⁷⁰ Report of the 1927 National Conference of Charity Organisation and Kindred Societies, *Ibid*, p 101.

increased state expenditure, stifled industry and discouraged workers' productive energies.

But it was John Pringle, who launched the most outspoken attack upon the growth of the public social services. In 1931 the Secretary of the COS completed his work British Social Services: The Nation's Appeal to the Housewife and her Response; part of which dealt with the impact of social legislation upon the balance of the family. One of the central arguments in this work criticised insurance and the dole for placing money in the hands of husbands when it was the heroic wife who played the pivotal budgetary role in the household. Over and above this Pringle held that the industrial and financial difficulties faced by the country could be partly blamed upon the burden of the public social services. Those propagandists who had begun to gain the upper hand around 1906 had not only failed to abolish destitution and usher in the "era of the self respecting independent citizen", but had also imposed a tax burden of millions upon British industry. Moreover, Pringle's attack on statism portrayed Britain as a country struggling with the burden of sustaining dependent citizens with a variety of claims against a mechanical and impersonal state. It also suggested that the public social services treated groups as collective entities with troubles that were dealt with uniformly, thus disregarding the pastoral attention of the Poor Law and charity. This was partly due to the pernicious influence of party politics which meant that the transfer of a social service from the voluntary to the public authority left social casework open to the charge of inquisitorial methods and insulting behaviour.⁷¹

By the early 1930s, then, sections of the COS were protesting as loudly as ever about the growing role of the state in welfare provision. The economic impact of social reform was one avenue of attack, while the anti-democratic argument about popular sentiment and the role of politics in welfare was another. Much of the COS hostility centred around the same old issues of

⁷¹ J. Pringle, British Social Services, p 131.

community and individual interests which had formed the backbone of the Society's attack upon the Liberal welfare reforms. In pushing this traditional line, Pringle and his followers faced much the same problem as C. S. Loch: the COS were an outspoken minority which could do nothing to reverse the statist trend in the social services. During the inter-war years the choice was, as before, one of either protesting on the sidelines or "making the best of a bad job" by co-operating with legislation in order to exert influence over it. This was obvious to Cyril Norwood in his speech to the Society's 1927 Annual Meeting. Despite being concerned about the impact of state welfare upon character and independence, Norwood did recognise that a return to the nineteenth century was not practical as, "the conscience of the nation today would not for a moment tolerate the return of this state of society."⁷² Norwood finished his speech by calling upon the COS to continue with the difficult work of pursuing its principles, even in areas where the state had increased its responsibility.

Even John Pringle was eventually forced to make concessions to this argument. Shortly before his death in 1938 Pringle wrote that statism was turning Britain into an "illogical, unsymmetrical, often grotesque" mechanical society which at best was a substitute for the totalitarian state. Although such language was hardly likely to appeal to those who spoke of a positive convergence between voluntary and statutory service, Pringle was not advocating an entirely negative approach as he believed in the need for voluntary individual treatment alongside the mechanical and impersonal public administration. Voluntary social service was in a position to give adequate time to individual circumstances, and the value of its efforts had already been revealed through case work in the school meals service and co-operation with London's Chief Officer of Public Assistance.⁷³

⁷² COQ, Vol I, July 1927, p 91.

⁷³ J. Pringle, "Trumpeter: What are you Sounding Now?" COQ, Vol XII, October 1938, pp 187 - 192.

Yet the followers of Loch and Pringle did not monopolise voluntarist thought on public provision in the early twentieth century. It seemed to many volunteers - including even some within the COS - that negative opposition to the state was swimming against the tide of social development. The Guilds of Help and Councils of Social Welfare were able to respond to the 1906 liberal welfare reforms in a more positive way than Loch and the COS. In Bradford early opposition to local authority school meals was overcome by the failure of the Guild's Cinderella Club and feeding scheme to deal with the problem.⁷⁴ Consequently, the Guild was quick to co-operate with the authority's school feeding committee. The education authority also provided opportunities for the Guild in Chesterfield, where the medical inspection of schoolchildren was followed up by parental visits from volunteers aiming to secure the implementation of the officer's proposals.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Loch's long and hard fight against the 1911 National Insurance Act found little support within the guilds, who were much more likely to argue that new opportunities were opening up for voluntarism as a result of this measure. As Walter Milledge of Bradford told one Guilds conference, the state's assumption of responsibilities previously held by volunteers would "broaden the outlook for the philanthropist and enlarge his opportunities for constructive work."⁷⁶

The support for a closer partnership between statutory and voluntary effort manifested by the Guilds was encouraged by the demands of war. The co-operation of local authority officials and voluntary representatives on local relief committees, for instance, was later drawn upon by those sought to put the case for greater convergence between charity and the state. This was evident in the views of L. F. Ellis, the Secretary of the NCSS, who wrote in 1919 that: "If the war has taught us anything, surely it has taught us both the need for, and the

⁷⁴ M. Cahill and T. Jowett, 'The New Philanthropy: The Emergence of the Bradford City Guild of Help', p 379.

⁷⁵ Report of the Local Government Board on the Guilds of Help, Cd 5664, 1911, p 12.

⁷⁶ Quoted in M. Moore, Social Work and Social Welfare, p 97.

possibility of, united action in a common cause." In addition to rejecting the assertion that statutory welfare provision had diminished the need for voluntary service, he claimed that in future "the voluntary worker who is to be useful, must work in co-operation with public authority."⁷⁷

Despite the optimism in this remark, the statist orientated NCSS was forced to respond to the calls for economy that culminated in the Geddes Report of 1922. On the one hand the Council argued that the revival of industry depended upon reducing public expenditure,⁷⁸ but on the other it emphasised the detrimental effect economy could have on social services which, according to its 1921 Manifesto on Public Economy and Personal Responsibility, brought in an annual return of social well-being and thus should not be seen as excesses.⁷⁹ Moreover, in November 1921 the Monthly Bulletin criticised those who were uninterested in any form of service and concerned themselves solely with lowering taxes by eliminating supposed dangerous extravagances in social policy.⁸⁰ The Council seemed to be arguing that, although total opposition to cuts was pointless, the Government did have had a responsibility, to "protect some services which were of more importance than others".⁸¹

As was mentioned earlier the cuts of 1922 could not prevent the ad hoc growth of state welfare during the remainder of the inter-war period. This was clear to both the NCSS and elements within the inter-war COS who were willing to go beyond the reluctant co-operation with state legislation that characterised the position of John Pringle. In 1927 William Glen, the Secretary of the Glasgow Branch, argued for a revision in the thinking of the organisation, the purpose of which would be to find accommodation with a modern sense of social consciousness that recognised "the state has, in a word, assumed a very

⁷⁷ L. F. Ellis, 'Reconstruction in Social Work', COR, Vol XLV, June 1919, p 150.

⁷⁸ Annual Report of the NCSS, 1920 - 21, p 4.

⁷⁹ NCSS, Manifesto on Public Economy and Personal Responsibility, 1920.

⁸⁰ The Monthly Bulletin, Series 2, No 5, November 1921, p 52.

⁸¹ Ibid, p 52.

definite responsibility for the material conditions of the lives of the people."⁸² The introduction in 1925 of a widows, old-age and orphans contributory pensions scheme by a Conservative administration revealed how all encompassing this sense of responsibility was. In thinking about the way forward for the Society, Glen posed the same question which had exercised the mind of Loch before 1914: should the COS accept such change and work within this framework, or should it oppose legislation and endeavour to prevent it passing? Of course the line adopted by Loch and later Pringle combined elements of both options: they had criticised reforms at the outset, only to later advocate co-operation in order to mitigate any adverse consequences. One contributor to the COQ, Miss Alsager Nixon, argued this had led the Society to "oppose schemes of state reform when they are proposed, and then later accept them in the manner of opportunists."⁸³ While Glen advocated such co-operation, he strove to avoid the charge of opportunism by warning against any nostalgia for the pre-1906 situation. After pointing out that the "virile individualism of the Victorian age is past", he remarked,

Some of the more strenuous amongst us may sigh for a revival of the laissez-faire and hanker after the full blooded Manchester school of thought, but I fear they are wielding a straw to stem a flood. Present conditions must be accepted if the point of view we represent is going to function at all. The negative attitude is bound to fail.⁸⁴

It was not only this question of the limits of state responsibility which led some within the COS to question Pringle's judgement. During the late 1920s the implications such responsibility was likely to have for personal independence was generating discussion within the Society. Once again William Glen was at the centre of revisionist thinking. The hostility of the

⁸² W. Glen, 'Charity Organisation and the Future', COQ, I, April 1927, p 91.

⁸³ A. Nixon, 'How the COS May Adapt Itself to Modern Conditions Without Abandoning or Abating its Principles', COQ, I, April 1926, p 307.

⁸⁴ W. Glen, COQ, I, April 1927, p 97.

Edwardian COS to New Liberalism contrasted with Glen's view that, in the course of time, a new citizen would emerge that viewed state provision "not as a means of undermining his independence, but as an auxiliary aid to his social well-being."⁸⁵ In supporting this argument Glen pointed out that increased statutory social service provision had not discouraged the existence of a healthy thrift movement in Britain, nor the value of self-help and responsibility that went with it.

Glen's doubts about the "more strenuous elements" within the COS were also shared by some leading volunteers and welfare writers outside the organisation. In defending voluntary convergence with the state, Lionel Ellis argued in 1927 that both public and voluntary social services were designed to promote the well being of the community.⁸⁶ Consequently, the task for the public administrator and volunteer alike was to secure a form of co-operation which would preserve the freedom and character of the voluntary body on the one hand, and the stability of statutory provision on the other. The same point was made over a decade later by the former Assistant Secretary of the NCSS, Sir Wyndham Deedes, who argued that the relationship between the state and voluntary sector should be thought of as a partnership involving no hard and fast line of demarcation, but rather a variety of mixes all based upon sound administration in the interests of the community.⁸⁷

Of course neither Ellis nor Deedes were suggesting that there were no faults with state provision, or that in all instances voluntarism was unable to undertake provision without some support from public authority. Ellis clearly felt that the role of pioneer, for example, was best left within the domain of voluntary service. Yet it was the growing recognition of the contribution state welfare could make to the common good that continued to weaken the position

⁸⁵ Ibid, p 95.

⁸⁶ L. F. Ellis, 'The Respective Spheres of Public Authorities and Voluntary organisations in the Administration of Social Services', Public Administration, Vol V, No 4, 1927, p 393.

⁸⁷ W. Deedes, Foreword in J. Q. Henriques, A Citizen's Guide to Social Service, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938), p 12.

of traditional elements within the COS. During the 1930s Pringle and his supporters were increasingly portrayed as being out of step with modern developments in social welfare. This was clearly revealed during the 1931 Conference of the COS and Kindred Societies, when the Reader in Social Study at the University of Edinburgh, Nora Milnes, launched a scathing attack upon the COS Secretary. Milnes described the COS position as being based upon a fierce commitment to self-dependence which encouraged the misplaced view that the nation was being taught to "lean on the state."⁸⁸ This gloomy prognosis about the impact of state provision on character fitted uneasily with the continued existence of a thrift movement amongst workers. Milnes also pointed out that the Society was acting against its own long term interest by failing to dispense with its Victorian and Edwardian baggage. It was, she argued, stagnant and "out of touch with the times", and this explained "the little support it gets from the younger generation."⁸⁹

Milne's view was shared by other welfare writers. Hilda Jennings argued in her 1930 study, The Private Citizen in Public Social Work, that while Pringle would attempt to repudiate much of her case for a closer partnership between charity and the state, the existence of a more favourable frame of mind within many charities towards public provision, meant distinctions between the two were becoming increasingly blurred. Jennings rejected the argument of those who "saw in this tendency to welcome the state a disquieting sign of social deterioration and of diminished initiative and self-sacrifice on the part of the private citizen."⁹⁰ Contrary to this traditional view, she proposed that the individual was "more, and not less, conscious of his social responsibilities", while the state had ceased "to look with contempt on the volunteer."⁹¹ As an

⁸⁸ N. Milne, 'Public Health and the Family', Paper read to Kendal Conference of Charity Organisation & Kindred Societies, COQ, V, July 1931, p 155.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p 157.

⁹⁰ H. Jennings, The Private Citizen in Public Social Work, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930) 18.

⁹¹ Ibid, p 19.

example of this voluntary-statutory convergence Jennings mentioned the practice whereby employment exchanges appointed advisory committees of voluntary workers to act in co-operation with executive officials.

This form of co-operation was part of what the social scientist from Liverpool University, Elizabeth Macadam, called "the new philanthropy" in her book of the same name published in 1934. Macadam pointed to an inter-dependant system of charitable and statutory social service in which both sectors worked together for common ends. The difference between this position and that of Pringle was revealed in her assertion that due to "an excess of loyalty to the past", the COS was "clinging blindly to interpretations of social principles designed to fit an entirely different world."⁹² According to Macadam the Society would never gain fuller influence unless, "it moved away from its stubborn anti-statism and recognised the future of voluntary work lay in influencing and supporting, rather than rejecting, state action."⁹³ This would help overcome the anti-statism found within traditional charitable institutions on the one hand, and the anti-voluntarism of the Labour Movement on the other. In fact, Macadam could no doubt claim to be following in the tradition of the Guilds of Help when she argued that voluntarism was, "no longer the prerogative of the older families or the upper classes."⁹⁴

In some ways Jennings and Macadam were overly optimistic. One of the themes which runs through the following chapters in this thesis is the middle-class nature of the voluntary sector, regardless of its claim to serve a common good applicable to members of all classes. Moreover, it would also be wrong to suggest that tension did not exist between both sectors in the delivery of social services. In 1929 Sir Wyndham Deedes conducted a survey for the NCSS upon the performance of 25 local Councils of Social Service.⁹⁵ The

⁹² E Macadam, The New Philanthropy: A Study of the Relations between the Statutory and Voluntary Services, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1934), p 65.

⁹³ Ibid, p 67.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p 285.

⁹⁵ See M. Brasnett, Voluntary Social Action, p 61.

survey found that the Council's hope of widespread co-operation between councils and local authorities had not been fulfilled in many areas; especially those with Labour councils who were suspicious of untrained voluntary workers. This research also revealed that few public assistance committees were co-opting volunteers in their work, despite the recommendations of the 1923 Interdepartmental Committee on Public Assistance.

Overall, the voluntary sector was powerless to stop the expanding social service state in the early 20th century. During the inter-war period the desire for economy on the part of governments was an infinitely more serious threat to the public social services than the arguments of figures like John Pringle. The inability of Loch and Pringle to turn back the tide, forced the Edwardian and inter-war COS to co-operate reluctantly with social policies they had initially opposed. For other volunteers, not to mention commentators like Macadam and Jennings, the way forward for voluntarism lay in a "positive convergence with the state." This school of thought argued that the clock could not be turned back, and moreover there was no overwhelming evidence to suggest that the ad hoc growth of state social services was either weakening the individual character upon which the community depended, or eliminating the need for voluntary welfare provision. This was beginning to dawn on Pringle's successor as Secretary of the COS after 1938, Benjamin Astbury, who argued as early as 1931 that the Society should be "prepared to scrap old ideas when new ones prove to be more in keeping with modern needs and requirements."⁹⁶ Astbury also sympathetically reviewed Macadam's book, The New Philanthropy, in an article which called for a team spirit in charitable-statutory relations, and a move away from the conception of charity as "the prerogative of any one class or party".⁹⁷ This outlook clearly endeavoured to bring the COS

⁹⁶ B. Astbury, 'Co-operation', COQ, V, October 1931, p 175.

⁹⁷ B. Astbury, 'Whither Goest Thou?', COQ, VIII, January 1933, p 75.

closer to a convergence position on the state; a development which culminated in the Society's support for the 1942 Beveridge report.

By responding to circumstances outwith its control, voluntarism entered into a variety of differing relations with the state. The rigid separation of state and voluntary spheres which the COS had fought hard to defend no longer appeared credible. By the late 1930s social welfare commentators had recognised the difficulties of drawing a hard and fast line of demarcation between both sectors. As one commentator William Blackshaw, wrote in 1939, the "relationship between statutory and voluntary social services follows no formal plan, but exhibits a variety of forms."⁹⁸ This was also clear to PEP in its 1937 Report on the British Social Services which suggested that relations between statutory and voluntary bodies were formed pragmatically by methods of trial and error.

This is not to suggest that some charities were unable to retain independence from the state. Frank Prochaska has referred to the position of those charities which took an assertive pride in their independence from central and local government. Given this, Prochaska concludes, it is possible to criticise Macadam for underestimating the "resilience of those societies which protected their freedom by shifting their functions into areas where partnership was unnecessary."⁹⁹ While such resilience undoubtedly existed, it did not necessarily weaken the position of Jennings and Macadam. Although experimentation was a function which some charities could carry out independently of the state, Jennings noted that such bodies often called upon local and central government to take over their work. In 1930 she pointed out that the volunteer, "when he embarks upon some piece of pioneering, openly declares his hope that success in it will lead to the assumption of public

⁹⁸ W. Blackshaw, The Community and Social Service, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1939), p 61.

⁹⁹ F. Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse, p 82.

responsibility."¹⁰⁰ Macadam also believed that in the field of experimentation the volunteer possessed the freedom to move ahead of public opinion and thus deal with matters which had not yet acquired a claim against the state.

Macadam not only portrayed the voluntary sector as the junior partner in welfare provision, but also as a national characteristic which could survive by adapting itself to changing conditions. One way in which voluntary organisations did this was through entering "agency" relationships with local authorities. In fields such as maternal and child welfare and welfare of the blind, local authorities were either permitted, or compelled, to carry out services under national legislation: the upshot being a growth of local authority welfare schemes which - often due to cost - used charities as agents in the delivery of particular services.¹⁰¹ In the face of official inspection, Macadam believed that "this often praiseworthy tendency" revealed an outward and visible sign of efficiency on the part of the volunteer.¹⁰²

Further evidence of greater charitable convergence with the state lay in the practice of supplementing state provision which left an untouched sphere of potential action for charities. Elizabeth Macadam saw opportunities for voluntary effort in this form of partnership when she spoke of their being good prospects for the "systematic use of voluntary societies to supplement and follow up the public services."¹⁰³ Supplementing state provision could also be attached to what was described earlier as experimentation, and the satisfaction of "new needs" thrown up by contemporary developments. One of the best known examples of this form of relationship concerned the establishment of community centres on new local authority council estates like Watling and

¹⁰⁰ H. Jennings, The Private Citizen in Public Social Work, p 18.

¹⁰¹ For more on voluntary-statutory relations in the fields of maternal and child welfare and blind welfare see M. Rooff, Voluntary Societies and Social Policy, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), pp 50 - 66 and 216 - 234. For an account of the inadequacies of provision and the attitude of policy makers towards working-class women see J. Lewis, The Politics of Motherhood: Maternal and Child Welfare in England 1900 - 1939, (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

¹⁰² E. Macadam, The New Philanthropy, p 38.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p 93.

Becontree in London, where there were little or no amenities for leisure and a vibrant social life.¹⁰⁴ The NCSS, along with the Educational Settlements Association and the British Residential Settlements, created a New Estates Community Committee to surmount the problem. With the financial support of the Pilgrim Trust, the Committee set about developing community associations and centres.¹⁰⁵ By the end of 1935 the Committee reported the existence of community associations on around 30 to 40 estates.¹⁰⁶ Although housing authorities had the statutory powers to assist these developments, much was made of the pioneering role of voluntarism. One social welfare writer, Julian Henriques,¹⁰⁷ described the situation facing the NCSS as follows:

The newly developed housing estate is a mushroom growth. It has been suddenly created by some housing authority, or perhaps by a speculative builder, and it possesses none of the traditions of the old rural or urban communities. It consists of rows and rows of houses all very much alike, tenanted by people who, when they first go there, have none of these traditions to bind them together in the common interest.¹⁰⁸

Although PEP was probably accurate to suggest in 1937 that "the majority of small charities have no financial or administrative relations with any public authority", large parts of the voluntary world had adjusted their activities in order to bring them in line with those of the state.¹⁰⁹ This development reinforced the position of those social workers and writers who, like Elizabeth Macadam and Hilda Jennings, sought to move philanthropy away from older

¹⁰⁴ M. Brasnett, Voluntary Social Action, pp 62 - 64.

¹⁰⁵ The Pilgrim Trust was established in 1930 when Mr Stephen Harkness, an American of English descent, placed 2 million pounds in the hands of a small body of trustees who were instructed to promote the future well-being of the country. In the 1930s its activities fell into the categories of social welfare and the preservation of national monuments. See G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare pp 223 - 224.

¹⁰⁶ J. Q. Henriques, A Citizen's Guide to Social Service, p 324.

¹⁰⁷ This is not to suggest that Henriques was enthusiastic about the growth of state welfare in Britain. His view was that the extension of the public welfare services was weakening a sense of personal responsibility by shifting it from the individual to the community. Echoing Loch and Pringle, he also argued that this bureaucratic machine was ill adapted to deal with all those circumstances facing the individual. *Ibid*, p 176.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p 324.

¹⁰⁹ P. E. P. Report on the British Social Services, p 172.

suspicious ideas towards an acceptance of voluntarism and the growing social service state working together for common ends. G. D. H. Cole was, therefore, correct to talk about the advocates of "voluntaryism against state action" becoming conscious that they were "fighting a losing battle."¹¹⁰ True some volunteers like Loch, and later Pringle, continued to criticise the unco-ordinated growth of public welfare provision, although the ideological defeat of this position was highlighted by the more pro-statist position adopted by Benjamin Astbury of the COS during the later 1930s, and the manner in which his predecessors were forced grudgingly to co-operate with national legislation they had originally opposed. "Making the best of a bad job" merely revealed the COS's impotence in the face of developments it could not control.

This chapter has attempted to provide an overview of the main trends in voluntarist thinking about the state in the period before 1939. It has concentrated on differing opinions about the correct public-private welfare mix in the delivery of social services. In this sense it has tackled many of the same questions also addressed by the recent research of Geoffrey Finlayson and Jane Lewis. From this point onwards the thesis will adopt a different approach by looking at the relationship between voluntarism and the state with particular reference to war, industrial unrest and unemployment.

¹¹⁰ G. D. H. Cole, 'A Retrospective of the History of Voluntary Social Service' in Voluntary Social Services, P 22.

CHAPTER TWO: WORLD WAR ONE

In recent decades the impact of World War One upon British society has been a favourite topic of discussion amongst social historians. Writers such as Arthur Marwick, Jay Winter and Alaisdair Reid have all participated in a lively debate centring around the issue of war and social change.¹ Within this debate, considerable attention has focused upon the implications of war for the labour movement, women, state welfare, civilian health and public attitudes towards religion and morality. Yet if these areas of study have proved attractive to social historians concerned with British domestic life during the Great War, the same could not be said for voluntary social welfare provision. Overshadowed by an increase in state collectivism during 1914 - 1918, the voluntary sector has been largely ignored,² with the result that little has been written about the problems and opportunities presented to charity by the challenge of total war. This oversight is unfortunate as important developments occurred within the voluntary world at this time. War, it could be argued, had a contradictory effect upon the field of charitable action: on the one hand it produced a decline in income and active membership for many older charities whose objectives were not directly related to immediate war needs, whilst, on the other, it presented voluntarism with opportunities which were met by an outpouring of effort.

¹ See, for example, A. Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War, (London: Macmillan, 1965), A. Reid, 'World War One and the Working Class in Britain', in A. Marwick (ed), Total War and Social Change, (London: Macmillan, 1988), J. M. Winter, 'The Impact of the First World War on Civilian Health in Britain', Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol XXX, No 3, 1977, pp 487 - 503 and The Great War and the British People, (London: Macmillan, 1985).

² However, there are exceptions. Brian Abel - Smith examines voluntary medical provision during World War One in his work, The Hospitals 1800 - 1948, while Geoffrey Finlayson mentions the activities of the National Relief Fund, the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association and the War Refugees Committee in Citizen, State and Social Welfare. See B. Abel - Smith, The Hospitals 1800 - 1948, (London: Heinemann, 1964), pp 252 - 283, and G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, pp 218 - 221.

The negative impact of war upon charity was visible in both the rising costs and falling subscriptions faced by many societies. At the request of the principal Metropolitan charities, Lord Lichfield wrote to The Times in November 1914 to inform the public about the hardship endured by established bodies who could not compete with the successful appeals of war charities.³ The Glasgow COS painted a similar picture in January 1915 when, surveying the impact of war on the local scene, it referred to associations which were "already crippled through insufficient means."⁴ Nor was this problem confined to the early months of hostilities. In May 1917 the London Orphan School blamed its income deficits for the years 1915 and 1916 on rising costs and falling subscriptions induced by war.⁵ The School claimed that this distressing financial situation was hindering its work of providing "sound education, religious training and healthy exercises" for middle-class orphans.

Faced with the twin problems of a fall in revenue and a rise in costs, some charities chose to cut back upon their activities, while others found the strain too great and were forced to close. This was the fate of the Greenock COS which folded in January 1915 due to the exhaustion of its funds. Although the Society believed that subscriptions had been affected by the taxation imposed upon generous employers by recent social legislation, it also concluded that a fresh appeal for resources was pointless given the competing demands of war charities for public generosity.⁶

However, this pessimistic conclusion was not acceptable to all of the charities whose principal aims predated the "new needs" created by

³ The Times, November 21st, 1914, p 10.

⁴ Glasgow Charity Organisation Society, Statements on Local Charities, January 1915, p 1.

⁵ The Times, May 1st, 1917 p 1.

⁶ The Glasgow Herald, January 20th, 1915, p 11.

war. Some of these societies responded to prevailing conditions by modifying their advertising strategies, in the hope that donations would be more forthcoming if some connection with the war effort could be clearly established in the public mind. This strategy was adopted by many leading children's charities shortly after the outbreak of hostilities. On August 20th, 1914, Dr Barnardo's placed an advertisement in The Times which, after briefly outlining the nature of its normal work, stated that: "The motto of our homes is for God and Country. Barnardo boys are constantly in training for the navy. 172 have entered His Majesty's Navy in the last four years."⁷ In a similar patriotic vein the Waifs and Strays Society revealed during the same month that, "old boys are serving the country in the Army and Navy,"⁸ and, three months later, the National Children's Home proclaimed its willingness to receive the children of deceased servicemen and Belgian refugees.⁹

Here, then, were examples of how military conflict could act as a spur to voluntary social action. Indeed, many older societies were quick to identify and prioritise certain groups within society whose material and moral well-being was considered to be at risk, while totally new institutions emerged as a response to the demands of war. This explains the role charity assumed in the lives of servicemen's families, disabled and convalescing soldiers, Belgian refugees, young women living in centres of military activity and troops stationed at home and abroad.

War-related activity of this nature did exert a strong claim upon the generosity of the public. The National Relief Fund - which was created through an appeal by the Prince of Wales for donations to help fight military and civilian distress - claimed in March 1915 to have

⁷ The Times, August 20th 1914, p 1.

⁸ Ibid, August 31st, 1914, p 1.

⁹ Ibid, November 5th, 1914, p 1.

received over £4.9 million in subscriptions and donations.¹⁰ In addition, the British Red Cross could rely upon public generosity to help fund its work amongst the war wounded, with the result that The Times collection on behalf of the society had raised over £4 million by June 1916.¹¹ The war - related activities of the YMCA also proved popular with those who subscribed to charity. In January 1916 the Association revealed that around £500,000 had been received in subscriptions for its campaign to provide recreation huts for military training camps.¹² Noting the overall progress of such appeals, the COR remarked in August 1916 that:

The liberality of the British Public is proverbial, but it has surpassed all precedent and expectation in the present war. Already the sum of war charity is estimated to have exceeded £30 million, and the desire to give appears to be insatiable.¹³

Unfortunately, there are no existing figures which can determine the precise accuracy of this estimate. Nevertheless, the sheer scale of public donations to war charities forced the Government to introduce a degree of control over fund-raising in 1916. In that year the Home Office appointed a Select Committee on War Charities which heard evidence from interested parties on financial matters. Although the Committee recognised that much money was wasted through the overlapping of funds with similar objectives, it refused to tackle this problem, concentrating instead upon the questions of fraud and

¹⁰ Report on the Administration of the National Relief Fund (hereafter NRF), up to the 31st March 1915, Cd 7756, p 3.

¹¹ Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem in England on Voluntary Aid Rendered to the Sick and Wounded at Home and Abroad and to British Prisoners' of War, 1914 - 1919, Red Cross History, (London: HMSO, 1921), p 17.

¹² The Times, January 25th, 1916, p 6.

¹³ 'The War Charities Report', COR, Vol XL, August 1916, p 47.

mismanagement. The Committee advocated a system of registration which rewarded responsible administration involving properly audited accounts,¹⁴ and the War Charities Act which followed put this system into operation. It defined war charity as "any fund, institution, or association having for its object, or amongst its objects, the relief of suffering or distress, the supply of needs or comforts, or any other charitable purpose connected with the present war."¹⁵ Under the Act such charities could only appeal to the public for contributions if they were registered with a relevant authority which, depending upon the society's location, was either a borough, district or county council. In addition, registration authorities were granted the power to remove charities from the register for maladministration and refusal to comply with conditions.

The War Charities Act also created a combined register of authorised war charities in England and Wales. Held by the Charity Commissioners, this register provides useful information about the number of war societies in operation after 1916. Indeed, the Commissioners' 1917 Report pointed out that during the last four months of 1916, 4,179 charities were entered in the combined register.¹⁶ Of course this figure says nothing about the size and income of individual societies as the combined register included both large and small organisations, with entries ranging from the Red Cross and Order of St John War Library at one extreme, to the Darlington, East Road, Wesleyan Church Comforts Charity on the other. Nevertheless, the register does reveal that war was met by an upsurge in patriotic charitable endeavour which both voluntarism and the state were committed to defending from fraud through joint action.

¹⁴ Report of the Committee on War Charities, 1916, Cd 8287, p 5.

¹⁵ Acts of Parliament, 6&7, Geo V, C 43.

¹⁶ Sixty Fourth Report of the Charity Commissioners' for England and Wales, 1916 - 1917, Cd 8521, p 7.

If social historians have largely overlooked both the problems and opportunities charity confronted as a result of war, they have also paid little attention to the impact military conflict had upon relations between charitable societies and the state. As Frank Prochaska points out, "philanthropists were zealous in their support of the war effort."¹⁷ The next couple of sections in this chapter will examine the form this support took. It will become clear that voluntarism not only co-operated with the state in the satisfaction of welfare needs, but also promoted what it believed to be the national interest through the dissemination of patriotic and moral ideas concerning political and sexual behaviour. The impact these developments had upon how charity perceived its future role in society will be dealt with at the end.

VOLUNTARISM AND THE STATE: WELFARE NEEDS

According to Geoffrey Finlayson, war not only mobilised the resources of the state "it also stretched them to an unprecedented and uncomfortable degree."¹⁸ Due to war the state was forced to adopt a number of additional welfare commitments on top of those it had made before 1914. The creation of the "New Army" through recruitment greatly increased the burden imposed upon the War Office by separation allowances payable to wives and dependants. Furthermore, the sheer scale of hostilities inevitably created large numbers of casualties; most notably sick and wounded servicemen who placed claims for assistance on the War Office and, after 1917, the Ministry of Pensions. Military conflict also stretched the state's resources in areas not immediately connected with military conflict. In referring to child welfare, Caroline Rowan has argued that during 1914-1918: "Anxiety about the population level

¹⁷ F. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse*, p 74.

¹⁸ G. Finlayson, 'A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911 - 1949', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol 1, No 2, 1990, p 190.

deepened as deaths at the front increased and the birth rate at home declined."¹⁹ Thus, the Local Government Board not only issued circulars encouraging local authorities to set up infant welfare centres, but also made available a 50% grant for the expenses of health visitors and centres.²⁰

The increase in welfare demands that war placed upon the state also provided charity with an opportunity to relieve the Government of at least some pressure. This was clearly visible in the work of the National Relief Fund which was founded on the 11th August 1914, following calls by the Prince of Wales and Queen Alexandra for resources to relieve war distress. The Fund aimed to embrace within the scope of its effort the relief of all hardship arising directly from war casualties and trade dislocation.²¹ The administration of this work was delegated to an Executive Committee appointed by the Prince, after consultation with the Prime Minister. It included the "great and the good" from both public and civil life, with membership ranging from the former Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, to the founder of the Chesterfield Settlement, Miss Violet Markham.²² With the support of the LGB, representative committees consisting of members of local authorities and the Guilds of Help, were

¹⁹ C. Rowan 'Child Welfare and the Working Class Family', in M. Langan, and B. Schwarz (eds), *Crises in the British State, 1880 - 1930*, (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p 190.

²⁰ Despite these developments Local Government Board Officials still emphasised the importance of education, rather than poverty or character, in explaining infant mortality. In 1916 one Board of Education circular claimed that infant mortality was more to do with people themselves than their external surroundings. See J. Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, p 65.

²¹ Report on the Administration of the NRF up to 31st March, 1915, Cd 7756, p 2.

²² Violet Markham, (1872 - 1959), was the daughter of a Derbyshire colliery owner and sister to the Liberal MP, Arthur Markham. In 1902 she founded the Chesterfield Settlement, and through her work in this area was considered suitable for a post on the Executive Committee of the NRF. During the War she was also involved with the Women's Section of the Department of National Service. In the 1920s Markham was a councillor in Chesterfield, and after 1934 she sat on the Unemployment Assistance Board, rising to the position of Deputy Chair in 1937. Markham will appear in most of the following chapters because of her involvement with voluntary work throughout the period. Her experience of this participation is well recorded in her papers at the LSE. For more biographical detail see E. T. Williams, and H. Palmer, (eds) *Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp 692 - 693.

created to distribute funds dealing with both civilian and military needs. The committees' activities were curtailed somewhat by both the Executive's decision to use war charities for the distribution of military grants, and a favourable employment situation which reduced civilian hardship. Consequently, they were left to deal with problems such as sporadic cases of distress, the victims of air raids and the dependants of British civilians interned in Germany.²³

The promising domestic situation allowed the Executive Committee to devote more time and resources to the military side of its work, including the relief of distress amongst soldiers, sailors and their dependants. The well-being of servicemen's dependants was, indeed, an important area in which the Fund struggled to lessen the burden endured by the state as a result of military conflict. Britain's entry into battle revealed that the War Office possessed inadequate information regarding both the number and precise location of soldiers' wives.²⁴ This caused an inevitable delay in the payment of many separation allowances. Moreover, in some instances where allowances were paid supplementation was necessary as the rates were insufficient to maintain a home. On top of this there was also hardship arising from the absence of assistance at the

²³ Report of the Administration of the NRF up to 31st March 1917, Cd 8621, p 4.

²⁴ Part of the reason for this stemmed from the restrictive marriage practice operated by the Army before 1914. A small number of men were allowed to marry as a reward for loyalty and good service: a practice known as "marriage on the strength." Those soldier's wives "married on the strength" were eligible for separation allowances and certain other benefits. The existence of this practice did not succeed in turning the Army into a near celibate force. As some 19th century social purity campaigners pointed out, many soldiers frequently relied upon the services of prostitutes, while others went ahead and married despite army regulations: this was termed "marriage off the strength." Those women married to soldiers "off the strength" were not entitled to army allowances, and were often forced to depend upon the Poor Law or charities such as the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association in times of hardship. Nevertheless, when Britain entered the war Asquith recognised that the payment of allowances to wives "off the strength" was necessary to boost recruitment. Consequently, this practice was adopted on the 10th of August 1914. Unfortunately, however, the War Office did not keep lists of wives "married off the strength" and so delays in payment were inevitable. See S. Pedersen 'Gender, Welfare and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War', *American Historical Review*, Vol 95, No 4, 1990, pp 986 - 992.

outbreak of war for dependants other than wives and children. Faced with this scenario, the Fund came to the aid of the state by supplementing allowances in order to meet costs such as rent, and relieving distress amongst soldiers' mothers, sisters and other relatives who were not initially covered by government regulations.²⁵

In many parts of the country the task of dealing with hardship amongst dependants was carried out by the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association. As this body had been involved in the relief of distress amongst servicemen's families during the Boer War - and as it also commanded the respect of the War Office - the Fund viewed it as a suitable organisation for advancing and supplementing dependants allowances.²⁶ Under these arrangements the Association had, by August 1915, financially assisted 107,814 cases in London alone; while on a national scale it claimed, by mid 1916, to have aided over 700,000 wives and around 1.6 million children.²⁷ In 1915 the Association's Council commented on the circumstances which brought it to this work: "Some agency was imperatively called for to take part in temporarily relieving Government of the sudden and unprecedented task imposed upon its resources. Financial help for families in distress had to be disbursed at once in anticipation of official matters."²⁸

Charity could, therefore, act as a "stop gap" agent for the state as the payments made to soldiers' dependants revealed. Yet it would be wrong to assume from this that the SSFA's position in relation to the state remained static throughout the war. If anything it was open to change through public pressure. There was a widespread feeling in Britain

²⁵ Report of the Administration of the NRF, March 1915, p 5.

²⁶ Ibid, p 4.

²⁷ Annual Report of the Soldiers and Sailors and Families Association, 1915 - 1916, (hereafter SSFA), p 22.

²⁸ Annual Report of the Council of the SSFA 1914 - 1915, p 27.

that both advances to servicemen's wives and complementary payments to families receiving War Office allowances were proper concerns for the state rather than charity. This view was expressed in Parliament as figures ranging from the Labour leader, Arthur Henderson, to the Liberal MP for Nottingham Mansfield, Arthur Markham, argued that family maintenance was both a soldier's right and an official responsibility.²⁹

The state eventually gave into this pressure by implementing the Naval and Military War Pensions Act of 1915 which transferred the functions of the NRF and SSFA mentioned above to the new Statutory Committee of the Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation. This body consisted largely of individuals appointed by the King and various government departments including the War Office and the LGB.³⁰ Although the 1915 Act made provision for the representation of the SSFA on both the Statutory Committee and its local committees, it was obvious to all involved that the state had taken over certain activities which had been in the charitable sphere of interest. Supported mainly by Exchequer grants, this Committee was, in the words of the Junior Minister and SSFA member, W. Hayes Fisher MP, a "state body with state finances at its back" which would take over "duties that could not be left to the mere haphazard of whether or not voluntary associations are strong in the boroughs."³¹

It appeared that the state believed certain matters were too important to fall within the realm of charitable assistance. This angered some members of the SSFA like Lieutenant General Sir Edward Elles, who argued at the Association's 1916 Annual Conference that the

²⁹ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, (House of Commons), 5th Series, Vol LXV, July 20th - August 19th, 1914, Col 2116 - 2117, and Vol LXVIII, November 11th to 27th 1914, Col 50 - 51.

³⁰ Acts of Parliament, 5 & 6, Geo V, 1916, C 83.

³¹ Report on a Conference of the SSFA held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, 6th April, 1916, in Annual Report of the SSFA, 1915 - 1916, p 1778.

Government had pushed them aside with "scant courtesy" and "no very great gratitude."³² He also felt that, regardless of how efficient the new system might be, officialdom would be unable to carry out the work in the sympathetic manner which supposedly characterised the activities of volunteers. This view was re-iterated by another speaker, E. Cozens-Hardy, who began by suggesting that the sluggishness which characterised the spread of local committees under the Act was due to the inefficiency associated with government and semi-government agencies.³³ Cozens-Hardy then remarked that the SSFA's work since 1914 had been inspired by the love of women and children rather than obedience to an unwanted piece of legislation. This tendency within the organisation seemed to subscribe to the Earl of Cromer's view that the Government's treatment of the SSFA served as evidence of a wider attempt by the state to "strangle all voluntary effort."³⁴ It was the influence of this spirit which prompted Miss L. J. Wood, the Honorary Secretary of the Burnley Division, to advocate a policy of boycotting the new committees.³⁵

Nevertheless, this hard-line element failed to win the argument. If anything, the experience of the new Act highlighted a willingness within both official and voluntary circles to alter charitable-statutory relations in the face of changed conditions. Indeed, the provision made in the 1915 Act for a voluntary presence on both the Statutory Committee and its local committees was utilised by the SSFA who were represented on both the Central and London bodies. The Association's representative on the latter committee, Sir Charles Nicholson, MP, had been a critic of the

³² Ibid, p 9.

³³ Ibid, p 13.

³⁴ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, (House of Lords), 5th Series, Vol XIX, 3rd June - 20th October, 1914, Col 631.

³⁵ Report of a Conference of the SSFA held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, 6th April, 1916, p1809.

decision to take separation allowances away from the SSFA, because he felt it had dealt satisfactorily with the task in hand.³⁶ Yet both he and the Association were willing to accept the inevitable by co-operating with the state through the provision of assumed expertise in the administration of the new act. In fact in 1916 the SSFA Council even went as far as claiming credit for the new legislation by arguing that state responsibility was "largely due to the educational work of the Association over the past thirty years."³⁷

It should also be remembered that neither the 1915 War Pensions Act, nor the creation of the Ministry of Pensions which took over the Statutory Committees functions after 1917, totally eclipsed the SSFA's involvement in the relief of distress. Delays surrounding the creation of local war pension committees in about 200 areas forced the Government to ask both the NRF and the SSFA to continue their work up until the 30th June 1916.³⁸ In addition, even as late as 1918 the Association was acting as the agent and local committee of the Ministry of Pensions in such remote areas as Guernsey and Jersey.³⁹ The SSFA also recognised that, although it had surrendered certain activities to the state, there was still much to be done through the provision of services which lay outside the Government's sphere of action. As the Honorary Secretary of the Wiltshire Branch pointed out in 1916, this could take the form of providing families with advice and information on all sorts of matters.⁴⁰ The National Association's Secretary, Captain Wickham-Legg, also touched upon this question of supplementary services when, in the same year, he remarked that:

³⁶ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, (House of Commons), 5th series, Vol LXXIII, July 5th - July 20th, 1915, Col 215.

³⁷ Report of the Council of the SSFA, 1915 - 1916, p 22.

³⁸ Ibid, p 21.

³⁹ Report of the Council of the SSFA, 1917 - 1918, p 38.

Supposing we do not find sufficient scope for our energies under existing regulations, our bylaws are not as the laws of Medes and Persians, and it is always open to us to cancel or to raise them, to make them wider, to take in a different class and so on.⁴¹

Like separation allowances, the care of the sick and wounded involved a series of differing and changing relationships between patriotic voluntary associations and a state burdened by the demands of war. Military conflict placed enormous pressure upon the resources of the Army Medical Service as additional doctors and nurses had to be drawn from the civilian population, and a considerable expansion of hospital accommodation was urgently required.⁴² Once again, then, plenty of room was left for patriotic charitable endeavour, as the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross and Order of St John acknowledged when it remarked in 1919 that "the outbreak of war meant the Army Medical Service found itself, at short notice, obliged to organise on a scale which made efficient assistance offered to it from outside not only welcome, but at times a necessity".⁴³

One of the most notable forms of assistance given by these societies was the provision of auxiliary hospitals which aimed to relieve the Army Medical Service of pressure by accepting for treatment suitable cases from military hospitals. In the majority of instances the provision of such institutions was the outcome of local effort, often involving the Red Cross and the Order of St John. The hospitals were staffed by Voluntary Aid Detachments of nurses who, at the outbreak of war, were directed by

⁴⁰ Report of the Annual Meeting of the SSFA, 1916 - 1917, p 11.

⁴¹ Report on a Conference of the SSFA, April 1916, p 1778.

⁴² See B. Abel - Smith, *The Hospitals 1800 - 1948*, pp 252 - 266.

⁴³ Reports by the Joint War Committee of The British Red Cross Society and Order of St John, 1914 - 1919, p 3.

the Territorial Force County Associations.⁴⁴ The relationship between these auxiliary institutions and the War Office can be described by the word "agency," as the latter paid capitation grants to the hospitals in recognition of their service to the state. According to the Joint War Committee of the Red Cross and Order of St John, 1081 hospitals received over £ 2.5 million in capitation grants from the Government during 1917 alone.⁴⁵ As the War Office argued in July 1920,

of all the innumerable forms of voluntary and generous service rendered to the nation during the war, none was more valuable, and few more unobtrusive, than the establishment and maintenance of private homes and other buildings for the sick and wounded.⁴⁶

The care of sick and wounded servicemen also presented charity with the opportunity to provide services outside the state's sphere of responsibility. This complementary role was exhibited in a number of ways. It was the duty of the Red Cross Stores Department to provide its own hospitals with medical equipment and additional comforts. Nonetheless, from early 1917 onwards, this Department decided, with the approval of the War Office, to supply military hospitals with articles not included on the army schedule, including card tables, wheelchairs and invalid foods.⁴⁷ Another interesting example of this form of relationship lay in the provision of "rest stations" which operated at many railway terminals in Britain and on the Continent. The aim of this initiative was

⁴⁴ For a non critical account of voluntary aid detachments and their work see T. Bowser, The Story of Voluntary Aid Detachment Work in the Great War, (London: Andrew Melrose Ltd, 1917). However, Brian Abel-Smith tells a different story. He points out that those in the detachments were usually untrained by nursing standards, and were thus criticised by professionally trained nurses who questioned their ability to treat men in military, auxiliary and voluntary hospitals. See B. Abel Smith, The Hospitals 1800 - 1948, p 236.

⁴⁵ Reports by the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross and Order of St John, 1914 - 1919, p 228.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p 230.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p 236.

to provide injured servicemen travelling home on ambulance trains with food and drinks distributed at stops along the way.⁴⁸ As the War Office was unlikely to develop this service, charity stepped in to fill the gap. By November 1915 the Scottish Red Cross had established stations at various terminals in Glasgow and Edinburgh, while in Newcastle members of the Nursing Division of the St John's Ambulance Brigade ran the station from which they met trains and served tea, food and cigarettes.

Both the Red Cross and the Order of St John could justify entering into these relationships on the basis of a patriotic desire to relieve the Government of certain pressures generated by war. Yet neither the self-congratulatory tone of the Red Cross, nor the praise heaped upon it by the War Office after the end of hostilities, can hide the fact that inefficiency, vested interest and tension between statutory and voluntary sectors often characterised medical provision. Immediately after the outbreak of war, the compilation of lists of auxiliary hospitals was undertaken by a number of rival bodies including the Red Cross, the Order of St John and the Soldiers and Sailors Help Society. Given the desire of these bodies to guard their own positions, it took the intervention of the War Office to impose co-ordination through the creation of a Joint War Committee.⁴⁹

Moreover, as Brian Abel-Smith has pointed out, the challenge of war did not prevent either voluntary or auxiliary hospitals using the War Office payments systems for their own good.⁵⁰ Some auxiliary institutions were tempted to hold on to recovered military patients, or admit patients with minor injuries, in order to gain capitation grants for occupied beds. In addition, differences of opinion between the Red Cross and the

⁴⁸ Ibid, p 189.

⁴⁹ B. Abel-Smith, The Hospitals, 1800 - 1948, pp 254 - 255.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p 276.

Government could arise from administrative questions, and it was not always the former that gave way in such disputes. For example the charity prevailed in disagreements over food supplies to auxiliary hospitals in 1918. The Ministry of Food's schemes for the distribution of rationed categories was criticised by the Red Cross as being insensitive to the needs of the hospitals. In order to force a change of mind in official circles, the Red Cross and the Order of St John threatened to throw the onus of feeding these institutions onto the War Office. This threat was successful in that it forced the Government to introduce a more favourable set of arrangements from the charity's point of view.⁵¹ The Red Cross attributed this about-turn in official circles to the reluctance of the War Office to take on an additional burden at a most pressing time. All in all the whole affair emphasised how conflict could creep into voluntary-statutory relations, thus stressing the need for government action - even if of a submissive type - to bring about equilibrium in the relationship.

Charitable-statutory relations also figured in the treatment of those wounded servicemen who were unfortunate enough to fall into the category of permanently disabled. One of the most notable voluntary bodies working in this area was the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society which, under its Secretary, Major Tudor-Craig, served as yet another example of how, in attempting to meet welfare needs thrown up by war, charity could enter into a variety of differing and changing relationships with the state. Using money received from the NRF, the Society performed an agency role for the Government by temporarily assisting discharged men pending the issue of a War Office pension. The 1915 Annual Report of the Society's Glasgow Branch drew attention to the

⁵¹ Reports by the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross and Order of St John, 1914 -1919, p 144.

importance of this work when it remarked: "Considerable delay still takes place between the date of a man's discharge and the payment of his pension, and it is here that the SSHS steps in, and finances the men and their families until the War Office has performed its duty."⁵²

This "agency" role was also manifested in other ways as the Help Society was, along with the Red Cross, appointed by the War Office and Admiralty as the central registry for the transfer of invalids from hospitals to convalescent homes.⁵³ The Society also found time to provide services which were supplementary to those of the state. These ranged from the provision of clothes to the discharged disabled, to help with the completion of pension forms. In one way or another, then, the society relieved the Government of certain tasks at a time when national resources were facing unprecedented strain. The scale of this work can be ascertained from the fact that the Society had, as a consequence of all its activities, dealt with over 75,000 cases by March 1916.⁵⁴

Mention should also be made of other charities working in this area. The NRF distributed resources to various voluntary initiatives concerned with the well-being of soldiers suffering from blindness, loss of limb and severe facial injuries. Amongst the most well known were the St Dunstan's Convalescent Hostel for Blinded Soldiers, and Queen Mary's Convalescent Hospital for Limbless Soldiers.⁵⁵ In the words of the Joint War Committee of the Red Cross and Order of St John, such institutions highlighted how, "it was from the outset evident that no

⁵² Annual Report of the Glasgow Branch of the Incorporated Soldiers and Sailors Help Society, (hereafter SSHS), 1915 - 1916, p 3.

⁵³ Letter from Major General Cheylesmore, Chair of the SSHS, to Executive Committee National Relief Fund, August 28th, 1914, Violet Markham Papers, NRF, 1 / 9.

⁵⁴ Report on the Administration of the NRF, March 1916, p 4.

⁵⁵ Report on the Administration of the NRF, September 1915, p 5.

Government Department could grapple immediately with the needs of so many disabled men as were being produced by the war."⁵⁶

One might argue that the well-being of permanently disabled servicemen was the concern of a mixed system of welfare, although once again it would be wrong to suggest that relations between the component parts of this system remained static and free from controversy. Some MPs - particularly those on the Labour benches - held that the disabled serviceman should be no more the object of charity than the dependants he had left behind.⁵⁷ If this was an example of what Geoffrey Finlayson has called the "voluntarism should not cope" view,⁵⁸ there were others who argued that the Society could not cope with the demands being placed upon it. One member of the NRF's Executive Committee, Leonard Brock, was forced to admit in April 1915 that the SSHS faced grave difficulties in carrying out many of its duties.⁵⁹ Brock recognised that, despite its achievements, the Society had failed to establish itself firmly in many areas. Although it was represented in each county, this representation often consisted of a single individual rather than a divisional committee. Brock's second criticism was levelled at the Society's Secretary, Major Tudor-Craig, who, it appeared, was oblivious to the organisation's structural problems. In summing up Brock remarked:

I feel bound to record my personal impression that the composition of the Executive Committee of the Society and the personality of their secretary are not such as to leave me at all hopeful of the possibility of re-organising the

⁵⁶ Reports by the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross and Order of St John, 1914 - 1919, p 238.

⁵⁷ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol LXXIII, July 5th to July 20th, 1915, Col 1442.

⁵⁸ G. Finlayson, 'A Moving Frontier', p188.

⁵⁹ L. G. Brock, Temporary Assistance to Wounded Soldiers and Sailors, Paper to the Executive Committee of the NRF, April 19th, 1915, Violet Markham Papers, NRF, 1 / 9.

society sufficiently to enable it to cope with the strain which is likely to be imposed upon it in the near future.⁶⁰

As such views existed within the charitable sector itself, it was not surprising that the state eventually sought to exert greater statutory control over the relief, training and employment of disabled soldiers and sailors. Although the activities of the SSHS had relieved the state of certain pressures, the lack of uniformity which characterised its organisation forced the Government's hand. The Statutory Committee of the Royal Patriotic Fund - which was mentioned earlier in conjunction with separation allowances - took over the payment of advances to disabled servicemen. Moreover, through the creation of a Disablement's Sub-Committee, the state extended its influence in devising local schemes for the treatment and training of disabled men.⁶¹

However, these developments still provided scope for charitable activity on behalf of the disabled. The onus was once again placed upon both charity and the state to reach agreement over spheres of responsibility under new arrangements. Despite losing certain functions to the Statutory Committee, the SSHS willingly agreed to place members upon this body and its Disablement's Sub-Committee, both of which, it was felt, could use the experience of skilled volunteers. Furthermore, charitable co-operation was undoubtedly encouraged by the Sub-Committee's recognition of how schemes of treatment and training could still rely partly upon local voluntary effort. In a circular to local committees established under the 1915 Act, the Sub-Committee argued that the interests of economy and efficiency dictated against the creation of special machinery in instances where existing arrangements were

⁶⁰ L. G. Brock, Provision for Wounded and Disabled Soldiers, Paper to the Executive Committee of the NRF, 8th April, 1915.

⁶¹ Acts of Parliament, 5 & 6, Geo V, Chap 83, p 5.

adequate.⁶² As examples of voluntary institutions which would continue to play a role in these fields, the Sub-Committee mentioned St Dunstan's, the Roehampton Hospital for amputees and the Lord Roberts Memorial Workshops.⁶³

So far emphasis has been placed upon the twists and turns of voluntary-statutory relations in welfare areas concerning the home front. But as one might expect the soldier engaged in active combat abroad was also considered an object of charitable effort. During the winter of 1914-15 there was an upsurge in voluntary action directed towards the supply of gifts and comforts for soldiers. Hundreds of local societies were formed to supplement Army provisions by replying to requests for gifts from officers and men in the field.

The growth of these bodies was viewed as an example of voluntarism's ability to move quickly without the hindrance of official regulations. Yet it also focused attention upon a classic weakness of charity, namely an inability to co-ordinate action. This was obvious to the Army Council which formed a Special Department of the War Office in September 1915 to give direction to charities supplying comforts to soldiers. Under the newly appointed Director General of Voluntary Organisations, Sir Edward Bart, county, city, borough and district associations were set up for this purpose. Charities could affiliate to these organisations through local committees, after which they would receive official recognition from the War Office. When explaining its intervention in this area, the Army Council spoke of its objective as being the creation of:

⁶² Circular from Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation Statutory Committee, Disablement's Sub-Committee, to local Committees, July 1916, in Report of the War Pension's Statutory Committee 1915 - 1916, Cd 8750, p 57.

⁶³ Ibid, pp 57 - 58.

a general scheme of co-ordination, in order that the great band of voluntary workers might have the opportunity of developing their work on lines which would serve not only economy and efficiency, but the maximum benefit to our fighting forces, individually or collectively, whether situated at home or overseas, either in the field or in hospital.⁶⁴

Although some local charities objected to the "cold hand of officialdom" interfering with their freedom to act, there was still considerable compliance with the Government's wishes. By acknowledging the need for compromise in sustaining amicable relations with the state, charity could justify its response to changed circumstances out of a patriotic desire to further the war effort. This allowed the Director General of Voluntary Organisations to boast in 1919 that around 400,000 volunteers had worked under the scheme, resulting in the distribution of 232 million cigarettes, 62,000 games and 123,000 sweaters to servicemen.⁶⁵

The provision of comforts for troops exhibited a familiar pattern surrounding relations between charity and the state. In attempting to relieve the Government of certain pressures, voluntarism's deficiencies resulted in the intervention of officialdom, thus forcing both sectors to co-operate and maintain a working relationship. This pattern was also relevant to the experience of those charities catering for the needs of Belgian refugees living in Britain. Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, a number of well-to-do individuals, including Lady Lugard, formed a War Refugees Committee with the aim of receiving, feeding and accommodating those who had fled Belgium. Between August 24th and the Government's offer of hospitality to the Belgians on September 10th,

⁶⁴ See Report on the National Scheme of Co-ordination of Voluntary Effort Resulting from the Formation of the Director General of Voluntary Organisations, (London: HMSO, 1919), Cmd 173, p 9.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp 8 - 9.

the Committee carried out this work without official help. During this period it set up a reception depot next to Victoria station, and co-operated with organisations such as the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Girls Life Brigade in the provision of food and temporary accommodation. The Committee's 1916 Annual Report pointed out that this work was carried out independently of the state because, "the Government, absorbed in war work, was not inclined to take responsibility."⁶⁶

Fortunately for the Committee, however, the LGB agreed with its conclusion that private effort was insufficient to meet the needs of Belgian refugees. The President of the Board, Herbert Samuel, recognised that the state should make provision for the temporary reception, feeding and shelter of refugees until suitable accommodation could be found by allocation. This decision marked the beginning of a process in which the Government steadily increased its responsibility for the welfare of Belgians living temporarily in Britain. The LGB set up refuges in and around London, thus relieving the WRC of anxiety surrounding temporary feeding and housing.⁶⁷ State action was also visible in the field of employment where Board of Trade labour exchanges took on the responsibility of finding jobs for those Belgians considered eligible for work.⁶⁸

Voluntarism clearly possessed inadequate resources to cover the welfare needs of Belgian refugees. But both the statutory and voluntary sectors recognised that increased public responsibility did not preclude charity from playing a supportive role in welfare provision. In fact the LGB continued to look upon the WRC as an agent through which money

⁶⁶ Annual Report of the War Refugees Committee, (hereafter WRC), for 1915 - 1916, p 4.

⁶⁷ Report on the Special Work of the Local Government Board (hereafter LGB), Arising out of the War up to 31st December, 1914, (London: HMSO, 1914), p 11.

⁶⁸ Annual Report of the WRC, 1915 - 1916, p 10.

could be distributed for particular purposes. In this context mention can be made of the Committee's Transport Department which provided services for the War Office such as the transportation of Belgians called up for military service. In recognition of this agency role, the Government agreed to meet the Department's running costs.⁶⁹ The Committee was also asked by the Colonial Office to administer a private gift from India earmarked for the feeding of Belgian Schoolchildren. This agency work was, indeed, undertaken by the organisation's Private Relief Fund. A similar example of the Committee acting at the behest of the state concerned the actions of ex-prisoners. Here the Home Office asked the organisation's Legal Department to tend and help find employment for such individuals.

The organisation also found an outlet for expression in supplementing the welfare activities of the state. It was pointed out earlier that through its labour exchanges, the Board of Trade endeavoured to find employment for suitable Belgians. As the Committee felt these exchanges were inappropriate for those from the professional and commercial classes, it set up an exchange of its own to deal with such groups.⁷⁰ Moreover, the Committee also undertook the everyday task of handing out advice and information to refugees on various questions arising from life in Britain.

Overall, some of the social problems caused by war pushed large sections of the charitable sector into a closer relationship with the state. Out of a patriotic desire to help the war effort, many charitable bodies sought to relieve the Government of some of the pressures it faced through the provision of agency and supplemental services. All in all, charity's agency role provided it with the opportunity to administer public

⁶⁹ Ibid, p 20.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p 46.

money on an unprecedented scale. As this practice became more common in the inter-war years, it is easy to forget that the war greatly encouraged the state to fund charity, especially in areas such as care for the sick and wounded, and the needs of Belgian refugees. It should also be recognised that relations between the voluntary sector and the state were far from static. Where voluntarism lacked both the depth of resources and the organisational coherence needed to function satisfactorily, the state often intervened and took over. This did not necessarily mean an end to the voluntary input and the experience of the SSFA, amongst others, highlights how charity continued to supplement state provision and maintain an agency role following the take-over of certain functions. Both voluntarism and government were, therefore, able to redefine their relationship in a number of areas, thus reaching a working agreement on which activities could be left to the former.

The next section will focus on the manner in which some of the above activities allowed voluntarism to link the national interest with certain political and moral values. Accompanying middle-class charity's desire to deal with welfare needs, was a commitment to discouraging certain forms of political and sexual behaviour amongst working-class men and women.

VOLUNTARISM AND THE STATE: IDEOLOGY AND MORALITY

Military conflict created an enhanced awareness within charitable circles of the need for national unity. As part of this process appeals for resources on behalf of war charities served an ideological function in that they encouraged patriotic cross-class identification with the war effort. War also made it easier for voluntarism to link the national interest to certain forms of sexual conduct. As Lucy Bland has pointed out, the early twentieth century saw the emergence of a social hygiene movement

which emphasised the moral and national duty of motherhood.

Organisations like the National Council for Public Morals aimed to educate the young about the ideals of marriage, and the dangers of promiscuity.⁷¹ In discussing female sexuality social hygiene groups drew a clear distinction between healthy motherhood with its beneficial consequences for the race, and promiscuity with its risk of venereal disease and national degeneration. After 1914 the demands of war allowed many charitable organisations to sharpen their arguments against promiscuity, as such behaviour could now be connected to the demands of immediate national survival.

Britain at war put unprecedented emphasis on national unity. One manifestation of this was the emergence of governments which included Liberals, Conservatives and - for the first time - Labour representatives. In May 1915 the Labour leader, Arthur Henderson, was invited to join Asquith's coalition government. Another development involving labour was the Treasury Conference of the same year in which the state enlisted the co-operation of trade union leaders in order to increase munitions productivity. The Munitions Act which followed this agreement prohibited strikes and lockouts in specified industries.⁷² This is not to suggest, however, that wartime Britain was free of strikes. In 1915 the South Wales Miners Federation struck successfully for a wage advance in defiance of the Munitions Act, and during 1916 and 1917 strike activity was running at around half the pre-war level.⁷³ Nonetheless, the state clearly recognised that the demands of modern war required the support

⁷¹ L. Bland, 'Cleansing the Portals of Life', Crises in the British State, 1880 - 1930, pp 201 - 204. Social Hygiene is also covered in G. Jones, Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain, (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

⁷² See J. Hinton, Labour and Socialism, p 98.

⁷³ Ibid, p 105.

and participation of larger sections of British society than had been the case in previous conflicts.

Identification with the war effort was a concern for both the Government and charity. To contribute to the resources of charitable organisations involved in war work was frequently viewed as a duty every patriotic citizen should fulfil. In January 1915, the Glasgow Herald launched an appeal for donations on behalf of the NRF. In its appeal the Herald argued that either military defeat, or distress caused by a successful war, were concerns for all members of the community as "every citizen, even the wealthy, would suffer".⁷⁴ By linking all Britons, regardless of class, to the same common interest this approach acknowledged the potential of charity in helping encourage working-class identification with the war effort. The Times had made a similar point in December 1914 when it commented that the success of its own appeal on behalf of the British Red Cross, revealed how there had been,

a response astonishing in its munificence - a wonderful monument of the charity and the public spirit of the nation and the empire. It has been, as we have repeatedly remarked, the work of all classes of our people, a truly national movement for a supreme national end.⁷⁵

By encouraging class unity behind a common objective, this form of appeal was a sign of Charity's commitment to social stability. The MP, Harold Elverston, argued that this one reason why such appeals had found favour with the state. When referring to charitable funds in the House of Commons on the 12th of November, 1914, he remarked: "I can quite understand that the Government is anxious that private people

⁷⁴ The Glasgow Herald, January 6th, 1915, p 6.

⁷⁵ The Times, December 31st, 1914 p 9.

should take a direct interest in this war, and that they will not want to dampen off this feeling in any way."⁷⁶

Recognition of the role charitable fund-raising could play in bolstering social cohesion was forthcoming from both inside and outside official circles. There was also acknowledgement within these same circles that certain appeals could be manipulated in a manner which fractured social solidarity. Of special importance here were appeals in aid of those organisations dealing with distress amongst the middle class. The NRF, to take the most notable example, distributed some of its resources to middle-class bodies such as the Officers' Family Fund, the Professional Classes Special Aid Society and the Professional Classes War Relief Council. According to a Times leader from October 1914, this development was being deliberately exploited by elements seeking to further class tension. It argued:

A most absurd yet base and mischievous falsehood has been put about, probably by street orators and anti-war socialists, that the Prince of Wales Fund is being expended entirely on officers' families. There is not a word of truth in this allegation, which would be too silly to need refutation if it were not current among working men, and used to dissuade them from enlisting.⁷⁷

The Home Secretary, Sir John Simon, recognised this problem and attempted to overcome it by stressing that the preservation of the middle class was in the interest of the entire nation. Speaking in June 1915 to the Professional Classes War Relief Council, he countered the arguments of the street orators by suggesting that, "the Professional Classes constitute a part of the community whose preservation and future are as

⁷⁶ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol LXVIII, November 11 - November 27th, 1914, Col 143.

⁷⁷ The Times, October 10th, 1914, p 9.

important to the nation, just as are the fortunes of our gallant soldiers and sailors."⁷⁸

The importance of encouraging working-class identification with the war effort through charity was also emphasised in the work of the War Camps Library which distributed 16 million books to the army at home and abroad. After the Spring of 1915 distribution was boosted through the use of post offices as collection points. The Camps Library argued that contributions from both labour organisations and the staffs of great houses in business revealed that there was "not a class of the community which had not given."⁷⁹ Despite this optimism, though, it is noteworthy that the Camps Library was, like The Times in its comments on the NRF, also aware of the nuisance presented by anti-war socialists. In its 1919 Report of work carried out over the previous five years, the Library explained how, "each publication had to be examined to see that no seditious leaflets had slipped into it."⁸⁰

The role of fund raising in promoting identification with the war effort cropped up in the debate over the legalisation of lotteries for war charities. The lottery had long been treated as a nuisance in English law, and anyone caught aiding or abetting such practices was likely to face prosecution.⁸¹ Following the outbreak of hostilities, lotteries for war charity were conducted up and down the country. In 1918 the Home Secretary, Sir George Cave, tried to regulate this activity by supporting the Marquess of Lansdowne's bill for the legalisation of lotteries during war. Under the Bill introduced in the House of Lords during July 1918,

⁷⁸ Ibid, June 2nd, 1915, p 3.

⁷⁹ Report of the War Camp's Library, 1919, Cmd 174, p 8.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p 11.

⁸¹ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, 5th Series, Vol 31, July 29th - November 12th, 1918, Col 32.

registered war charities would be permitted to hold lotteries provided they obtained the consent of the police.

Although Lansdowne and Cave merely aimed to regulate what was already a widespread practice, they threw charity into a vigorous debate on public morality. Some like Theodore Taylor, the Liberal MP for Radcliffe, felt that while the lottery could prove successful as a fundraiser, any state regulation of such activity should be opposed as it encouraged a "something for nothing" mentality which weakened the will to work.⁸² This was essentially the view of such Tory MPs as Sir A. Spicer and Sir Stephen Collins. Spicer believed gambling violated "the law of work", whilst Collins argued that young workers were being invited to graduate from lotteries to horses, and ultimately to methods of obtaining money outside employment.⁸³ Another Tory MP, Sir J. Spear, attacked the bill from a different standpoint. Drawing upon the self congratulatory tone which characterised much voluntarist comment on the success of national appeals, he argued that it was scandalous to suggest that British people could not be trusted to, "continue to provide funds for the Red Cross and other societies unless they are stimulated to do so by the chance of winning a prize."⁸⁴

Both the Home Secretary and Lord Lansdowne had aroused considerable opposition on account of what critics described as their desire to place patriotic fund raising before the moral good of the community. However, a closer examination of the issue reveals a different picture. In supporting Lansdowne's bill figures such as Sir Arthur Stanley, the Chairman of the British Red Cross and Order of St John, did not opportunistically abandon their commitment to the work ethic.

⁸² Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol 109, July 29th - August 8th, 1918, Col 1241.

⁸³ Ibid, Cols 1257 & 1259.

⁸⁴ Ibid, Col 1250.

Whilst recognising the value of lotteries in fund raising, Stanley felt that "some measures were justifiable in war, even though they might be questionable in less strenuous times."⁸⁵ In addition, Lansdowne himself was careful to draft a bill which would operate only for the duration of war in order to appease those who feared long term demoralisation amongst wage earners.

Charitable appeals were viewed as a means of taking a stake in the war. For opponents of lotteries the charitable appeal was a more solid commitment to the war effort which was free from the pitfalls of demoralisation. Yet other more direct options were also open to charity in its attempt to promote social solidarity. Arthur Marwick has pointed out that during hostilities the Government ran a propaganda bureau at Wellington House which, in 1917, was included in the newly created Ministry of Information.⁸⁶ As institutions rooted in civil society, charities were well placed to supplement the work of these official propaganda channels, and so, even before the end of 1914, bodies such as the Victoria League, the Workers Educational Association and the Social Service Bureau were holding patriotic meetings explaining why Britain had gone to war. Moreover, some societies were aware of the need to put the Government's case to those who played an essential part in the struggle for victory. From 1915 onwards, the YMCA provided recreation huts for munitions workers in the belief that the promotion of a "godly life" would increase "the power for work" and "promote a desire for efficiency."⁸⁷ In 1918 it extended its work in munitions plants by launching a scheme of short lectures which aimed to tackle war

85 Ibid, Col 1270

86 A. Marwick, *The Deluge*, pp 251 - 252.

87 *The British Empire Weekly*, July 21, 1914, p 675.

weariness by stressing the supposedly just nature of Britain's war aims.⁸⁸ The YMCA also put its recreation huts for troops at home and abroad to similar use. It organised an educational programme which - with the support of Army Command - brought in academics to raise troop morale by delivering lectures on patriotic subjects such as the history of both the British Empire and the allied countries.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the detrimental effect that food shortages at home was having on troop morale prompted the Association and the Ministry of Food to arrange, in early 1918, a series of lectures which aimed to dispel any unease amongst soldiers in France.

Educational lectures were not the only welfare services which charity provided to the troops. Anyone who looks through copies of The Times from World War One will see advertisements describing the recreational work carried out in military camps by the YMCA and Church Army. On the surface these centres were created with entertainment in mind, but given the YMCA's desire to protect the war effort and the national health from promiscuity, it is not surprising that they served other purposes. According to the Association, both the military efficiency of the Army and the purity of the nation were incompatible with the demoralising and physically debilitating influences of pubs and prostitutes. In an attempt to combine morality with national efficiency, the YMCA and Church Army recreation centres provided the

⁸⁸ The Times, February 25th, 1918, p 6. An interesting contribution from within the voluntary sector on the industrial situation came from Mr Arthur Clay in the June 1917 edition of the COR. Clay felt that, on the whole, the nation could be proud of the way in which manual workers had responded to the call of the country, both in the Army and in industry. Nonetheless, he pointed to a large group of workers who refused to put national interests before sectional ones, and had thus caused the nation over 2.4 million working days in strikes between January and November 1916. Clay hoped that those who had learned discipline and co-operation in the army would return to exert a calming influence on industrial relations. As we shall see in the next chapter this could not be taken for granted. A. Clay, 'Social Organisation', CQQ, June 1917, pp 284 - 285.

⁸⁹ The Times, February 25th, 1918, p 6.

soldier with an alternative to these undesirable influences. This point was made by one YMCA Commissioner who, after visiting the Association's hut at the Glasgow Maryhill Barracks in April 1916, commented that "previously the men had nowhere to go in the barracks, and too frequently wandered off to the public houses in the neighbourhood, or to other most undesirable places." "Now," he concluded, "the men gladly frequent this hut."⁹⁰

It was not only British servicemen who were susceptible to the temptations of immoral living. Attention was also paid to the behaviour of Belgian soldiers spending their leave in Britain. The First British Club for Belgian Soldiers was opened in London in order to provide creative entertainment and comforts which it was hoped would protect soldiers from the immoral temptations of drink and sex: temptations which - with their risk of alcoholism and venereal disease - threatened the fighting capacity of those afflicted. The Transport Superintendent of the WRC, Henry Campbell, told of how many Belgian soldiers had capitulated to the temptations of prostitutes and pleasure-seeking girls with the result that their fighting efficiency had often been badly impaired. This had even forced the Belgian military authorities to consider withdrawing soldiers' leave. However, by December 1917, Campbell was boasting that, thanks to the Belgian soldiers' clubs in London, Southampton and Folkestone, the servicemen returned to the front in a healthier condition, with the result that the "officers have no fear of returning their men for a holiday in England."⁹¹

Those charities concerned with upholding moral standards during the turmoil of war devoted considerable time and attention towards

⁹⁰ YMCA, British Empire Weekly, April 7th, 1916, p 304.

⁹¹ H. Campbell, Belgian Soldiers at Home in the United Kingdom, (London: Saunders and Cullingham, 1917), p 40.

influencing the behaviour of young women living in areas of military activity. Within charitable circles it was feared that women other than prostitutes were likely to engage in sex with soldiers. The President of the Young Women's Christian Association, H. M. Procter, was worried about the evils which could arise when a girl in a state of mental restlessness produced by the war found herself both unemployed and faced with a sudden and absorbing interest in the presence of a large number of troops stationed in her town. This scenario, together with a patriotic desire to help on the girl's part, could, if frustrated, "easily lead to demoralisation."⁹² One way in which the Association fought this development mirrored the recreation huts scheme deployed amongst soldiers. The YWCA, encouraged by Government ministers such as Arthur Balfour, provided recreation centres for women living near military camps. These clubs aimed to direct the patriotic energy of women in a wholesome non-promiscuous direction: a direction which, to quote H. M. Procter, was conducive to upholding, "the moral and social welfare of His Majesty's Forces."⁹³

⁹² The Times, December 21st, 1917, p 9. By 1917 the perceived outcome of this demoralisation was producing lively discussions in the press. One letter writer to The Times, M. D, argued in December 1917 that the main source of venereal infection was the "free lance" women who engaged in sex for pleasure rather than money. Combining morality with national efficiency, he suggested that this development not only put the troops at risk, but also jeopardised the health of women who ought to be the "future mothers of rising generations." Ibid, December 14th, 1917, p 12. Moreover, as Lucy Bland has shown, VD was a prominent concern of social hygiene groups like the National Council for Public Morals and the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease. These groups viewed sex education as a means of directing women away from promiscuity and into motherhood. This argument found fertile ground in war time hysteria over VD and its effect upon military efficiency. Indeed, Bridget Towers reveals how the NCCVD was able to win an accredited status from the Local Government Board for an education policy which emphasised the importance of moral instruction. State policy also included free diagnosis and treatment and, under regulation 40 D of the Defence of the Realm Act, the compulsory medical treatment of women who had sex with servicemen while suffering from VD. See L. Bland, 'Cleansing the Portals of Life', and B. Towers, 'Health Education Policy 1916 - 1926: Venereal Disease and the Prophylactics Dilemma,' Medical History, No 24, January 1980, pp 70 - 84.

⁹³ The Times, December 13th, 1914, p 9. Similar objectives were behind the patrol system operated by groups such as the National Union of Women Workers and the Scottish Union of National Women's Societies. With the support of the Home and Scottish Offices these patrols co-operated with the police in discouraging young women from acting in a manner which

Class distinction and the need for prudent sexual behaviour also featured in voluntarism's dealings with Belgian refugees. Favourable treatment for middle-class Belgians was an acknowledged feature of the WRC's work.⁹⁴ The Committee pursued a policy of social separation at reception and, with the financial support of the LGB, arranged temporary accommodation for "better class" Belgians in hotels and superior flats.⁹⁵ In justifying this policy, Viscount Gladstone, the WRC's Honorary Treasurer, argued that "the educated and superior classes" strongly resented being associated with "less desirable types".⁹⁶ Lurking behind this remark was the assumption that the Committee could take pride in the patriotism of meeting the needs of allied citizens on the one hand, whilst showing an awareness of the potential threat this posed national life on the other. For Gladstone and his colleagues there were, especially within the lower orders of Belgian society, unsound elements who had found their way to Britain, and were thus likely to cause trouble through loafing, drunkenness, crime and immorality. This was indeed the experience which regional members of the organisation conveyed to the LGB's 1914 Departmental Committee on Belgian Refugees. A Mr Balfour of the Sheffield District Committee spoke of some men being "excessively lazy" and "difficult to deal with", whilst the Rev A. Prichard

tempted crown servicemen. By April 1915 over 1000 of these patrols were operating in England, while the corresponding figure in Scotland was around 300. According to the Joint Convenors of the Women's Patrol Committee for Scotland, Wilhelmina Greenclash and Isabelle Salverson, the duties of patrols were to "discourage foolish and imprudent behaviour" by establishing friendly relations with loitering girls. Like the YWCA the patrols hoped to guide female interest in those who were training to defend their country into channels "useful and beneficial to the girls and the nation." See The Glasgow Herald, January 15th, 1915, p 4, and Glasgow COS, Organised Help, April 1915, p 104.

⁹⁴ Of course similar favouritism characterised voluntary effort elsewhere. The most well known example is medical treatment. Abel-Smith reveals that the "allocation of places in this sporadic hospital service took account of rank, nationality and colour, quite apart from medical need." See B. Abel - Smith, The Hospitals 1800 - 1948, pp 272 - 275.

⁹⁵ Annual Report of the WRC, 1915 - 1916, p 32.

⁹⁶ Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Departmental Committee Appointed by the President of the LGB to Consider and Report on Questions Arising in Connection with the Reception and Employment of Belgian Refugees, 1915, Cd 7779, p 138.

from Birmingham told of individuals, "loafing about and making themselves troublesome."⁹⁷ According to Gladstone such behaviour could be explained by the fact that,

We get the very best and worse from Belgium. The Committee can easily understand that at a time like this the Prisons in Belgium are practically empty, and a great deal of wastrels and undesirables come over here, especially when they hear that there is free hospitality to be got, and that has been a great practical difficulty.⁹⁸

In dealing with the objectionable, charity and the state were capable of invoking a harsh, punitive and moralistic approach. Some refugees who fell into the hands of the police due to drunkenness or some other misdemeanour were sent by the Committee to the Metropolitan Asylum Board's refuge at Edmonton. This stigmatised safety net for the undesirable was described by the Secretary to the LGB, Sir Horace Monroe, as a depository for "thoroughly undesirable blackguards."⁹⁹ It is notable that women who fell into this objectionable category received close attention from the Committee. Those who were of a disagreeable character and vulnerable to further deterioration through contact with what the Committee described as "a very bad type of person" - mainly prostitutes and alcoholics - were introduced to the reformatory efforts of the Catholic Women's League.¹⁰⁰ Attempts were also made to reform those who fell into the "very bad category." The Committee's Care of Young Women and Girls Department visited women in Holloway prison on charges of prostitution and theft, and in other

⁹⁷ Ibid, pp 82 & 77.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p 138.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p 165.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p 165.

instances magistrates actually handed women over to the Department on the grounds that it was a sound reformatory alternative to detention.¹⁰¹

Within this context of charity and morality, mention should be made, once again, of the SSFA. It would be wrong to suggest that this Association concerned itself solely with meeting material needs that were largely the State's responsibility. War presented the SSFA with the opportunity to influence the behaviour of those working-class women with whom it came into contact.¹⁰² As one would expect, keeping the family together during the soldier's absence with the colours was foremost in the Association's aims. This provided justification for the Executive Committee of the Relief Fund's decision to pay, through the SSFA, benefits to wives struggling with rent increases. It also firmly underpinned the Association's attempts to discourage women from acting in a manner which threatened family unity. At the 1915 Conference on War Relief and Personal Service, one member of the Glasgow COS, a Mr Kenyon, mentioned the useful role bodies like the SSFA could play in impressing upon women the desirability of keeping the home tidy, and paying the rent on time. Miss Wiseman, a leading figure in the Warwickshire SSFA, spoke of how the police in Nuneaton had persuaded drunken wives to hand over War Office pay to her organisation which - knowing what was best for the family - distributed it to them on a weekly basis and partly in tickets. Wiseman went on to explain that the War Office had written to her expressing approval of such an arrangement.¹⁰³ Such views appear

¹⁰¹ Annual Report of the WRC, 1915 - 1916, p 58.

¹⁰² One leading member of the SSFA, Countess Ferrers, hoped that the Naval and Military Pensions Act would not break the continuity of personal relationships between the SSFA and working class families. Indeed, she felt these relationships helped "strengthen and protect national solidarity against the disintegrating forces of class jealousies." The COS Winter Conference of 1916, COR, Vol XXXIX, February 1916, pp 76 - 77.

¹⁰³ Conference on War relief and Personal Service, June 1915, (London: Longman's Green & Co, 1915), pp 47 - 48.

to confirm Susan Pedersen's argument that the SSFA were "the disciplinarians, trouble-shooters and morality police of soldiers' wives."¹⁰⁴

The attitude of the SSFA did not escape criticism, and representatives of Labour were especially forthright in their condemnation of the Association and its support from the state. Arthur Henderson told the House of Commons in November 1914 that the SSFA, when assessing claims for supplementary allowances, had meddled unnecessarily in family business, and shown inquisitorial methods which were a disgrace to everybody concerned.¹⁰⁵ He continued by describing a situation in which a sailor's wife who applied for a supplementary advance was rudely asked by the Association's visitor how much of her income was spent on drink and the cinema.¹⁰⁶ Henderson, however, was not the first to invoke such criticism. In October 1914, the Glasgow Trades Council held a meeting condemning the city's association for its treatment of soldiers' wives. In the view of R. G. D. Thomas, who was appointed by the Executive Committee of the NRF to investigate the activities of the Glasgow SSFA, the meeting's main objection "was to the class of question asked by the almoners."¹⁰⁷

The SSFA and the War Office closed ranks in order to refute these allegations. In a letter to the Glasgow Herald during October 1914, Mr John Milwain, the Honorary Secretary of the Glasgow SSFA, poured contempt upon the Trades Council's criticisms. The questions cited at the Council's meeting were, he said, so senseless that "no visitor of the

¹⁰⁴ S. Pedersen, 'Gender, Welfare and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War', p 992.

¹⁰⁵ Hansard, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Vol LXVIII, November 11th - November 27th, Col 50.

¹⁰⁶ Susan Pedersen has emphasised the limitations of Labour's approach to the separation allowances issue. Labour believed that allowances were a right granted in recognition of the husband's service to the state. This position collapsed wives interests into those of their husbands. S. Pedersen, 'Gender, Welfare and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War', p 995.

¹⁰⁷ NRF Executive Committee Paper, October 1914, p 2, in Violet Markham Papers, NRF, 1 / 13.

Association would ask them."¹⁰⁸ Such criticisms were also dismissed by the Government. As the War Office forfeited allowances to women who acted in a manner detrimental to family life, it was not surprising that Harold Baker, the Financial Secretary to the War Office, rejected the allegations of labour by suggesting that the Association's work could not be carried through without some level of inquiry and friction.¹⁰⁹

Both the SSFA and the state were willing to show some flexibility on the family issue by paying, where there was evidence a real home existed, allowances to the unmarried wives of soldiers and sailors. In some charitable circles these decisions were bitterly opposed on the grounds that they encouraged moral uncertainty. On the 28th of January, 1915, a special meeting of the SSFA was summoned by 22 members of the St George in the East Branch who opposed help being given to unmarried mothers under any circumstances.¹¹⁰ The Vice President of the London North East District SSFA, Countess Ferrers, remarked in the same year that some individuals had actually resigned from the organisation in protest.¹¹¹

Yet such responses greatly overestimated the extent to which family stability was being undermined by the payment of advances to the unmarried partners of soldiers. It could hardly be said that leading members of the Association condoned these people's unmarried status. At the 1915 Conference on War Relief and Personal Service speaker after speaker who supported the decision to deal with the unmarried, stressed that this not entail support for non marital relationships. One contributor, the Archbishop of Canterbury, argued that unmarried women had "gone

¹⁰⁸ The Glasgow Herald, October 9th, 1914, p 4.

¹⁰⁹ Hansard, House of Commons, Vol LXVIII, November 11th - November 27th, 1914, Col 74.

¹¹⁰ Annual Report of the SSFA, 1914 - 1915, p 27.

¹¹¹ Conference on War Relief and Personal Service, 1915, p 10.

wrong", while a member of the Stepney SSFA, Mr Montague Kirkwood, argued that illegitimate children were not to blame for the "illicit" relations of their parents. Both sympathised with Alderman Holt of Manchester who told the Conference that he deplored the fact that such people existed.¹¹²

Still, the question of why these payments were made has to be tackled. For many volunteers the alternative of refusing relief to the unmarried was even more morally threatening. Countess Ferrers argued that charity could not stand by and watch as families were thrown onto the streets to face immoral temptations; whilst the Archbishop of Canterbury pointed out that the unmarried had to be "looked after, tended, watched and guarded."¹¹³ With these aims in mind, the Association's County of London Branch boasted in its 1915 Report that: "In almost every division the unmarried dependants are the care of specially selected visitors, and usually of a special sub-committee."¹¹⁴ For the Association it was the unmarried woman who, in the absence of her partner's restraining hand, was most susceptible to the temptations of drink and promiscuity. Payments to the unmarried gave charity access to the homes of such people which could be used to reform behaviour. As the County of London SSFA pointed out in August 1915: "During the past 12 months 3,470 cases of unmarried dependants have been dealt with, and of those 809, or more than a quarter, have been married through the instrumentality of the Association."¹¹⁵ The Army's approval of this development was acknowledged in the Association's remark that: "there were several instances where circumstances justified such a course,

¹¹² Ibid, p 31.

¹¹³ Ibid, pp 31 & p 38.

¹¹⁴ SSFA, County of London Branch, Secretary's Report, 1914 - 1915, p 3, in Violet Markham Papers, NRF, 1/11.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p 3.

through the kindness of the military authorities and the personal interest of the Officer's concerned, short leave has been obtained to enable men at the front to return and marry".¹¹⁶

War had undoubtedly induced charity to co-operate with an enlarged social service state, and it also re-reinforced in the minds of many volunteers a sense of community and social solidarity. These developments influenced voluntarism's view of how it might operate after the war. There were those who looked upon certain war-time developments with unease. In 1915 the Annual Charities Register and Digest stated that, "nations before now have spent lavishly of their blood and treasure, to maintain their freedom from foreign tyranny, and then have passively submitted to similar tyrannies at home."¹¹⁷ In the same year, Sir Arthur Clay of the COS wrote that any discussion on principles of relief, "must proceed on the assumption that the existing social organisation based upon private property and individual liberty will continue."¹¹⁸ Through their remarks, both the Register and Arthur Clay can be placed within those charitable circles which clearly felt apprehensive about the future consequences of war collectivism. Whilst accepting that some state regulation was necessary for war purposes, parts of the charitable sector believed that increases in state expenditure were encouraging an unhealthy public mood which took such developments for granted. Moreover, as we saw in the last chapter, concern was also expressed about the activities of socialists and collectivists who aimed to exploit both war legislation and public sentiment as a means of bolstering the case for further increases in state intervention during peacetime.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p 3.

¹¹⁷ Annual Charities Register and Digest, 1915, p CCCXXXIX.

¹¹⁸ The Glasgow Herald, January 18th, 1915, p 11.

By contrast, others within charity were less perturbed by war developments. Some charitable organisations and individuals recognised that war had facilitated the development of forces which would continue to propel the state forward in social matters. The close co-operation between voluntarism and the state during war would serve as an indicator of future developments. One writer with the YMCA's British Empire Weekly, Malcolm Spencer, suggested in May 1915 that, "the co-operation of official and voluntary effort in the past few months should prove the necessity of that co-operation in more permanent ways."¹¹⁹ For Spencer, individual effort was the "salt" of an energetic society, but it also had its limitations, as shown by the fact that Britain could not have sustained a successful war effort if "swift and drastic action had not been taken by the executive."¹²⁰ This implied that similar action would be required in future if social evils were to be removed, thus placing a fresh onus upon the volunteer to seize the positive points of such intervention and co-operate for the good of society.¹²¹ Similar sentiments were expressed within the SSFA. The Honorary Secretary of the Glasgow Branch, Allan Hay, described how participation in the war effort had altered its outlook upon social affairs. He remarked that:

the effect upon ourselves has been great in broadening our human sympathies, in widening our ideals, and preparing our minds for those great measures of social reconstruction which must inevitably come after the war is over, measures which will find in the hearts and minds of our voluntary workers, a ready response, an intelligent sympathy and cordial co-operation.¹²²

¹¹⁹ YMCA, British Empire Weekly, May 28th, 1915, p 462.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p 462.

¹²¹ Ibid, p 462.

¹²² Annual Report of the SSFA, 1916 - 1917, p 12.

Many of those who agreed with this view recognised that voluntary social work in the post-war period would have to exhibit a greater degree of coherence than it had done in the past. The challenge of war created an awareness within voluntary circles of charity's strengths and weaknesses. In trying to satisfy the welfare needs generated by military conflict, voluntarism not only exhibited a degree of flexibility, but also a lack of co-ordination. If charity was to co-operate successfully with the state in meeting the challenge of post-war reconstruction, training and co-ordination of effort would have to be given greater emphasis. This was certainly the view of commentators such as Elizabeth Macadam and Violet Markham. In February 1918 Macadam wrote to Markham suggesting that, in future, voluntarism should aim to be a highly organised and professionalised sector limiting itself to experimental work leading up to state control, and the provision of services like prison visiting, which properly lay outwith the state's domain.¹²³ In her sympathetic reply Markham spoke of trained voluntary workers serving as part of a coherent social organism "with duties and obligations towards other workers and the state."¹²⁴

World War One had, therefore, accelerated a number of important developments within the philanthropic world. Some charities clearly found war conditions unfavourable, while others, by contrast, were presented with opportunities that drove them into closer co-operation with the state. Out of these developments emerged a growing recognition - visible in the views of Markham and others - of the need for greater voluntary and statutory convergence in the post-war world. But if middle-class philanthropy had been primarily occupied with aiding the state against an

¹²³ E. Macadam, Letter to Violet Markham, 19th February, 1918, Violet Markham Papers, 2 / 3.

¹²⁴ V. Markham, Letter to Elizabeth Macadam, 20th February, 1918, Violet Markham Papers, 2 / 3.

external enemy during war, its focus soon shifted to the internal threat posed by labour in the post-war world. It is to this world, and the industrial troubles which marked its birth, that we now turn.

CHAPTER THREE: RECONSTRUCTION

After patriotically supporting the state through four years of military conflict, voluntary social action confronted the challenge of peacetime reconstruction. Many of those bodies which were at the forefront of war work now grappled with the problems of demobilisation and rising unemployment. The Armistice of 1918 did not bring to end the activities of the NRF, the SSFA and the YMCA, as military and civilian distress continued to hold their attention. Moreover, new organisations also emerged after the war; one of the most famous being the British Legion which was founded in 1921 through an amalgamation of four ex-servicemen's charities: the Comrades of the Great War, the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers and the Officers Association. By the end of 1922, the Legion had around 116,000 members grouped together in 2089 branches,¹ and employment and pensions were just two of the areas in which it acted on behalf of ex-servicemen. The war-time experience of co-operation between charities and government also had an impact upon post-war voluntarism through the creation of the NCSS which, after 1919, stressed the need for co-ordination in voluntary service and the desirability of partnership with the state.²

The voluntary sector's transition from war to peace was anything but smooth. Financial problems and waste of resources were common complaints amongst charities at this time. The voluntary hospitals - probably the most well known element within the charitable world - were hit by a post-war inflationary spiral which increased costs and forced many to introduce charges upon patients. The Cave Committee's investigation during 1921 revealed that the majority of hospitals had deficits which, given existing tax rates, were unlikely to be eliminated through larger voluntary contributions. While the Committee

¹ G. Wootton, The Official History of the British Legion, (London: Macdonald & Evans, 1956), p 45.

² M. Brasnett, Voluntary Social Action, pp 22 - 23.

ruled out permanent support from state funds on the grounds of maintaining charitable independence, it did advocate some form of temporary assistance. The upshot was a once and for all Government payment of £500, 000, which was dependant upon the hospitals raising an equivalent amount themselves.³

Other sections of the voluntary world also faced financial difficulties. In 1921 the London Council of the COS revealed that, as the cost of its work had been increasing for some time, it faced a growing discrepancy between income and expenditure.⁴ Early in the year it formed a special committee to examine possible areas of economy. As a result, expenditure on the central office was cut and grants were withdrawn from committees in Woolwich, Lewisham and Norwood, thus terminating the Society's representation in these areas. The COS was also forced to replace its monthly Review with a cheaper Quarterly and implement amalgamations involving district committees in Finsbury and St James. The Society's financial predicament was not dissimilar from that of the NCSS. The National Council complained in 1920 that the development of work had been hindered by a lack of financial resources,⁵ and a year later it admitted that economies had been implemented alongside an attempt to consolidate, rather than expand, work already undertaken.⁶

Given that the overwhelming majority of charities were under no obligation to send reports to any public authority, it is impossible to produce a precise picture of voluntarism's financial position at this time. Only three classes of charity submitted accounts to supervisory bodies: endowed charities, supervised by either the Charity Commissioners or the Board of Education, and war and blind charities which were accountable to appropriate local authorities under the War Charities and Blind Persons Acts of 1916 and 1920.⁷ In addition,

³ B. Abel - Smith, The Hospitals, 1800 - 1948, p 307.

⁴ Annual Report of the Council of the COS, 1920 - 1921, p 4.

⁵ M. Brasnett, Voluntary Social Action, p 36.

⁶ Annual Report of the NCSS, 1920 - 1921, p 6.

⁷ C. Braithwaite, The Voluntary Citizen: An Enquiry into the Place of Philanthropy in the Community, (London: Methuen, 1938), p 85.

a few town councils compiled lists of local charities and attempted to estimate their annual income, while some government departments produced lists of recognised charities in fields like maternal and child welfare and prisoner's aid.⁸ Yet this could not conceal the fact that lack of supervision rendered the diversity and scale of voluntarism inaccessible to detailed analysis.

In 1938, however, one commentator, Constance Braithwaite, bravely attempted to test the assertion that increased taxation and the provision of state social services had reduced the amount donated to charity. Being aware of the difficulty of obtaining reliable information, Braithwaite was forced to rely upon statistics from just three sources: the figures for London charities produced by the COS in the Annual Charities Register and Digest between 1908 and 1927, those produced by the Liverpool Council of Social Service for charities in the city during 1907 and 1923 - 33 and the statistics compiled by the Central Bureau for Hospital Information in the Annual Hospitals Yearbook between 1924 and 1938.⁹ Despite the imperfect nature of these sources, Braithwaite still felt she could come to "some conclusions of general interest."¹⁰

When the research from London, Liverpool and the voluntary hospitals was drawn together, Braithwaite was able to isolate certain trends in charitable finance. Total money receipts in the post-war period had not fallen below the corresponding pre-war levels, and so the general trend between 1907 and 1934 was an upward one. Yet, of equal importance was Braithwaite's admission that the real income of charities in the post-war period had fared less favourably. In 1922 the real income of London charity was around 70% of the 1914 figure, and only after 1923 did it creep back up towards the pre-war level. It also appeared that the total income of charities was becoming increasingly reliant upon

⁸ NCSS, Report on the Compulsory Registration of Charities, Publication No 16, 1921, p

2.

⁹ C. Braithwaite, The Voluntary Citizen, p 86.

¹⁰ Ibid, p 85.

payments for services rendered from individuals and groups, including public authorities.¹¹

When it came to charitable contributions, Braithwaite found little evidence to suggest that the philanthropic interests of individuals, as expressed through their gifts, had declined. In London, for example, she found that income from charitable contributions steadily increased in the six years after 1917, reaching a peak of £6.7 million in 1923. Nonetheless, once again it seemed this was insufficient to cover price rises as the real income represented by charitable contributions in 1921 accounted for 60% of the 1908 level and was only 41 % of total receipts, in comparison to 45% in 1908.¹²

Although the time scale of this research was not restricted to the immediate post-war years, it did question some of the explanations put forward by volunteers for the financial difficulties facing charity in 1919 and 1920. At the Oxford Conference on Reconstruction and Social Service during the latter year, Sir Arthur Stanley of the British Red Cross complained that steeper taxation was hampering those who had generously contributed in the past.¹³ A few months later, Sir Arthur's point was echoed by the COS Council which, after referring to Geoffrey Drage's work on the growth of state expenditure on public assistance over the previous thirty years, asked why individuals who paid so heavily for social purposes out of rates and taxes should "be asked to unbutton the charity pocket also".¹⁴ From Braithwaite's research, though, it appeared that if there was a problem with contributions, it arose less from a weakening of the charitable impulse due to tax, than the ability of this impulse to keep ahead of rising costs.

Concern over the financial future of voluntarism generated some interest in the issue of registration, which was viewed as a means of eliminating

¹¹ See Ibid, pp 94 & 175.

¹² Ibid, p 96.

¹³ NCSS, Conference on Reconstruction and Social Service, (London: P S King and Son, 1920), p 73.

¹⁴ Annual Report of the Council of the COS, 1920 - 21, p 3.

irresponsible or fraudulent bodies from the hunt for funds. During the 1920s secretaries of charities frequently complained about resources being squandered in the appeals of irresponsible, makeshift organisations.¹⁵ The Home Office actually set up a Committee to look into the supervision of charities during 1927,¹⁶ although this was six years after the NCSS had produced a report on compulsory registration based upon the findings of some of its local councils.¹⁷ This Report opened by stating that there was no adequate record of the number of existing charities in England and Wales, and thus no means of estimating either the number of new charities, or the scale of terminated old ones. Partly as a result of this unsatisfactory situation, the Council found little opposition to registration at the local level. In Birmingham 47 agencies approved of registration and only 3 disapproved, while in Liverpool the figures were 103 approvals and only 13 disapprovals. In all, the views of 293 agencies were canvassed by local councils, with 268 supporting registration.¹⁸ With these findings in mind, the Council advocated an extension of the 1916 War Charities Act, which obliged organisations to register with the relevant local authority.

But despite the considerable support for state registration, the Report did detect some unease about the possibility of supervision being carried too far. One of the provisions in Clause 3 of the 1920 Blind Persons Act permitted the authority to refuse registration on the grounds that the work was being carried out satisfactorily by another charity.¹⁹ Taking account of local feeling, the Council rejected the extension of this scheme by recommending that maladministration, and not duplication, should be grounds for refusal of registration.

¹⁵ D. Owen, *English Philanthropy*, 1660 - 1960, p 528.

¹⁶ Report of the Home Office Departmental Committee on the Supervision of Charities, Cmd 2823, 1927.

¹⁷ NCSS, Report on the Compulsory Registration of Charities, 1921.

¹⁸ Ibid, p 12.

¹⁹ Ibid, p 8.

Issues of finance and registration were of importance to voluntarism at this time. In the rest of this chapter, though, it is voluntarism's response to the social problems of the immediate post-war years which will concern us. In the next section charity's dealings with demobilised soldiers and unemployed workers - in effect areas where the voluntary presence was clearly visible - will be explored. This will be followed by an examination of voluntarism's attitude towards the industrial unrest of the period. One of the themes which will become clear is that in the face of labour's post-war industrial offensive, voluntarism's thoughts and actions were motivated by the same commitment to social solidarity and community which had inspired it during war.

VOLUNTARISM, EX-SERVICEMEN AND THE UNEMPLOYED

With the end of hostilities in 1918, the problem of re-absorbing soldiers back into civilian life became much more pronounced. The Great War not only mobilised the entire nation, but also created a large citizen army, the dismantling of which threw up a number of problems relating to maintenance and employment. Although the state was willing to grant pensions to disabled soldiers, and introduce an out of work donation to keep the discharged unemployed off the Poor Law, both the inadequacy of benefit in many instances, and the problem of unemployment, gave voluntary organisations the opportunity to help smooth the transition from war to peace by supplementing state provision.

This was clearly visible in the post-war activities of the NRF. Following the Armistice, the Fund recognised the importance of temporary assistance for ex-servicemen with needs which fell outwith the regulations of the Civil Liabilities Department and the Ministry of Pensions. It pointed out in 1919 that the out of work donation covered little more than basic maintenance, thus leaving no margin with which to meet the cost of sickness or some other emergency.²⁰ The donation was also insufficient to cover the cost of re-

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Report on the Administration of the NRF up to 30th June 1919, Cmd 356, p 3.

establishing homes which had broken up during war. Consequently, the Fund decided to donate £50,000 to the SSFA and £100,000 to the Soldiers and Sailor's Help Society for the temporary assistance of men and their dependants.²¹ As a result the SSFA's 1920 Annual Report noted a steady increase in branch work amongst the families of demobilised and discharged ex-servicemen.²²

It was not only the older established charities which dealt with distress outwith the responsibility of the state. We saw earlier how the British Legion was an amalgamation of the Comrades of the Great War, the National Federation, the National Association and the Officers Association. These groups had formed a combined Unity Relief Committee which, utilising money received from the Sportsman newspaper and the Officers Association, spent £500 on distress relief during Christmas 1920. With the steep rise in unemployment in the new year, the Fund extended its work by distributing interest free loans to many in need.²³ After July 1921 the Unity Committee and its work was taken over by the British Legion which set up the British Legion Unity Relief Fund.

The temporary relief of distress, then, was one area where both war and post-war charities supplemented state provision. Much of the need for this relief was generated by an unfavourable employment situation facing ex-servicemen, which, in itself, provided further opportunities for supplemental welfare provision. The partnership between old and new in this endeavour was highlighted by the NRF's decision to allocate £150,000 to the Unity Relief Fund in order to provide employment for ex-servicemen.²⁴ After being taken over by the British Legion, the money obtained from the NRF was distributed in two fields: collective projects involving men in retail, house building, decorating

²¹ Ibid, p 3.

²² Annual Report of the SSFA, 1919 - 1920, p 26.

²³ G. Wootton, The Official History of the British Legion, pp 31 - 32.

²⁴ Report of the Administration of the NRF up to March 1st, 1921, Cmd 1272, p 4.

and dairying, and attempts to set others up in commerce and hairdressing. On the whole, aid in these areas took the form of interest free loans.²⁵

Voluntarism was also involved in supplementing the state's efforts to promote emigration amongst ex-servicemen. Shortly after the Armistice the Government set up an Overseas Settlement Committee which acted under the general authority of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Due to a loss of means and an increase in fares, free passages were granted to all ex-servicemen. In 1922 the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty, Leo Amery, justified this decision on the grounds that it would actually cost the country less than payments in unemployment benefit. For some, like the MP, Colonel Wedgewood, this remark revealed how the Government's failure to produce "homes fit for heroes" in Britain was encouraging it to export the consequences of its failure.²⁶ To others, including parts of the voluntary sector, emigration provided an opportunity for a better life at a time of hardship at home. Consequently, the state was able to rely upon the support of voluntarism in the shape of the NRF, which provided assistance in both the cancellation of debts and the provision of equipment considered necessary for a successful start overseas. A Joint Committee consisting of members from the Fund and the Colonial Office was set up, and £375,000 was allocated for emigration purposes.²⁷

During 1922 the Government introduced an Empire Settlement Bill to encourage co-operation with overseas governments and private organisations in matters of assisted migration and land settlement. In justifying the state use of voluntary bodies to help men start up farms, Amery praised the work which had already been carried out by the Salvation Army, the Church Army and the YMCA. The policy of the Overseas Settlement Committee was, he pointed out,

²⁵ G. Wootton, *The Official History of the British Legion*, p 47.

²⁶ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol 153, April 10th - May 12th, 1922, Col 578 & 632.

²⁷ Report of the Administration of the NRF, March 1st, 1921, 1272, p 9.

to enter into agency relationships with these organisations by "relying upon them wherever we can."²⁸ Under the Empire Settlement Act grant aid was made available to these private agencies with the approval of the Treasury.

The creation of employment exchanges for the ex-soldier also generated much enthusiasm within some voluntary circles. The National Executive of the British Legion established a Special Employment Committee in 1922 which encouraged its area councils and branches to set up employment committees. As Graham Wootton points out this helped the organisation establish its own network of exchanges throughout England and Wales.²⁹ Finding employment for the ex-soldier was also a priority for the YMCA. In 1916 the Association had set up a bureau in order to provide the ex-serviceman with employment and information, and, by 1919, it was in contact with around 2000 men a week. The bureau's remit included finding employment for disabled men considered unemployable by local pensions committees, and providing information about government grants to ex-apprentices whose training was broken through enlistment. In cases where education was poor, or confidence lacking, the bureau often provided a letter of introduction to the relevant department of state. In justifying the existence of the bureau alongside state labour exchanges, the Red Triangle fell back upon some of voluntarism's supposed traditional strengths, including its superior elasticity and its ability to treat each applicant as an individual case.³⁰

In the last chapter we saw how both charity and the state were involved in meeting the needs of disabled servicemen during war. These needs obviously continued to occupy both sectors during peace. On the state side there was some change in the administration of this responsibility. The industrial and agricultural training of disabled men was transferred by departmental order from

²⁸ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, Vol 153, April 10th - May 12th, 1922, Col 582.

²⁹ G. Wootton, The Official History of the British Legion, p 47.

³⁰ The Red Triangle, Vol II, No 12, August 1919, p 465.

the Ministry of Pensions to the Ministry of Labour in 1919.³¹ With regard to the administration of pensions, legislation introduced in 1920 restricted the Ministry's powers and duties to awards dealing with disablement caused by war, while compensation for disablement during peace was transferred to the service departments.³²

But state responsibility for the disabled did not crowd out voluntary effort in areas such as industrial and agricultural training. The YMCA, for example, ran a number of schemes for disabled men, including a poultry farming at Woldingham in Surrey, and various workshops in Manchester which specialised in carpentry, joinery and rug manufacture.³³ It also set up an agricultural training farm for consumptives at Kinson in Dorset. Although the Association stressed the innovatory and experimental nature of some training schemes, Sir Arthur Yapp told the 1919 Select Committee on Pensions that, with official help, it would be willing to develop this work all over the country.³⁴ Major Tudor-Craig of the SSHS also gave evidence to the committee, on account of his position as controller of the Society's subsidiary branch dealing with the Lord Roberts Memorial Workshops. In London, Liverpool, Dundee and elsewhere the workshops trained and employed men in crafts like basketmaking, woodwork and iron work. In stressing the voluntary nature of these initiatives, Craig told of how they exhibited a "human touch" and lack of bureaucracy which were absent in state control. Yet although Tudor-Craig was opposed to the Ministry of Labour taking over the shops, he did approve of co-operation with Ministry training schemes which would give the Government a voice in the running of affairs.³⁵ Co-operation with the Ministry was also called for by the Disabled Society which was formed in November

³¹ Annual Report of the Ministry of Pensions, 1919 - 1920, Cmd 35, p 19.

³² Ibid, 1920 - 21, Cmd 244, p 1.

³³ First and Second Special Reports from the Select Committee on Pensions, Together with Proceedings of Committee & Minutes of Evidence, H C, 247, 1919, p 302.

³⁴ Ibid, p 304.

³⁵ Ibid, p 321.

1919 to deal largely with one legged ex-servicemen. Among the Society's achievements was an agreement with the British Legion permitting 40 disabled men to produce poppies in a factory on the Old Kent Road. The Vice Chairman, Major George Howson, argued that the Ministry of Labour should provide the Society with £10 for each disabled man employed.³⁶

The statutory-voluntary partnership hinted at by Yapp, Tudor Craig and Howson was well known to the 1922 Select Committee on the Training and Employment of Disabled Ex-Servicemen. The Ministry of Labour submitted an appendix to the Report listing 14 voluntary training and employment schemes receiving its support. Trainees were sent to the Lord Roberts Memorial Workshops by the Ministry, and during 1921-1922 it paid a capitation grant of £25 per head for around 250 disabled men. It also paid maintenance allowances during instruction, together with a weekly training fee. Two other examples of this form of voluntary statutory co-operation are also worth mentioning. Aid was given to the Princess Louise Scottish Hospital at Erskine in the form of allowances and fees for 84 men undergoing training, while in Brighton the Ministry paid training allowances to 300 disabled men engaged in diamond cutting for the National Diamond Factories Ltd.³⁷

The existence of these initiatives should not be allowed to hide the problems surrounding training for the disabled. The Select Committee's hearing raised a number of problems concerning the work of bodies like the Lord Roberts Workshops. Its representative, Colonel Donald Kennedy, was forced to admit that the Ministry of Labour was more interested in training men with light disabilities than the severely disabled which made up part of the workshop's intake. Kennedy also admitted that there was little democracy in the running of schemes which were controlled by a committee lacking representation from the

³⁶ Evidence from Proceedings of the Select Committee on the Training and Employment of Ex -Servicemen, H C, 170, 1922, p 215.

³⁷ Ibid, pp 425 - 426.

men themselves.³⁸ Then there was the fear within the trade union movement that the training and employment of the disabled were a threat to existing wages and work conditions. The YMCA was forced to abandon a planned expansion of its training activities in Birmingham because of trade union opposition to market gluts in certain trades.³⁹ This point was eloquently made by George Bernard Shaw who told readers of the British Legion Journal in 1923 that, "disabled men drag down wages and standards of work. They should not be employed at all industrially. The duty of the country is perfectly clear. These men were disabled in its service, and should be supported by it unconditionally."⁴⁰

Of course this was not an argument which impressed either the Legion or its predecessors. Indeed, in pushing for the employment of the disabled, the ex-service charities raised the controversial issue of a compulsory obligation on employers to hire a specific percentage of disabled ex-servicemen. Both the National Federation and the British Legion campaigned hard for such an obligation, thus forcing the Lloyd George Coalition to balance this patriotic demand on the one hand, with the freedom of employers on the other.⁴¹ The Government's solution was a voluntary system called the King's National Roll scheme, in which firms were encouraged to hire disabled ex-servicemen to the extent of 5% of the total workforce. Those who complied were included on a list compiled by the Ministry of Labour.

The poor uptake of the scheme by employers forced the Federation to reiterate its call for compulsion in February 1920. But both the worsening economic situation, and Lloyd George's staunch commitment to a voluntary scheme, held back the employment of the disabled. In 1922 the British Legion used its parliamentary contacts to push for the creation of the Select Committee

³⁸ Ibid, pp 164 - 165.

³⁹ First and Second Special Reports, Select Committee on Pensions, 1919, p 305.

⁴⁰ See G. Wootton, The Official History of the British Legion, p 51.

⁴¹ Ibid, p 48.

on Disabled Ex-Servicemen mentioned above. The Legion's case to the Committee was put forward by the Assistant Secretary, Mr J. R. Griffin, who stated that the "community of disabled" in Britain should be ensured a certain share of work regardless of the industrial situation. The King's Roll's reliance upon the voluntary principle had failed to guarantee this because, despite being in existence for over two and a half years, only around 30,000 private firms had enrolled.⁴² As an alternative, Griffin advocated a scheme in which every business employing more than 20 workers would be obliged to hire a "definite percentage" of disabled men. The Ministry of Labour would enforce this system through its labour exchanges.⁴³

The Legion was unable to persuade either the Committee or the Government that compulsion was the way forward, at least in the short term. The Select Committee recommended improvements to the existing system in order to increase its attractiveness to employers. Nonetheless, it did accept that, if no more than 40,000 firms were on the roll by the end of February 1923, voluntarism could be seen to have failed, thus proving the need for some system of compulsion.⁴⁴ Unfortunately for the Legion, though, the new Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, was as opposed to compulsion as his predecessor, with the result that the voluntary system continued. All in all it appeared that this contest between voluntarism and the market, had ended with the victory of the latter.

There are plenty of other instances in which both sectors co-operated to deal with the needs of those broken by war. In the medical field, for example, the civil hospitals were still treating around 15,000 war pensioners in July 1920, on the basis of a settlement negotiated between the British Hospital Association and the Ministry of Pensions.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, a central argument of this thesis is

⁴² Select Committee on Training and Employment of Ex-servicemen, 1922, p 13.

⁴³ See Select Committee on Training and Employment of Ex-servicemen, 1922, pp 13 & 16.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p XLIV.

⁴⁵ B. Abel - Smith, The Hospitals, 1800 - 1948, p 254.

that over concentration upon the interplay of both sectors in the delivery of social services leaves out the ideological objectives which underpinned much voluntary provision. With regard to military charity those organisations that came together to form the British Legion in July 1921 were not without their early political differences. The National Association was formed in 1916 and at first had links with the labour and trade union movement, while the Federation was set up a year later following a meeting at the National Liberal Club. There was a strong Conservative element in the Comrades of the Great War which was formed partly on the initiative of the Tory MP, Sir John Norton-Griffiths. But these party political differences were soon smoothed over in 1918 when the Association lost its labour character under new secretaryship, and the Federation dropped its opposition to the admission of officers.⁴⁶ These developments undoubtedly created a more favourable environment for the creation of a single organisation geared towards promoting ex-service loyalty to the state.⁴⁷

The desire to defend the existing order was important to those bodies which later formed the Legion. Part of the reason behind the formation of the Comrades in 1917 was Norton-Griffith's fear that syndicalists were seeking to recruit returning soldiers to the extremist cause. During 1919 the outbreak of Army mutinies on both sides of the channel, and the possibility of strike action by transport and power workers, created even more fertile ground for militants to exploit the sense of disillusionment felt by ex-soldiers faced with housing shortages and employment difficulties. Moreover, the same year saw the emergence of the National Union of Ex- Servicemen which was a left-wing organisation committed to linking the struggles of the demobilised soldier to those of the working class.⁴⁸ Faced with this situation the military charities were forced to take counter action. In August the Federation organised a campaign to prevent the spread of Bolshevik ideas which included the screening

⁴⁶ G. Wootton, The Official History of the British Legion, p 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p12.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p 10.

of a film entitled: "Bolshevism: a message of its evils."⁴⁹ In the same month the Comrades appeal to The Times stressed the need for both employers and the state to deal with the legitimate grievances of ex-servicemen. According to one leading member, Frederick Young, it was necessary to win returning soldiers for constitutionalism, because if the state could rely upon their support in peace as it did in war, "it could face all the strikes and labour troubles in the country with comparative equanimity in the knowledge that, whatever happens, they could in the last resort rely with absolute certainty on the men who won the war."⁵⁰

The promotion of such loyalty was also important to the British Legion. Graham Wootton remarks that if ever there was a need for a single strong ex-service organisation it was during the industrial and military unrest in 1919.⁵¹ Soon afterwards opinion in the existing organisations moved swiftly towards unity. By December 1920 a draft constitution and provisional unity committee had been formed, laying the basis for formal unity the following year. Although the Legion avoided affiliation to any political party, it did act, as we saw earlier, as a pressure group on Government over issues such as pensions and disability. In a wider sense it also followed its predecessors by providing ex-servicemen with a legitimate constitutional channel for airing grievances. This was demonstrated in the debate on the War Pensions Bill of 1921, when the Treasurer of the Legion, Major Cohen, expressed the organisation's support for constitutional government before going on to attack the Bill for being a hurried centralising measure which was detrimental to its members' interests.⁵² In the next chapter we shall see that the Legion's commitment to the constitution was clearly manifested in its support for the state during the General Strike of 1926, but in the early 1920s it concentrated on the preliminary task of building an organisation of officers and men which, in the words of Field Marshall Lord

⁴⁹ The Times, August 22nd, 1919, p 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid, August 7th, 1919, p 6.

⁵¹ G. Wootton, The Unofficial History of the British Legion, p 7.

⁵² Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol 144, July 4th - July 22th, 1921, Col 810.

Haig, would act as "a great national organisation" of all who experienced the patriotism of war."⁵³ The Times emphasised this argument during the organisation's membership campaign of March 1922: "The Legion's constitution binds its members to perpetuate in the civil life of the Empire and the World the principle for which they fought; to inculcate a sense of loyalty to the crown, community, state and nation; to promote the unity of all classes."⁵⁴

Voluntarism's dealings with the ex-serviceman, therefore, reveal themes which were clearly visible in its contribution to the war effort outlined in the last chapter: the existence of agency and supplemental relations with the state in the delivery of social services, and the promotion of a sense of loyalty to the community. Similar themes also appear in its response to the general unemployment issue. While most work on charity and unemployment in inter-war Britain has understandably focused upon the depression years of the early 1930s,⁵⁵ the rise in unemployment after 1920 was also met by an outpouring of voluntary effort. Some idea of the form this assistance could take was given by R. Saunderson in the February 1921 edition of the COR.⁵⁶ Some of the relief Saunderson mentioned was directed towards the unemployed ex-serviceman, as the activities of the SSFA and the SSHS showed, but assistance for the able-bodied worker was available from the Salvation Army, the Church Army and various emergency distress funds. In addition, advice and training was provided by such organisations as the COS, the Apprenticeship and Skilled Employment Association and the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants.

Both old and new charities were, therefore, involved in the relief of distress amongst the unemployed. A new organisation engaged in material

⁵³ The Times, August 4th, 1921, p 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid, March 31st, 1922, p 9.

⁵⁵ See for example R. Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement, 1932 - 39', The Journal of Contemporary History, 6, 1971, pp 156 - 171, and B. Harris, 'Unemployment and Charity in the South Wales Coalfield between the Wars', July 1991.

⁵⁶ R. Saunderson, 'The Relief of the Unemployed', COR, Vol XLIX, January - September, 1921, pp 116 - 123.

relief was the Winter Distress League which supplied boots and clothes to the deserving unemployed after 1922. According to one of the League's organisers, Ian Hay, this endeavour was an "encouraging gesture of fellow feeling to those who are struggling so grimly."⁵⁷ One of the most prominent established bodies involved with the unemployed was the YMCA whose nation-wide activities were outlined by Sir Arthur Yapp in the September 1921 edition of the Red Triangle.⁵⁸ Yapp's article actually said as much about the organisation's ability to gain access to an audience, as it did its desire to relieve distress. In Bury, Lancashire, the YMCA's premises were open to the unemployed on a daily basis between 1 and 6 PM, providing they agreed to look for work in the morning, and attend one definite lecture a week. Meanwhile in Manchester the opportunity to purchase food at cost price was granted to the jobless in return for a commitment to attend self-improvement classes which, it was argued, helped maintain morale. For the association these initiatives were justified as help for the unfortunate victims of the trade cycle on the one hand, and a means of keeping individuals fit for future labour market re-entry on the other.

The same could also be said about the emergency relief funds which Saunderson mentioned in his COQ article. These funds involved the Mayors of cities such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Birmingham in local appeals to aid the unemployed. In Glasgow, for example, a committee consisting of corporation members and representative citizens was appointed in February 1921 to preside over the administration of relief in food tickets and rent payments. In supplementing state provision, Lord Provost Paxton was confident that sympathetic members of the community would contribute to the well-being of less fortunate families who had been overtaken by circumstances outwith their control. For Paxton this commitment to community was compatible with the survival of a distinction between the deserving and undeserving unemployed.

⁵⁷ The Times February, 21st, 1922, p 6.

⁵⁸ A. Yapp, 'The YMCA and Unemployment', The Red Triangle, Vol V, No 4, December 1921, pp 205 - 211.

As he told the Glasgow Herald in September, subscribers could rest assured that assistance would only be given after the most searching and complete investigation into the circumstances of each case.⁵⁹

The Lord Provost's Relief Fund combined both practical relief with a commitment to social solidarity. The common purpose arising from this united effort was frequently mentioned in Paxton's correspondence. On the 31st December 1921, he told Monsignor Ritchie that the Fund was making an "irresistible appeal to all classes in Society".⁶⁰ While we shall see shortly that this view was a touch optimistic, it is the case that the Fund did succeed in attracting some cross-class support. In December 1921, Robert Mackay, the President of the Students Representative Council at Glasgow University, wrote to the Herald stating that, "as our own lives are bound intimately with those of our fellow townsmen, we, as students, have become increasingly conscious of the acute distress now existing throughout the land."⁶¹ Mackay went on to reveal that the Council was planning to express publicly this sentiment by organising an unemployment day to aid the fund. The wealthy also expressed their sympathy through the organisation of charity balls in which proceedings from tickets sales were donated to the Fund. Moreover, both local businesses and sections of labour were praised by Paxton for their public spiritedness. Firms such as Muir and Finlay Boilerworks, Parkhead, were thanked for donating, as were the employees of the Co-operative Wholesale Society.⁶² With its mind obviously on recent industrial unrest, the Glasgow Herald's leader of May 13th, 1921, remarked that the Fund's appeal demonstrated how "there is no greater foe to Bolshevism and unrest than the unity of the community."⁶³

⁵⁹ The Glasgow Herald, September 19th, 1921, p 8.

⁶⁰ Letter from Lord Provost Paxton to Monsignor Ritchie, 31st December, 1921, in Strathclyde Regional Archives, (hereafter SRA), Lord Provost's Correspondence.

⁶¹ The Glasgow Herald, December 10th, 1921, p 6.

⁶² Letters from Lord Provost Paxton to Muir and Finlay and Co-operative Wholesale Society, 6th May, 1921, and 7th April, 1921, in SRA, Lord Provost's Correspondence.

⁶³ The Glasgow Herald, May 13th, 1921, p 6.

Such expressions of fellow feeling, or, to quote one almoner for the Glasgow Fund, "bonds of brotherhood", did have their critics on both sides of the labour-capital divide.⁶⁴ The Scottish Home and Health Department acknowledged in its 1921 Report on Industrial Unemployment and Unrest in Scotland that Scottish funds for the relief of employment were suffering due to depleted resources. One factor which lay behind this unsatisfactory situation was the feeling amongst some employers that workers should have exercised foresight by saving a greater portion of their higher war-earnings for periods of hardship. The Report's author, Mr T. Highton, commented that, "the flow of charity has been rather checked by the knowledge that many of the workers now claiming benefit were, during the war, in receipt of high wages and made no provision for times of adversity."⁶⁵

This argument was obviously motivated by a critique of the unemployed themselves. Within the Labour Movement, by contrast, criticism was levelled at charity and the existing economic and social arrangements supported by its practitioners. This is highlighted by events in Glasgow where members of the Council's Labour Party refused to participate in the Lord Provost's Relief Fund. When explaining why Labour argued that, in the absence of employment, it was the duty of the state to maintain the workless. This was also the position of the Executive Council of the Glasgow Independent Labour Party which declared in February 1921 that:

We endorse the policy of the Labour Party in the Town Council in their refusal to accept responsibility for charity methods for the unemployed, on the grounds that the workless and their families are entitled to maintenance as a public right while they are denied access to the means of earning their livelihood.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid, April 21st, 1921, p 5.

⁶⁵ Scottish Record Office, (hereafter SRO), Memorandum on Industrial Unemployment and Unrest in Scotland, 8th October, 1921, HH, 31 / 36.

⁶⁶ The Glasgow Herald, February 9th, 1921, p 7.

When we come on to look at voluntarism and unemployment in the early 1930s, we shall see that the same themes of social solidarity and labour market participation were used to defend the activities of the occupational centre movement. In the early 1920s, however, the need for community and social cohesion was clearly exhibited in charity's dealings with both the ex-serviceman and the unemployed. Yet it is perhaps the industrial and political situation in the early post-war years that most clearly reveals charity's commitment to social stability. It is easy to forget that in addition to dealing with post-war problems like those mentioned above, voluntary bodies also found time to comment on industrial and political matters both before and after the breaking of labour's post-war offensive in April 1921. As middle-class institutions operating within civil society, charities were forced to consider the implications of working-class militancy for the national community as a whole. It is to this issue that we now turn.

VOLUNTARISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF LABOUR.

In the three years following the 1918 Armistice, working-class assertiveness reached new and unprecedented heights. On a yearly average, around 40 million working days were lost in strikes between 1919 and 1922. Within an international context shaped by revolution and upheaval, the Lloyd George Government was forced to take seriously unrest within both industry and the armed forces. During 1919 the Government was faced with mutinies in the army on both sides of the English Channel, and the possibility of co-ordinated strike action by the powerful Triple Alliance of miners, railwaymen and transport workers.⁶⁷ Even if it would probably be an exaggeration to say that Britain was on the brink of revolution in 1919, there is, as Kenneth Morgan

⁶⁷ R. Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), pp 65 - 66.

points out, enough evidence from official sources to show that alarmist talk filled the air.⁶⁸

By 1921 the Government had succeeded in countering labour's post-war offensive. Although the Cabinet had used force to defeat the Clydeside engineers in January 1919, it also recognised the importance of making concessions to labour, especially when faced with the prospect of a strike by the Triple Alliance. In September 1919 the Government conceded national collective bargaining and higher wages to the railwaymen, while in October 1920 it granted higher wages to the miners in the face of a strike which threatened to spread to the railways.⁶⁹ The granting of concessions suited trade union leaders such as Robert Smillie of the Miners Federation and Jimmy Thomas of the National Union of Railwaymen, both of whom wished to avoid conflict and were thus instrumental to the Government's industrial relations strategy. In 1919 Smillie persuaded the miners to accept the Sankey Commission on the Coal Industry, thus giving the government time with which to drop the issue of nationalisation; whilst in April 1921 Thomas helped persuade the rail and transport unions to call off a Triple Alliance strike in support of the miners' fight against wage cuts.⁷⁰

However, by this time the position of organised labour had weakened as a result of the rise in unemployment from the summer of 1920 onwards. This development encouraged employers to launch a counter-attack over wages. During 1921 and 1922 cuts were introduced in a number of industries including shipbuilding, textiles and, following a national lock out, engineering. The worsening economic situation also strengthened those forces which were critical of post-war social reform and supportive of expenditure cuts, lower taxation and a reduction in the state's economic and social role. Amongst those who

⁶⁸ K. Morgan, Conflict and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918 - 1922, (London: Clarendon Press, 1979), p 49.

⁶⁹ J. Hinton, Labour and Socialism, pp 112 - 114.

⁷⁰ R. Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism, pp 66 & 88.

supported economy on the grounds that high levels of public spending and taxation dampened economic activity, were Treasury civil servants, bankers, coalition conservatives, industrialists and middle-class anti-waste groups.⁷¹ Although reform in areas such as health had been defeated before 1921, the onset of depression ensured that the promise of Fisher's 1918 Education Act and Addison's housing programme were undermined by the implementation of public expenditure cuts.

The potential threat of post-war unrest to the social order is an exciting issue which has understandably generated much interest amongst historians. Ian Maclean's research on Red Clydeside suggests that the authorities' response to the strike by engineers for a 40 hour week was an alarmist one based upon a misreading of the situation.⁷² The seriousness which the cabinet attached to events in Glasgow was, it would seem, a reflection of both the exaggerated reports produced by the Special Branch under Basil Thompson, and an understandable feeling of unease generated by upheavals elsewhere in Europe. Although Bonar Law may have spoken of the need to prevent similar action from breaking out elsewhere, there was, Maclean argues, no real attempt to spread the strike beyond Glasgow. In fact the only promise of sympathetic action came from the London electricians who called off their proposed strike at the last minute.

⁷¹ The failure of post-war reconstruction has long been a topic of discussion for social historians. Bentley Gilbert blames a vocal and reactionary wing of the Conservative party for blocking effective reform measures by the Lloyd George coalition. According to Philip Abrams critical obstacles to reform were clearly visible as early as Christmas 1918. These obstacles were both administrative and ideological as the Local Government Board had little enthusiasm for the Ministry of Reconstruction and was thus an obstacle to the creation of a Ministry of Health, while those who defended the Ministry's proposals were not committed to the level of interference with private forces necessary to achieve such schemes. Rodney Lowe's survey of the labour and health ministries suggests their ineffectiveness was due to both internal weakness and the strength of the rival Treasury. See B.B. Gilbert, British Social Policy 1914 - 1939, (London: Batsford, 1970) p 36, P. Abrams, 'The Failure of Social Reform, 1918 - 1920', Past and Present, Vol 24, 1963, pp 43 - 62, R Lowe, 'The Erosion of State Intervention in Britain', Economic History Review, XXXI, 1978, pp 270 - 286. For a brief overview of this debate see M. A. Crowther, British Social Policy 1914 - 1939, (London: Macmillan, 1988) pp 30 - 39.

⁷² I. Maclean, 'Red Clydeside 1915 - 1919', in J. Stevenson and R. Quinault (eds) Popular Protest and Public Order, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp 215 - 239.

Kenneth Morgan also warns against overestimating the seriousness of the industrial situation in Britain. Although Lloyd George was aware of the Bolshevik menace to civilised society, Morgan still feels that the alarmist reports of Basil Thompson should be taken less seriously than they were by "literal minded historians of the 1960s."⁷³ Moreover, he also argues that placing British events in an international context shows the success of Lloyd George in keeping class war at bay. When compared to the post-war industrial situation in France, Germany, Italy and the United States, Britain experienced little bloodshed, minimal violence and an enduring sense of social cohesion.⁷⁴

Other historians have emphasised the importance of social unrest in influencing welfare provision. Mark Swenarton views those houses built under the 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act as an "insurance against revolution": a state attempt to persuade workers that their legitimate demands could be met, and their lives improved, within the existing order. For Swenarton it was the weakening of the Labour Movement through rising unemployment, and the failure of the Triple Alliance to strike in April 1921, which allowed the Government to limit, and then terminate, the programme altogether.⁷⁵ The connection between social unrest and welfare has also been made by Bentley Gilbert who argues that the extension of unemployment insurance during 1920 was motivated by the Government's fear that an outbreak of popular violence could occur if "something were not done to provide economic security for the British working-man."⁷⁶

According to this view the state aimed to uphold social stability and strengthen moderation within the labour movement by meeting the legitimate demands of labour. Although there may be some debate about the seriousness of the industrial situation at this time, the alarm and unease within official

⁷³ K. Morgan, Conflict and Disunity, p 53.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p 76.

⁷⁵ M. Swenarton, 'An Insurance Against Revolution', pp 89 & 96.

⁷⁶ B. B. Gilbert, British Social Policy 1914 - 1939, p 66.

circles also found expression within middle-class voluntary welfare societies. Kenneth Morgan argues that Lloyd George attempted to maintain order by reinterpreting the consensus of the war period.⁷⁷ In voluntary literature this theme was enmeshed with ideas of citizenship and community which were deployed as an intellectual response to the industrial and electoral strength of labour.

This is clearly revealed in the thinking of the NCSS and some of its local organisations. As was pointed out earlier, the NCSS was formed with a view to encouraging the formation of local welfare councils which would unite both local authority officials and volunteers around a commitment to co-ordinate social service provision for the common good. Its Annual Report of 1920 spoke of the need to "unite all citizens in the service of the community, without distinction of creed, party or class", in order to render their service effective in co-operation with the state.⁷⁸ The Council recognised that this need for unity in the service of a wider interest was not only necessary for the effective supply of social service, but was also crucial to industrial harmony and social stability. In October 1921 its Monthly Bulletin argued that post-war industrial unrest had proved that "class war should give way to class co-operation" and "friendship for hatred."⁷⁹

As one would expect, this sentiment was found in many local Councils of Social Service. In addition to co-ordinating welfare provision at the local level, many Councils spoke of the need to apply the common good to the industrial situation. In 1919 the London Council of Social Service actually linked its work to class harmony by arguing that its meetings performed a most fundamental service for the state through contacting all elements in social life and "blending them together by meetings, conferences and committees."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ K. Morgan, Conflict and Disunity, p 76.

⁷⁸ Annual Report of the National Council of Social Service, (hereafter NCSS), for 1919 - 1920, p 4.

⁷⁹ NCSS, Monthly Bulletin, Series II, No 4, October 1921, p 37.

⁸⁰ Intermediate Report of the London Council of Social Service, 1918 - 1919, pp 8 - 9.

During 1921 the Hampstead Council of Social Service involved itself in a similar project by providing a meeting place where industrial and social questions could be considered in a spirit of "neighbourly consideration". The Council's industrial reconciliation meetings at the town hall were attended by both employers and workers and were thus an attempt to "bring about the mutual understanding amongst all classes upon which the reconciliation of apparently conflicting aims must be based."⁸¹ This was also the aim behind a Leeds Council of Social Service scheme in which textile and engineering employers and unions were invited by the Mayor to serve on joint trade committees where views could be exchanged. In February 1921 the NCSS Monthly Bulletin described this as a serious effort to "secure the real collaboration of employers and employed in the consideration of their mutual trade interests."⁸²

The COS also commented on post-war industrial matters. In London and Glasgow district committees exhibited both anger and unease about the industrial situation at this time, although emphasis was placed upon the desirability of overcoming class conflict through the recognition of common traditions and experiences. The February 1919 edition of the Glasgow COS's journal, Organised Help, appeared shortly after the strike by Clydeside engineers for a forty hour week. After criticising "Leninists amongst us" for stirring up agitations in industry, it argued that the country could be saved from "anarchy and savagery" through a re-assertion of the truthful solidarity of interests between employers and workers.⁸³ During 1920 the Hackney and Stoke Newington Committee of the COS took a similar line by warning of class separations and cleavages that encouraged great "misunderstandings and hostilities", and which could only be overcome through the promotion of a

⁸¹ Executive Report of the Hampstead Council for Social Welfare, 1921 - 1922, p 4.

⁸² NCSS, Monthly Bulletin, Series 1, No 9, March 1920, p 105.

⁸³ Glasgow COS, Organised Help, February 1919, p 8.

"spirit of social solidarity" that would act as a "foretaste of better and happier times."⁸⁴

However, it was the YMCA which was probably most enthusiastic about the use of ideas to counter the clash of material interests between classes. Encouraged by the high profile it had obtained through its war camp work amongst soldiers, the Association felt confident about its ability to contribute to the reconstruction of society through educational clubs and settlements. As early as June 1918 it unveiled a programme entitled the, "Fellowship of Reconstruction" which invoked the same communitarian ethos that was prominent in NCSS and COS circles. The statement argued that the life of the community had to be drawn from the "self sacrifice and co-operation of all human beings that compose it;"⁸⁵ while the Association's 1919 British Conference reaffirmed this line in a resolution which praised its educational work as a unifying force between class and class.⁸⁶

This commitment to a public interest taking precedence over sectional interests was evident in the YMCA's views on post-war industrial dislocation. In November 1920 Sir Arthur Yapp argued that a fight to the finish in the coal industry would be disastrous for the country; a fact recognised, he felt, by "responsible men on both sides".⁸⁷ But despite the apparent even-handedness of Yapp's remark, the YMCA was clearly more concerned with the need for moderation and responsibility on the labour side of industry. This had been spelt out in the March 1919 edition of the Red Triangle, which spoke of the working class being divided into those who were educationally, "well equipped, inadequately equipped and mal equipped". For the Triangle it was the latter groups which lacked the education necessary for responsible and thoughtful

⁸⁴ Annual Report of the Hackney and Stoke Newington COS, 1919 - 1920, p 11.

⁸⁵ The Red Triangle, Vol III, No 1, September 1919, p 20.

⁸⁶ Ibid, Vol III, No 2, October 1919, p 4.

⁸⁷ Ibid, Vol IV, No 3, November 1920, p 6.

participation in industrial affairs and thus threatened to, "cast the country into the morass of Bolshevism".⁸⁸

The importance of overcoming this problem was a prominent theme in the Association's commitment to adult education. The spread of YMCA educational huts and clubs was intricately bound up with ideology and the challenge of labour. In May 1919 the Editor of the Red Triangle drew attention to the political side of this challenge.⁸⁹ Despite Labour's poor performance in the coupon election of 1918, the Journal looked to a future in which the dissemination of moderate ideas amongst the working class was crucial in preventing group selfishness from exploiting the franchise and shattering social fellowship. Of course this fear of a "tyranny of the majority" was nothing new. The nineteenth century liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill wrote in his famous work, On Liberty, that the "tyranny of the majority is now recognised among those evils upon which society requires to be on its guard."⁹⁰ Indeed, Mill actually argued for plural voting and proportional representation as a means of countering the despotism of the numerical majority.⁹¹ The Red Triangle applied this same fear to a mass democratic age by remarking that: "When the franchise was first conferred among British working men, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer said, "we must educate our masters." The greatest peril before us, as in Russia today, comes from ill educated minds in the possession of supreme power."⁹²

The Association's desire to reform supposedly ill-educated minds would, it was hoped, have an impact upon workers' behaviour in both the workplace and the polling booth. This was the view of Basil Yeaxlee, a YMCA Secretary with an interest in adult education. In his 1920 publication, An Educated Nation, Yeaxlee expressed concern about the ignorance underpinning much

⁸⁸ Ibid, Vol II, No 7, March 1919, p 251.

⁸⁹ Ibid, Vol II, No 9, May 1919, p 354.

⁹⁰ J. S. Mill, On Liberty, (London: Fontana, 1986), p 129.

⁹¹ See R. J. Halliday, John Stuart Mill, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), p 138.

⁹² The Red Triangle, Vol II, No 9, May 1919, p 354.

popular discussion on industrial and political matters. Such ignorance, he argued, had to be countered otherwise it would pollute society with "prejudice, distortion and fatal misunderstanding."⁹³ For Yeaxlee education was a means of preparing individuals for the duties of citizenship by fostering qualities which could be employed with advantage to the community. The fundamental task facing society, Yeaxlee argued, was whether it could attain the intellectual and moral adequacy to tackle a new economic and political world with "opportunities for both good and evil."⁹⁴

The activities of the St Phillips YMCA settlement in Sheffield serve as a crude example of the reformatory effort which Yeaxlee had in mind. The settlement's warden, Mr Arnold Freeman, was a former university lecturer who emphatically rejected the Marxist argument that the interests of capital and labour were bitterly antagonistic. Material possessions were, he argued, an unimportant accident, whilst what was really crucial to the good of society was the existence of "spiritually well equipped people" from all classes who could assist reconstruction. Combining political philosophy with philanthropic practice, Freeman committed the settlement to what he called "centrifugal education": that is sending visitors into working-class districts to advise on various moral and political matters, in the hope of building up contacts which could then be used to boost the settlement's membership. Through the use of settlements, Freeman felt the Association could furnish men and women with the, "knowledge and idealism necessary to prevent a revolution of the wrong kind."⁹⁵

The subordination of class conflict to an overall sense of the common good was, therefore, a major objective for thinking circles within voluntarism.⁹⁶

⁹³ B. Yeaxlee, *An Educated Nation*, (London OUP, 1920).

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pp 15 - 17.

⁹⁵ *The Red Triangle*, Vol III, No 4, December 1919, p 176.

⁹⁶ A rather interesting example of the YMCA putting this idea into practice was seen at Plaistow in London during July 1921. The Association opened a new building partly financed by employers from the east end of London. As both capital and labour were present at the opening, the *Red Triangle* viewed this as an example of how the Association united "all ranks

The close attention paid by the above societies to the industrial and parliamentary scenes reflects this fact. Similar motives were also at work in discussions on how to update the image of voluntarism in order to enhance its relevance to a mass democratic age. Within some voluntary circles it was felt that the volunteer should divorce himself from the perceived patronage of nineteenth-century charity, by viewing his work as part of the common attempt of all citizens to serve the community through the improvement of social conditions.

In fact even before the Armistice of 1918 this question of self-image was exercising the minds of figures such as Violet Markham and Elizabeth Macadam. Markham was actually hostile to the term "voluntary worker", believing it to be associated with both poor standards of work, and older terms like "charity" and "philanthropy" which were "anathema to modern schools of social thought."⁹⁷ Indeed, conflict with the trade unions, the Labour Party and others who were "unfairly down upon the voluntary worker" could best be avoided by presenting social work as an expression of citizenship and social study. During February 1918 Macadam developed this theme when, after suggesting that the term "charity" conjured up negative images amongst workers, she argued that disassociating social work from its elitist nineteenth-century image should involve the active encouragement of working-class participation. Macadam supported this argument by reference to her own local war pensions committee in Liverpool which had many working-class men and women visitors.

and grades of society." The guests of honour were the King and Queen who briefly attended a meeting of the East Ham branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. To the Association's delight a protest by some members about unemployment was drowned out by others who sang, "for he's a jolly good fellow". As we shall see in chapter six, this was not the last time that Royalty's association with the voluntary sector encouraged protest. The Red Triangle, Vol IV, No 10, June 1921, pp 343 - 344.

⁹⁷ Markham Papers 2 / 3, 1917 - 1919, private letter to Elizabeth Macadam, February 13th 1918.

After the Armistice of November 1918 the image of voluntarism continued to generate debate amongst interested parties. With the experience of military conflict still fresh in the minds of most volunteers, it was not surprising that concepts like community and citizenship were linked to the part played by all classes in the war effort. Lloyd George, then, was not alone in attempting to capture the spirit of war for peace purposes. Within the voluntary sector there were plenty who agreed with Bernard Bosanquet that war "had taught us the art of living together."⁹⁸ This theme came through at the April 1920 Conference on Reconstruction and Social Service, when Arthur Collins of the Birmingham Citizen's Committee spoke of how voluntarism had learned valuable lessons from the experience of war. Military conflict had, he argued, brought the nation closer together, with well-off individuals who had never spoken to a "common soldier" before 1914 exhibiting pride in every man who wore the King's uniform.⁹⁹ From this Collins concluded that voluntarism could look to the future recognising the importance of "united effort inspired by a common purpose."¹⁰⁰ Another speaker, Countess Ferrers of the SSFA, made a similar point by suggesting that ideas of duty and personal service had inspired the whole community during war. Yet while military conflict had provided one challenge for the community, peace had thrown up another through reconstruction. According to Ferrers, voluntarism could help win this battle by mobilising the citizenship of all classes in the community.¹⁰¹ It was, indeed, this mobilisation of common service experienced during conflict which L. F. Ellis of the NCSS felt should become the "characteristic of the age."¹⁰²

In emphasising the need for participation from citizens of all classes, the conference was exploring the same issue which had exercised the minds of Markham and Macadam. As we have seen from the work of Michael Moore

⁹⁸ B. Bosanquet, 'Public Assistance', *COR*, Vol XLVIII, December 1920, p 146.

⁹⁹ NCSS, Conference on Reconstruction and Social Service, 1920, p 152.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p 156.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p 174.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p 182.

and Jane Lewis, this was also a concern for Edwardian philanthropy, with the Guilds of Help showing greater success in encouraging working-class participation than the COS.¹⁰³ However, the war experience and the challenge of reconstruction helped stimulate an awareness of this issue within certain COS circles. In 1920 one of the Society's more prominent members, Mr Herbert Woolcombe, pointed out that voluntary social service "was not a case of one class benefiting another class, but of all classes joining hand in hand for the benefit of the district and therefore the country."¹⁰⁴ This argument was also invoked in the pages of the COQ on a couple of occasions during the early 1920s. An article written by a local secretary for the July 1922 edition entitled, 'To a Working Man', described the COS as a "democratic non-sectarian society" which invited anyone to work for it. The secretary continued by suggesting that a COS Committee might be composed "entirely of bus conductors if enough of them would serve."¹⁰⁵ In concluding, he called upon wage earners to bring their experience of working-class life to the COS, and thus help it turn into the truly democratic body it intended to be. The Society's leading philosopher, Bernard Bosanquet, had addressed the same theme two years earlier, although he was less enthusiastic about the prospects of working-class participation in the short term. Bosanquet described voluntary work as "an inherent social function" which had nothing to do with "class and class", and he denied that the COS was a "class-conscious body of the well to do". Although Bosanquet also held that most wage earners had too much on their minds to attend to complex administration,¹⁰⁶ he looked forward to a time in which the "neighbourly kindness" of the COS would be "handed over to the people of England".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ M. J. Moore, 'The Organisation of Philanthropic Resources in Britain, 1900 - 1914', and J. Lewis, 'The Boundary Between Statutory and Voluntary Social Service in the Late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries'.

¹⁰⁴ NCSS, Conference on Reconstruction and Social Service, 1920, P 178.

¹⁰⁵ 'To a Working Man' COQ, New Series, Vol 2, July 1922, p 26.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p 9.

¹⁰⁷ B. Bosanquet, 'A Necessary Social Function', COQ Vol I, April 1922, p 9.

To sum up the agency and supplemental relations which existed between the state and voluntarism in the delivery of social service carried over into the post-war world. These relationships characterised provision for both demobilised soldiers and unemployed workers. In these areas voluntarism also recognised the need to encourage the citizen's loyalty to the community through the removal of legitimate grievances. The same communitarian idea applied to voluntarism's interpretation of the industrial situation. Although working-class militancy in Britain did not reach the levels of intensity found in Germany, Italy or Hungary, it was serious enough to generate unease within both official and voluntary circles. The latter responded by stressing the need for social solidarity through community, and the application of the war spirit to peace. As we shall see in the pages ahead similar themes characterised voluntarism's reaction to the industrial upheavals of 1926.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GENERAL STRIKE

The overarching good which inspired voluntarist thinking on industrial unrest and unemployment in the three years after World War One, also formed the intellectual backbone of its response to the General Strike of 1926. The commitment to social cohesion which charity had exhibited amongst striking workers, ex-soldiers and the unemployed appeared as relevant as ever during the nine-day General Strike and the seven-month coal dispute from which it emerged. As we shall see in the pages ahead the common theme which was once again dominant within voluntarism was the importance of industrial conciliation around a commitment to the community interest. This was not, however, an even-handed approach as sections of the charitable world were unable to refrain from openly attacking the TUC and Miners Federation for a General Strike and coal stoppage which was considered contrary to the national interest. We shall also see how hard-line attitudes towards labour also surfaced in the debate over relief for miners' families during the seven-month coal dispute. Faced with the allegation that voluntary relief was helping sustain a strike which was damaging to the community, groups like Save the Children argued that such work promoted social cohesion by removing bitterness from mining districts.

A good deal has been written by historians on the General Strike.¹ This is not surprising given its importance to labour history. Some of those who have discussed the strike have not been content simply to explore the views of employers, labour and the Cabinet - in other words the central players in the events of May. Writers such as Christopher Farnham and G. A. Phillips have studied the attitudes of the British Broadcasting Company and the national

¹ See J. Murray, The General Strike of 1926, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1951), C. Farman, The General Strike of May 1926, (London: Panther, 1974) M. Morris, (ed), The General Strike, (London: Penguin, 1976), T. Cliff and D. Gluckstein, Marxism and Trade Union Struggle: The General Strike of 1926, (London: Bookmarks, 1986) and G. A. Phillips, The General Strike: The Politics of Industrial Conflict (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson 1976).

press, while Stuart Mews has explored the views of the churches.² Relatively little has been written, though, on the reaction of voluntary welfare societies to either the events of May or the more prolonged coal strike. Despite the part played by volunteer labour in strike breaking, and the efforts of charity to relieve distress amongst miners' families, little or no mention is made of such action by historians of inter-war voluntarism like David Owen, Frank Prochaska and Geoffrey Finlayson.³

This chapter aims to throw light on these hitherto neglected aspects of voluntarism's past. After outlining the background to the industrial unrest of 1926, the chapter will focus on the intellectual response of certain voluntary groups to the General Strike and the future of industry. Attention will then shift to the coal dispute and the arguments surrounding the relief of distress in mining districts. As we shall see, differences in attitudes on how to deal with the strike and the mining communities did not weaken voluntarism's commitment to social solidarity, and it is recognition of this fact which unites the present chapter with the preceding chapters on war and reconstruction, and the following ones on mass unemployment in the 1930s.

THE STRIKE: A BRIEF OUTLINE

According to Patrick Renshaw "the General Strike of 1926 was the most dramatic event in British domestic politics between the two world wars."⁴ In 1925 the mine owners responded to declining markets and profits by announcing the termination of national wage agreements and the introduction of cuts after the 1st May. The threat of a miners' strike supported by sympathetic action from dockers and railwaymen forced the government to intervene and

² See C. Farnham, The General Strike, May 1926, pp 182 - 191, G. A. Phillips, The General Strike: The Politics of Industrial Conflict pp 167 - 188, and S. Mews, 'The Churches' in M. Morris, The General Strike, pp 319 - 337.

³ See especially, F. Prochaska, The Voluntary Impulse, and A. D. K. Owen, English Philanthropy 1660 - 1960. Geoffrey Finlayson, to his credit, does mention that the General Strike revealed how voluntary activity amongst the propertied could turn against the working-class. See G. Finlayson Citizen, State and Social Welfare, p 249.

⁴ P. Renshaw, The General Strike, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1975), p 19.

grant a nine-month subsidy to the industry to uphold existing wages. This temporary subsidy, together with the appointment of a Royal Commission, merely postponed an inevitable conflict between employers who showed little interest in reorganisation, and miners who demanded "not a penny off the day, not a minute on the day." The miners' decision to strike was followed by millions of trade unionists rallying to the TUC General Council's call for solidarity action. Although the Council's strategy of dividing workers into a first line and a reserve prevented a full and immediate demonstration of union power, it did produce stoppages in a wide range of industries including transport of all kinds, printing, iron and steel and chemicals.

This bold move by the TUC did not mean that union leaders had any intention of toppling the State. The TUC frequently rejected allegations that the strike was a challenge to Parliament and the road to anarchy and ruin. It maintained that sympathetic strike action was aimed at securing justice for the miners rather than assaulting the constitution and government of the day. As it turned out, even this position was too radical for the General Council whose termination of the strike without any guarantees of concessions to the miners, reflected a dislike of national industrial action for strictly limited ends.

The TUC's discomfort with the use of the General Strike for limited objectives was not shared by the rank and file. It is well documented that the General Council was surprised by the impressive response to the initial strike call. The Council's strike newspaper, The British Worker, remarked that "workers' response had exceeded all expectations."⁵ The General Council and its newspaper were no doubt also surprised by the eagerness of some reserve workers to participate from the beginning. There is, for example, evidence of militant engineers and textile workers striking unofficially shortly after the first line had been mobilised. Moreover, as Margaret Morris has shown, there is also little credibility in the argument that the strike was waning when the TUC called

⁵ The British Worker, 5th May, 1926.

it off, as the council's own intelligence reports suggest that the overall situation was solid with only a small number of men returning to work.⁶ One could even go beyond this by arguing that, as time marched on, the strike actually grew in strength as more and more working factories were hit by problems of transportation and raw material supply.⁷

The willingness of workers to act in solidarity with the miners cannot be explained without some reference to the industrial situation in the eight years following 1918. In the previous chapter mention was made of the industrial militancy exhibited by sections of the working-class between 1918 and 1921. This militancy received a severe setback in April of the latter year when the leaderships of the railway and transport workers' unions failed to organise solidarity action with the miners' fight against wage cuts. As a result the miners were left in a hopelessly isolated position and, after three months, were forced back to work to face lower wages and district settlements. For our purposes it is important to note that this defeat had implications which extended beyond mining. During May 1926 many workers remembered that the capitulation of the miners five years earlier had given employers in other industries the confidence to launch offensives over wages. In 1922 wage cuts were imposed in engineering, shipbuilding and textiles, thus suggesting that, as miners' wages set the trend for other workers, any employers' offensive in the pits should be resisted, in order to prevent history from repeating itself.⁸

The solidarity action taken by trade unionists failed to defeat the colliery owners as the termination of the strike by the TUC left the miners in a hopelessly isolated position yet again. Consequently, when they returned to work in November it was in the face of wage cuts and longer hours. Furthermore, by this time other workers - especially those in transport and

⁶ M. Morris, The British General Strike, 1926, (London: The Historical Association, 1973) p 32.

⁷ Ibid, p 32.

⁸ Ibid, p 5.

printing - were haunted by the ongoing problem of employer victimisation which could take various forms including suspension or dismissal, compulsory acceptance of company unions and forced renunciation of union membership.⁹

For the TUC leadership the years after 1926 were marked by a move away from conflict towards co-operation with employers. Within a context of falling union membership, the restrictions of the 1927 Trades Disputes Act and the continuation of heavy unemployment, the General Council revealed a willingness to engage in talks on industrial matters with employers.¹⁰ Lord Weir and Sir Alfred Mond were amongst the first to respond to this new outlook, followed eventually by the National Council of Employers Organisations and the Federation of British Industry. It is tempting to view these talks as a fresh start in industrial relations created by the bitter experience of the General Strike, however the lack of any practical results suggests this argument can be carried too far.

The sluggishness that characterised the TUC's preparation for the events of May was not found in governing circles. Successive cabinets had been thinking about the appropriate response to an industrial emergency for some time with a Supply and Transport Committee being created for strike-breaking purposes in 1920. Associated with this organisation were volunteer service committees which aimed to co-ordinate the recruitment and deployment of volunteers in the event of a national strike.¹¹ Non governmental sources of recruitment and supply also emerged, with local chambers of commerce playing a part in recruitment, alongside the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies which defined itself as a body of citizens, "serving the interests of the

⁹ See C. Farnham, The General Strike, May 1926, pp 292 - 300.

¹⁰ See G. W. Macdonald & H. F. Gospel, 'The Mond-Turner Talks, 1927 - 1933: A Study In Industrial Co-operation', The Historical Journal, Vol XVI, No 4, 1973, pp 807 - 829.

¹¹ For an outline of the Government's strike-breaking apparatus see K. Jeffrey and P. Hennessey, States of Emergency: British Governments and Strike-breaking since 1919 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) pp 103 - 129. For the relevant official sources see Establishment and Organisation files, Public Records Office, (hereafter PRO), MH, 78 / 22 - 23 and papers of the Supply and Transport Sub-Committee, PRO, MAF, 60 / 545 - 552.

general community."¹² At the helm of this group were figures like Lyndon Macassey, the famous barrister, and Geoffrey Drage of the COS.¹³ The Home Secretary, Joynson-Hicks, praised the OMS in October 1925 by remarking that any citizen who wished to maintain peace and good government would be performing a patriotic act by joining this or any similar organisation.¹⁴ But despite receiving the endorsement of the Home Secretary, and handing over the names of 100,000 volunteers to the government in May, the OMS remained weak in the industrial north and many of its well-to-do supporters lacked the valuable skills necessary for effective strike-breaking.¹⁵

Voluntary welfare societies like the YMCA, the SSHS, and the Order of St John could also claim a role in attempting to minimise the strike's disruptive effects by engaging in agency and supplemental relations with the State. In Edinburgh the OMS was able to supply horse drivers and men for work on the docks by contacting, amongst others, the SSHS.¹⁶ During much of May Hyde Park was closed to the public as it had been requisitioned by the Government to help supply the capital with milk, and store foodstuffs from the docks. The YMCA's contribution included the creation of canteens to supply lorry drivers, builders and policemen with food and refreshments,¹⁷ not to mention the organisation of sporting activities for off-duty volunteers. The work at Hyde Park also called for action on the part of the St John's Ambulance Brigade which set up a station to deal with injuries arising out of the movement of supplies.¹⁸

¹² J. Davis - Smith, 'An Uneasy Alliance: Volunteers and Trades Unions in Britain since 1945' (London: The Volunteer Centre, 1991), p 6, and C. Farnham, The General Strike, May 1926, p 60.

¹³ J. Murray, The General Strike of 1926, p 55.

¹⁴ C. Farnham, The General Strike, May 1926, p 61.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp 149 - 150.

¹⁶ Edinburgh Headquarters of the OMS, Report on the General Strike, May 1926, SRO, HH 56 / 18, p 2.

¹⁷ Minutes of Central Food Committee, PRO, May 1926, MAF, 60 / 548.

¹⁸ Reports From Civil Commissioners, PRO, May 1926, MAF, 60 / 550.

In the medical field both the local and central state could count on the support of the Red Cross. Given the absence of adequate train and transport services the Society responded to the Ministry of Transport's request to help organise the movement of outpatients to and from London hospitals.¹⁹ It also co-operated with the London County Council in helping deal with the transportation of maternity cases between the hours of 8 and 11 PM. In addition, local branches put their services at the disposal of the local authorities, while the Director General of the Army Medical Service, Sir William Leishman, obtained information from the Red Cross on first aid posts in the Metropolitan area. Surveying the Society's work during May, the Red Cross Journal drew a parallel with its activities during World War One: "A gratifying feature of the strike was the splendid way in which officers and members volunteered and reported for duty. The spirit of all ranks of the British Red Cross is in every way as loyal and devoted as in the years of the Great War."²⁰

This remark suggests that both war and the General Strike were challenges to the community requiring loyalty to the Government. Yet the latter was an internal challenge which was arguably more akin to post-war industrial unrest than the threat of a foreign power. As one might expect, some of those societies which had been vocal in their condemnation of labour's post-war assertiveness had much to say about this latest cloud on the industrial horizon. It is these comments which shall be explored in the next section

THE VOLUNTARY RESPONSE

The General Strike occupied the thoughts of a number of voluntary institutions within civil society. With regard to newspapers, G. A. Phillips has argued that although party loyalties in the national press "were even more inclined to the right during the General Strike,"²¹ there was room for some debate amongst those liberal and conservative dailies that managed to sustain

¹⁹ 'Red Cross Members and the General Strike', The Red Cross Journal, July 1926.

²⁰ Ibid, p 79.

²¹ G. A. Phillips, The General Strike, p 181.

production. The Manchester Guardian, to take one example, put forward a moderate voice in support of conciliation, whilst The Times, by contrast, adopted a hostile attitude towards any settlement not involving the unconditional surrender of the TUC.²²

A similar divergence of approach characterised the churches' response to the strike. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, emerged as the leading exponent of Christian, middle-of-the-road-opinion. His famous peace appeal on behalf of the Anglican and Free Church leaders called for the simultaneous cancellation of the strike by the TUC, continuation of the Government subsidy to the industry and withdrawal of lockout notices by the colliery owners.²³ Others within the Christian world were in a less conciliatory mood. Davidson's insistence on simultaneous action contradicted the Government's belief that the unconditional surrender of the TUC was a necessary prelude to negotiations. Those Christians who attacked the Archbishop's intervention looked to Cardinal Bourne as their leading spokesman. Bourne denounced the strike as a sin against the obedience owed to God, and felt surrender by the TUC should be first upon the agenda.²⁴ According to Stuart Mews his position "was in sharp contrast to the conciliatory appeal of the Archbishop."²⁵

The opinions expressed in the newspapers and churches were echoed amongst voluntary welfare societies. The importance of conciliation was emphasised by the NCSS Monthly Bulletin whose survey of the industrial situation in May 1926 spoke of the need for a spirit of co-operation in industry based upon mutual confidence and respect between capital and labour. The

²² Ibid, pp 181 - 182.

²³ S. Mews, 'The Churches' in M Morris, (ed), The General Strike, pp 319 - 337.

²⁴ William Bridgeman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was critical of Davidson in his diary entry for the 9th of May. He wrote that "our Archbishop has been cowardly and foolish in joining the Free churches in a very woolly and cowardly declaration about the strike." Bridgeman felt that Cardinal Bourne had done much better by condemning the strike in a forthright manner. See P. Williamson, The Modernisation of Conservative Politics: The Diaries and Letters of William Bridgeman 1904 - 1935, (London: Historians Press, 1988) p 197.

²⁵ S. Mews, 'The Churches', p 330.

Bulletin went on to suggest that the distrust and suspicion which characterised industrial relations in mining could only be overcome by "admitting the workers to a knowledge of the problems employers have to face, and of enlisting their active help in solving them."²⁶ The Bulletin failed to produce any proposals concerning the creation of an institutional framework for such co-operation, or explain why workers should help employers solve their problems through wage cuts, longer hours and redundancies; although this did not prevent the Council from re-iterating a conciliatory line once the unrest of 1926 was over. In 1927 it spoke of a spirit of goodwill and co-operation which occupied everyone's thoughts, and how the great lesson which could be drawn from recent troubles was that lack of co-operation produced suspicion, jealousy, misunderstanding and even hostility between different sections of the community.²⁷

As will be shown, the NCSS gave its support to the talks that occurred during the first half of 1928 between members of the TUC and such leading industrialists as Sir Alfred Mond and Lord Weir. But the Council was not alone in stressing the need for conciliation both during the strike and in the near future. This is revealed in the thoughts and actions of leading figures in the Society of Friends or Quakers. Although some Quakers were as critical of the TUC as The Times or Winston Churchill, the Society created an Industrial Crisis Committee which argued that, as truth existed on all sides of the dispute, there was hope for the creation of a higher unity which would contain both capital and labour, and eliminate the strike and lockout from national life.²⁸ The immediate resumption of negotiations would, the Committee argued, give practical expression to this spirit. This call was echoed by the Society's Central Office which published a letter criticising those on both sides who spoke of a "fight to the finish" and who refused to accept that "victory won by force is a

²⁶ NCSS, Social Service Bulletin, May 1926, p 49

²⁷ Annual Report of the NCSS for 1926 - 1927, p 49.

²⁸ J. Fry, 'The Industrial Crisis', The Friend, May 21st, 1926, p 418.

disaster to both victors and vanquished."²⁹ The belief in fellowship between employers and workers prompted some Friends like Joan Fry, a leading figure on the social affairs side of the organisation, to advocate practical proposals for future co-operation. Viewing trade as a service to the community rather than armed peace between employers and employees, Fry advocated the creation of trade parliaments where representatives of all sides of industry could consider disputes, and work on improving business.³⁰

The termination of the strike encouraged some volunteers to look back upon recent events in a more optimistic manner. Those who were enthusiastic about the possibility of a new era of industrial co-operation could take comfort from both the short duration of the strike, and the supposed absence of any accompanying civil strife. The author of 'A Quaker Survey of International Life and Service,' H. G. Wood, was thankful that even during the darkest days of May, "the great body of people wished to have nothing to do with extremists or dictators, whether of the Bolshevik or Fascist variety."³¹ In supporting this claim Wood pointed to the TUC's initial reluctance to strike and its speedy termination of hostilities on the one hand, and the failure of the reactionary Winston Churchill to influence developments on the other. Wood's sentiments were shared by the National Union for Christian Social Service: a charity dating from the turn of the century with an interest in work farms for epileptics and the unemployed. Focusing on events during the strike, the Council spoke of how the "good temperament and humour of the British people" had kept trouble to a minimum and even prompted some policemen and strikers to engage in sport rather than "thirst for each other's blood."³²

²⁹ Letter from Central Office of the Society of Friends, May 1926, Industrial Crisis Committee, Receipts and Correspondence, 1926 - 1927, Friends House Library, ICC.

³⁰ J. Fry, 'The Industrial Crisis', p 418.

³¹ 'A Quaker Survey of International Life and Service', The World Outlook, June 11th, 1926, p 72.

³² National Union for Christian Social Service, Social Service, June 1926, p 89.

The middle-class volunteer's commitment to industrial co-operation and national unity was an understandable response to the stormier industrial situation that prevailed during much of 1926. However, these ideas were not shelved with the ending of the miners' strike in November. According to the Social Service Bulletin the year 1927 had been marked by a considerable improvement in industrial relations, which was conducive to the realisation of the spirit outlined in the Council's Annual Report. The Bulletin's judgement was supported by the Council's President, W. S. G. Adams, who argued that the year had been characterised by both "the spirit of co-operation penetrating more deeply into industry" and the growing recognition that "the interests of employers and workers are not opposed but mutual."³³ Although Adams' remark was not supported by references to developments in any particular industry, it is likely he had in mind the favourable response shown by some employers to the TUC General Council's commitment to talks on high-level industrial matters. This was certainly important to the Social Service Bulletin which praised the Mond - Turner talks by remarking that: "Approached and carried through in the right spirit, such a meeting of what are too often and quite erroneously regarded as conflicting interests, can be productive of nothing but good and may well usher in a new era for industry in this country."³⁴

The NCSS believed that voluntary social service had a part to play alongside industry in fostering a spirit of collective wisdom and public goodwill. The Council's 1927 Report issued a call for volunteers to help build across the nation groups which could give practical expression to the idea of understanding and trust between the different grades of society. J. H. Whitley, the President of the NCSS and Speaker of the House of Commons, had actually made this point some months before. Whitley was of course associated with the idea of improving industrial relations through joint councils of workers and

³³ NCSS, Social Service Bulletin, January 1928, p 3.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p 1.

employers; however at the end of 1926 he argued in the Social Service Bulletin that voluntarism could have a healing and vitalising role in society by helping overcome the "mutual misunderstanding" which had produced the recent coal stoppage. This would involve creating voluntary associations in which men and women of all classes could unite and work not for "self-interest but the common weal."³⁵ In Whitley's view voluntarism was, therefore, a school of citizenship in which the common good transcended narrower class interests.

The conciliatory views expressed within the NCSS and amongst some Quakers did not monopolise voluntarist thinking on industrial matters both during and after the General Strike. Some within the charitable world combined their call for industrial co-operation in industry with an overt attack upon the leadership of the trade unions. According to this position there was no room in the British national family for the spirit of class hatred which had been preached by misguided individuals within the labour movement. True service to the community took the form of standing firmly behind the Government and its call for the unconditional surrender of the TUC, which was a precondition for any future improvement in industrial relations.

As one might expect words like surrender and defeat appealed to those military charities which expressed an opinion on industrial matters. Yet this is not to say that the leading charity in this area, the British Legion, resisted conciliation in industry. One writer for its Journal, Godfrey Harvey, told readers in August 1926 of his regret that since the war the national family had hardly enjoyed peace as "political and industrial disputes" had taken precedence over the duty to sink selfish interests for the good of the community.³⁶ This sentiment was also found in the pages of the Legion's Scottish Journal which, looking to the future in March 1927, spoke of the need for a "brighter era" in which the bitterness of recent industrial struggle would be overcome by the

³⁵ Social Service Bulletin, December 1926, p 3.

³⁶ The British Legion Journal, August 1926, p 40.

comradeship of masters and men, and the "complete unity of capital and labour harnessed together for the interests and welfare of the people". As one might expect the Legion was also quick to use the experience of World War One to promote this case. In December it argued that Armistice day provided the country with the opportunity to show to the world that, in spite of political disagreements and industrial disputes, "we are a nation yet again."³⁷

Nonetheless, the Legion commitment to community existed alongside an explicit desire to attack trade union power, when commenting on the General Strike and mining stoppage. The Legion's National Executive Committee was due to meet at the end of May, but as the strike drew closer the General Purposes Committee convened on the first of the month to consider events. After pointing out that the Legion had a position of neutrality in industrial disputes, it pledged solid support for the Government and any measures it might take to defend the constitution and the community during an emergency.³⁸ Seven days later, the General Secretary, Colonel Heath, wrote to The Times calling upon those ex-servicemen who had "saved the country during war" to offer their services, in any way, to the authorities.³⁹

Although the voluntary sector supported the maintenance of essential supplies, the Legion's position was couched in language which was unlikely to appeal to those who emphasised the need for mutual goodwill between capital and labour. Leading members of the Legion sometimes compared the General Strike to the German military threat in August 1914 with the TUC leadership cast in the role of German High Command. Godfrey Harvey told readers of the British Legion Journal that the nation had once again been threatened by a

³⁷ Ibid, December 1926, p 141.

³⁸ The Times, May 3rd, 1926, p 9.

³⁹ There was dissatisfaction with the Legion's position amongst some local branches. At the second session of the British Legion Conference, held on the 24th and 25th May 1926, a resolution was moved by South Paddington and Stoke Newington protesting against the decision of headquarters to call for action without obtaining the prior approval of area conferences. South Paddington even claimed the headquarter's actions, and especially its use of the words, "in any way", had cost the branch half its membership. See The Times, May 25th, 1926, p 9, and G. Wootton, The Official History of the British Legion, pp 90 - 91.

tyrannical power, this time motivated by a spirit of class hatred, the crushing of which "was one of the first duties of Englishmen."⁴⁰ Hatred of this class-war also figured in Earl Haig's defence of the Legion's decision to side with the Government during May. When speaking to the organisation's Sixth Annual Conference in 1927, he described the previous year as a "grievous experience" which would hopefully never be repeated. By siding with the forces of law and order, however, the Legion had stuck by its ideals and helped save the country from the threat of "bloodshed and attempted revolution".⁴¹

Haig's use of the words revolution and bloodshed must be seen as alarmist when set alongside the control exercised over the strike by the moderate TUC General Council. But the juxtaposition of the need for co-operation in industry with forthright attacks on trade unionism was found in other parts of charity's military sector. The British Empire Service League was formed by Earl Haig during 1921 to unite ex-service organisations throughout the Empire,⁴² and its publications echoed the Legion's argument on the industrial situation. The League's commitment to conciliation was first exhibited in April when it called upon both sides in the mining industry to swallow their reservations and support the Samuel Report.⁴³ In May it published an article titled "England as a Team" which called upon the coalfields to give the spirit of unity a trial,⁴⁴ while a month later in June it even called the Strike a "blessing in disguise" for revealing that full partnership in industry was the only alternative to a ruinous experiment in socialism.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ The British Legion Journal, August 1926, p 40.

⁴¹ Ibid, March 1927, p 3.

⁴² The British Empire Ex-Service League became the British Commonwealth Ex-Services League in 1964. Every three years it holds a conference of the member organisations. Those helped by the League are dependants of soldiers who served the Empire before independence in units such as the Royal West African Frontier Force, the King's African Rifles and the Old Indian Army. Annual Report of the British Commonwealth Ex-Services League, 1993, p 7.

⁴³ Our Empire April 1926, p 141.

⁴⁴ Ibid, May 1926, p 162.

⁴⁵ Ibid, June 1926, p 188.

But recognition of this need for a team spirit in industry, once again existed uneasily with harsh criticisms of labour. The League's Journal blamed the prolongation of the dispute in the mining industry on "the pernicious influence of Moscow" and the fact that the miner's leader, A. J. Cook, was "a disciple of Lenin."⁴⁶ With regard to the General Strike it maintained that, as was the case during World War One, all classes in the community had found an identity of interest in the face of a common peril. According to the League, a successful strike would have substituted the dictatorship of a handful of trade union officials for the government of the day. However, thankfully loyal Britons had found "a unity of purpose such as they first discovered in 1914," which had defeated the plans of union leaders to undermine liberty and parliamentary democracy.⁴⁷

This hard-line attitude was not confined to the military sector of charity, as similar sentiments were expressed by some Christian volunteers, including elements within the Society of Friends. Two of the Society's most vocal proponents of hard-line views were Howard Hodgkin and Joseph Rowntree, both of whom felt that the General Strike was a declaration of war against the community.⁴⁸ Hodgkin argued that the strike had, through its effect on essential supplies, come close to establishing a blockade against society, and this was an act of war even if it entailed no fighting. Rowntree went even further and suggested that, given the interdependence of the community, any strike action was likely to impose hardship on people outside the industry involved. Moreover, as the morality which characterised the market was never perfect, Friends should concentrate on exposing the "might is right" tactics of the TUC. This was to be preferred to the position of peacemaker who, in the words of the

⁴⁶ Ibid, October 1926, p 222.

⁴⁷ Ibid, June 1926, p 32.

⁴⁸ H. Hodgkin, 'The Mining Crisis and the General Strike', *The Friend*, June 4th, 1926, and J. Rowntree, 'The Ethics of the Strike', *The Friend*, June 25th, 1926.

Quaker moderate, Malcolm Sparks, "neither approves nor condemns but works incessantly for a generous settlement."⁴⁹

This militant element was eager to use the experience of volunteer strike breakers in exposing these "might is right" tactics. The direct provision of services hit by the strike did prompt some angry workers to overturn trams, immobilise buses and attack supply convoys. In Hull there was rioting following attacks on volunteer tram drivers, and action against strike breakers was reported from the East End of London.⁵⁰ Similar developments also took place in Scotland where the London Midland Scottish Railway Company reported incidents of stone throwing at the approach to stations such as Buchanan Street in Glasgow, and Auchinleck in Ayrshire. Although charitable welfare societies were not directly concerned, some were willing to pass comment upon this type of direct action. In July 1926 an article in the COQ argued that the volunteer had taken on the role of the weak against the strong as he was performing a difficult function "while large numbers, with perfect safety, bullied him or otherwise endangered his life."⁵¹ A similar argument was put forward by A. G. Linney of the Society of Friends who spoke of the "excellent work" being done by the Port of London Authority and its volunteer labourers in the movement of foodstuffs from the Royal Albert Docks. Such work was, he argued, carried out in the face of the, "disorder that unprincipled people were inclined to."⁵² Neither Linney nor the COQ mentioned the police practice of baton charging pickets, or the provocative and violent behaviour deployed by many special constables,⁵³ and so one could easily dismiss these views as being

⁴⁹ The Friend, 4th June, 1926 p 506.

⁵⁰ See K. Jeffrey and P. Hennessey, States of Emergency: British Governments and Strike- Breaking since 1919, p 122.

⁵¹ 'Some Stray Thoughts on the Strike', COQ, No 18, July 1926, p 323.

⁵² A. G. Linney, 'The Mining Crisis', The Friend, May 31st, 1926.

⁵³ The writer Graham Greene served as a special constable during the strike. Reflecting on his experience in 1971 he spoke of how for many in the establishment such duties were "a break in the monotony of earning a secure living" and, at its most violent, like a rugger match played against a rather rough council school which didn't stick to the rules. G. Greene, A Sort of Life, (London: The Bodley Head, 1971), p 175.

the product of middle-class hostility towards industrial action. Nevertheless, this excessive concentration on union violence provides a contrast to the more peaceful picture of the strike painted by moderates like H. G. Wood.

Following the end of the miners' strike in November, there was, as we have seen, renewed hope that a new era of industrial co-operation was around the corner. But the need to stress the conciliatory lessons which could be drawn from the recent dispute did not eradicate the bitterness felt towards trade unionism within voluntary circles. The COS, to take one notable example, was up front in mounting an attack on labour which even raised the dreaded scourge of Bolshevism. Throughout most of 1926 the Society had blamed the Miners' Federation and the TUC for shattering any prospects of industrial advance in the short term. During October it asked why, in a population with so much to achieve, a million men had nothing better to do for six months than "paralyse advance for themselves and everybody else." With the recent industrial situation in mind, the Society's 58th Annual Report, Bolshevism and its Only True Antidote, suggested that pessimism about the future was the single most important factor in explaining the presence of extremism in Britain. Consequently, it called upon supporters to present to people through casework "the wide scope of betterment, physical, economic and mental that exists in Britain."⁵⁴ Once again, it seemed, voluntary social service had a part to play in the encouragement of social unity, although the COS made this point in an altogether more alarmist fashion than J. H. Whitley who, as we saw earlier, preferred to talk of overcoming misunderstanding rather than combating Bolshevism.

Bitterness towards labour also surfaced in the COS's 1928 Annual Report. When referring to the Lord Mayors' Relief Fund which had been set up the previous April to relieve distress in some mining areas, the Report spoke not only of the persistent charitable impulse in the British people, but also of the

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Annual Report of the Council of the Charity Organisation Society, 1925 - 26 p 2.

willingness of the "most revolutionary, Marxian, class-war ridden section of the wage earners to receive it." The Society's attachment to both social solidarity and anti-trade unionism was revealed when it spoke of the British public revealing its "forgiving spirit", and its "incapacity for bitterness or resentment" towards a group of workers whose leaders did much to destroy the country's prosperity in 1926, and also came close to declaring war on the whole community.⁵⁵

Between the end of the General Strike on the 12th of May, and the victory of the colliery owners in November, charity was also forced to debate the issue of relief for miners' families. This section has shown how the industrial situation encouraged all volunteers to view the General Strike as a reminder of the need for conciliation in industry, even if there was an element which was unable to do this without viciously attacking the strikers and their leaders. The next section moves into the area of distress relief which was not only a traditional concern of charity, but also an issue closely linked to the industrial situation in mining. Here the themes outlined above appeared once again, even if in the hands of different individuals and organisations.

COALFIELD DISTRESS

Patricia Ryan has pointed out that "intense political controversy can be aroused by the apparent financing of a strike by public funds." During 1926 any such relief was granted under the Poor Law thus ensuring that "local politics and the whole sensitive area of rating became deeply involved in the question of industrial disputes."⁵⁶ The legal situation concerning this matter was far from satisfactory. The Court of Appeal had issued a judgement in 1900 stating that, while relief could be granted to the families of strikers, it could not be given to the men themselves, unless they were physically unable to work as a result of want. In some mining areas, such as South Wales and Durham, Poor Law

⁵⁵ Annual Report of the Council of the COS, 1927 - 1928, p 2.

⁵⁶ P. Ryan, 'The Poor Law in 1926' in M. Morris, The General Strike, p 358.

Unions simply evaded this judgement and granted relief to able-bodied miners. Further confusion was caused by the position of single miners; a category not specifically mentioned in the Merthyr Tydfil judgement. Although the Ministry of Health urged unions not to relieve this group, around 10,000 were granted relief in both Yorkshire and Durham⁵⁷

The payment of relief to miners' families was not a straightforward affair either. Relief scales varied with boards like Chesterfield paying relatively generous rates, whereas others, like Nuneaton for example, granted as little as 5s to wives and 3s for each child.⁵⁸ In addition, the family's right to relief was often put under severe pressure at the local level. During and after July some boards pursued a policy of steadily reducing scales as a prelude to terminating out relief altogether. Patricia Ryan shows that by the end of November twenty seven unions were giving absolutely no out-relief to families. From this she concludes that "the reduction or stoppage of out relief, particularly when union funds and the miners' own resources were running low, must have been an important factor in hastening the drift back to work."⁵⁹

The failure of poor relief to meet basic needs left considerable room for charities like Save the Children to supplement public provision through the supply of food, boots and clothes to miners' families. This famous organisation was set up in 1919 to promote child welfare on an international scale, and its founder, Miss Eglantyne Jebb,⁶⁰ drafted a Declaration on the Rights of the Child which was adopted by the League of Nations Assembly in 1924.⁶¹ The high profile of the Fund undoubtedly contributed to the generation of fierce

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp 369 - 371.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p 374.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p 376.

⁶⁰ Educated at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, Eglantyne Jebb was a philanthropist in Cambridge during the 1900s who drew up a register of local charities. Following the Second Balkan War she went to Macedonia to carry out relief work amongst peasants. This interest in the effect of war on civilians prompted her to set up a Council Against Famine which led to the creation of the Save the Children Fund. See J. R. Weaver, (ed), Dictionary of National Biography 1922 - 1930, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937) pp 451 - 452.

⁶¹ G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, p 222.

debate surrounding its work amongst miners' families during 1926. The Fund's defenders portrayed the miners' wives and children as innocent victims of an industrial dispute within which bitterness could grow if starvation were allowed to gain a foothold in the mining districts. Others, by contrast, were unconvinced by this argument, and were able to draw upon the views of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children which suggested that needs in mining areas were being adequately met by public authorities whose work was often being duplicated by voluntary provision.⁶² But the most powerful hard-line argument against relief was that the striker could not be divorced from his family with the result that any help to the latter merely sustained a dispute which was damaging the national interest. If anything this argument supplements Patricia Ryan's point about the use of cuts in poor relief to break strikes. Those who looked forward to the unconditional surrender of the miners felt that little or nothing should be done, either publicly or privately, to relieve distress caused by the actions of the strikers themselves.

Much of the relief work carried out in the coalfields actually originated within the Labour Movement itself. Labour women like Marion Phillips, Ellen Wilkinson and Margaret Bondfield were involved in the creation of the Women's Committee for the Relief of Miners' Wives and Children.⁶³ From its inception in May this organisation consistently appealed to the public for donations to purchase food, medicine, boots and clothes. By the following January it had raised over £300,000 and distributed 34,000 pairs of footwear to miners' families. It is notable that the Committee did not limit its appeal to the Labour Movement as the support of a wide range of public figures was enlisted, including Seebohm Rowntree, H. G. Wells, a number of bishops and stars from the stage and screen including Sybil Thorndike and Arthur Boucher. In order to

⁶² See The Times, June 29th, 1926, p 16 and M. Morris, The British General Strike, 1926, p 36.

⁶³ See M. Phillips, Women and the Miners Lock Out, (London: Labour Publishing Co, 1927).

maximise support emphasis was placed upon the severity of the distress facing families, rather than the rights and wrongs of the coal dispute. This was evident in some of the Committee's appeals. On May 26th Thorndike stated that, "money contributed to this Fund will not be used for any political or propaganda purpose,"⁶⁴ whilst a day later Bouchier spoke of the need to help innocent victims of industrial war, "whose suffering must touch a chord of sympathy in the heart of every Britisher."⁶⁵

But sympathy was not the only driving force behind attempts to relieve distress; a fact which becomes apparent when we turn to the thoughts of voluntarism and its supporters. Early in the dispute some public figures were arguing that charity could actually promote social stability in the coalfields. This was certainly the view of Lady Cynthia Colville who sat upon the Ministry of Labour's Central Committee on Women's Employment. During May, Colville wrote to Violet Markham expressing her fear that the distress endured by families could arouse a great deal of bitterness among "such an aloof and class conscious section of the community as the miners." Colville proposed that, although many felt starvation was the fault of the miners themselves, a relief fund should be set up by people of varying political views whose organisational base and conception of the common good was wider than that possessed by the Women's Committee. In fact she felt that "whatever funds are raised, it is a pity these should be entirely organised by the Labour Party, thus widening the cleft between them and the rest of the community."⁶⁶

Colville's fear turned out to be unfounded as the Women's Committee did not monopolise the field of distress relief in mining districts. As was mentioned above similar work was undertaken by the Save the Children Fund.

⁶⁴ The Glasgow Evening News, May 26th, 1926 p 2. However, Thorndike was willing to take a political stance on the coal strike. At a Women's Committee meeting in Kingsway Hall on June 28th, she pledged her support to the miners cause as conditions in the coalfield were "beyond a joke". The Times, June 29th, 1926, p 18.

⁶⁵ The Glasgow Evening Times, May 27th, 1926 p 1.

⁶⁶ C. Colville, Letter to Violet Markham, Markham Papers, Correspondence on Coal Strike, May 29th, 26 / 14.

The Fund's activities actually took a variety of forms, including the feeding of under school age children not covered by the local education authorities, the supply of fresh milk and semi-medicinal foods to expectant mothers and the distribution of boots and clothing to school children. At first its work was targeted towards areas such as South Wales and the Forest of Dean, but in the face of worsening conditions it decided to spread its operations as widely as possible.

The Fund's publication, The World's Children, felt that relief work in the mining districts had been met by "real gratitude for outside sympathy" on the part of mining families.⁶⁷ Relief work could be justified, then, as a means of encouraging the suffering to keep faith in their fellow men and women. This was a valuable asset in the struggle to bring about "some method of settling disputes other than war."⁶⁸ This idea was used by the Fund's President, the Duke of Atholl, to meet the criticism that the Society was prolonging the strike through its actions. According to the Duke, charity was helping ensure that the next generation entering school would be a healthy one instead of an "uneconomic proposition", and benefiting the coal industry by removing social bitterness from the mining districts. Through these arguments the Duke skilfully distanced distress relief from the miners' struggle, and tied it to conservative objectives such as the needs of the labour market and social stability. This was the crux of his argument in a Times letter attacking the Miners Federation:

The people who are responsible for the strike, and even yet seek no path to peace, took no thought of the distress to the mothers and children. If others with broader views did not try to circumscribe the circle of the trouble and reduce its area, they would only be playing into the hands of those worse elements in our people who desire a prolongation of the strike.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ The World's Children, June 1926, p 128.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p 128.

⁶⁹ The Times, June 18th, 1926, p 15.

The relief of distress in the coalfields was motivated by a variety of objectives. Labour women like Marion Phillips and Ellen Wilkinson may have emphasised the non-party political nature of their committee work, but they were supportive of the miners' case and it is thus reasonable to assume that this was one factor behind their involvement. The same could not be said, however, for well-to-do supporters of voluntarism such as Cynthia Colville and the Duke of Atholl. As opponents of the Miners Federation, the latter recognised the crucial distinction between funds given to sustain the strike, and those donated to relieve distress amongst its innocent victims. Unlike support for the strike, meeting the needs of dependants could be justified on grounds of future economic prosperity and community solidarity.

As mentioned earlier voluntary activity in the coalfields generated much controversy and opposition. This was encouraged by the NSPCC's research which questioned the necessity of much private relief. The Society's Director, Robert Parr, issued a circular to local bodies asking for information on arrangements being made by education authorities for the provision of food in necessary cases. To the anger of the Women's Committee, the NSPCC suggested that, with the exception of boots and clothes, needs were being met all over the country. The findings from Chesterfield, Sunderland and Mansfield all suggested that children were actually being fed better during the strike than before, while in the Bolton district much voluntary effort was actually duplicating the work of local education authorities.⁷⁰

Moreover, on the national level voluntary action was frequently condemned as a source of direct aid to the strike, even when it was directed towards dependants. This criticism was made by Violet Markham who supported Baldwin during May and, despite feeling the colliery owners "lacked a vision for the industry", believed that the miners' slogan, "not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day", was stupid and unattainable. For this reason she

⁷⁰ See *Ibid*, June 29th, 1926, p 16.

could not support any appeal which was likely to help prolong "a calamitous strike." This led her to describe some benevolent ladies as "confounded" people going "half cock" over appeals for the relief of distress. Markham also suggested that if charity was to play a part in the removal of resentment from the coalfields, it would have to wait until the strike was over. This was because "a post-strike appeal isn't open to the charge that in order to help the sufferings of a section of the community, one is taking a line which has anti-national implications."⁷¹

The same point was made in the letters pages of both national and city newspapers during June. One Times reader calling himself W. E. M. expressed surprise at the fact that so many well-established and charitable individuals were supporting collections which helped sustain a strike that was commonly viewed as a "national calamity". W. E. M. then cleverly attempted to isolate the miners by expressing even more surprise that they should appeal to the country for help at a time when they were holding up prosperity and trade.⁷² This help was also addressed by a reader of the Glasgow Evening Citizen, J. H. Campbell, who wrote of being "sick" at both state and charitable attempts to subsidise "industrial warfare." Campbell asked why industrious taxpayers should have "collection boxes shoved under their noses for subscriptions for miners' wives and children" when the solution lay in men returning to work on the best terms available. This view clearly represented a strand of public opinion which was clearly outraged at attempts to soothe bitterness amongst communities that had allegedly brought the nation face to face with a disastrous situation.⁷³ The gospel of work was, therefore, of more immediate importance to the community than the removal of bitterness through charity.

⁷¹ V. Markham, letter to Cynthia Colville, June 1st 1926, Markham Papers, Correspondence on Coal Strike, 26 / 14.

⁷² The Times, June 11th, 1926, p

⁷³ The Glasgow Evening Citizen, June 26th, 1926, p 3.

Fund raising for miners' families was not restricted to Britain. The Women's Committee appealed for help in the United States, and hundreds of thousands of pounds was donated to British miners by their Soviet counterparts. This flow of money from the east did not go unnoticed in right-wing circles. On the 9th of June a group of Conservative MPs, led by Commander Locker-Hampson, announced their intention to raise the issue in the House of Commons as the driving force behind the donations was a Soviet Government committed to the defeat of the British Empire.⁷⁴ This crusade obviously had clear implications for distress relief work in Britain.⁷⁵ In fact one could say it was a gift for those hard-liners who opposed such effort from the very beginning. Violet Markham, to take one example, spoke of how the Bolshevik money "stuck in the throat" as it had been given not to relieve distress, but to "injure the country." As far as Markham was concerned most people "would not like their donations rubbing shoulders with the Moscow cheque."⁷⁶ Similar thoughts appeared on the letters page of The Times with a Mr Frank Salsbury telling readers on the 17th June that: "One cannot give to the wives and children without giving to the miners and thus supporting the strike, and further without putting money into the same coffers as the Bolsheviks of Russia."⁷⁷

The Times also provided a forum for those who argued that charity should be less concerned with mining families and more attentive to the plight

⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that similar issues arose during the miners strike of 1984 - 85. Tory MPs condemned the NUM leadership for sending its Chief Executive, Mr Roger Windsor, on a fund raising mission to Libya. Controversy also surrounded the open gifts given to British miners by their counterparts in the USSR. Indeed, developments in this area were closely watched by the British Secret Service. For more on the Libyan and Soviet questions see M. Adeney and J. Lloyd, The Miners Strike 1984 - 85: Loss Without Limit, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).

⁷⁵ This had not gone unnoticed in cabinet circles. On the 18th June, 1926, the Secretary of State for Dominion affairs, Leo Amery, sent a telegram to the Governor Generals of South Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand pointing out that Soviet money donated to the miners and their families was "undoubtedly sent with a view to fomenting discord in this country." Despite this, though, the Government allowed the money to enter and did not break off diplomatic relations with the USSR. Telegram from Secretary of State for the Dominions, to Governor Generals, 18th June 1926, PRO, CAB, 21 / 296.

⁷⁶ Violet Markham, Letter to Cynthia Colville, Markham Papers, 26 / 14,

⁷⁷ The Times, June 17th, 1926 p 15 .

of those victims of the miners actions. On the 2nd of June a letter signed 'Middle Temple' called for relief organisations to discriminate between the deserving and undeserving worker.⁷⁸ The miners were clearly undeserving as they had voluntarily withdrawn their labour, while those in other industrial sectors adversely affected by the strike were deemed deserving. The Times editorial team reproduced this argument in a leader two days later. After mentioning the distress endured by some iron and steel workers, the leader pointed out that:

If these appeals were intended merely as a political demonstration there would be nothing more to be said. If, on the other hand, they are a sincere attempt, as we are bound to assume in the case of some of their signatories, to alleviate unusual poverty then they should be directed to covering poverty wherever it may be found as the result of an obstinate and unnecessary dispute. Otherwise the authors are labouring under the old misuse of language which talks of victimisation in the belief that the victim of a strike is the striker.⁷⁹

To sum up, the community ethos which inspired voluntary action between the wars was forced to respond to tension within a capitalist society divided by social class. The General Strike, and the coal strike from which it emerged, generated considerable discussion amongst middle-class volunteers who recognised the need for a new co-operative spirit in industry. For some, however, this need for conciliation was placed alongside a stern and open condemnation of labour and its representatives who, it appeared, had betrayed the community. To others, by contrast, there was the danger that condemnation could be pushed so far as to fracture future unity. The short duration of the strike and the lack of serious unrest contributed to the optimistic conclusion that the British family had emerged from its squabble aware of the need for conciliation between capital and labour.

⁷⁸ Ibid, June 2nd, 1926 p 15 .

⁷⁹ Ibid, June 4th, 1926 p 15 .

Voluntarism's attitude towards labour was also central to the issue of relieving distress in mining areas. The comments of the Duke of Atholl skilfully distanced charity from the miners' case, whilst seeking at the same time to avoid bitterness and the separation of the mining communities from the rest of society. Unfortunately for the volunteer, this position was open to the criticism that, as there could be no separation between the miner and his dependants, charitable relief merely prolonged the strike and damaged the national interest. It was viewed as subsidising class conflict at the expense of a community whose prosperity was bound up with the sale of labour power. Here again, then, was evidence of a divergent approach towards the common good.

The debates between volunteers on these matters were soon overtaken by events. The absence of any meaningful recovery after 1926 and the onset of depression in 1929 turned the volunteer's attention away from industrial disputes towards unemployment: another subject which revealed voluntarism's attitude towards social class.

CHAPTER FIVE: UNEMPLOYMENT

Up until now this thesis has concentrated upon the role played by voluntary bodies in meeting the challenges of war, reconstruction and the General Strike. As we have seen voluntarism was committed to satisfying welfare needs, and promoting the idea of an overarching good which would hopefully unite both capital and labour. Through involvement in social welfare, charities struggled to secure working-class acceptance of values and forms of behaviour which were considered both central to national life, and crucial in overcoming the threats of military defeat and socialism. Here we shall continue to explore these themes by focusing upon those organisations which were involved with unemployed workers during the 1930s. The institutional links these groups forged with the state in combating material and mental distress will be explored in the first half of the chapter, whilst the second shall be devoted to revealing the ideological objectives that lay behind this action. Mention will be made of a wide range of activities, although particular emphasis shall be placed upon those projects financed by the Ministry of Labour and, after 1934, the Commissioners for the Special Areas.

VOLUNTARISM AND WELFARE

Unemployment is the problem that dominates the history of inter-war social policy. The vulnerability of the economy to downturns in the international trade cycle, and the permanent decline in demand suffered by the old staple industries, produced an unemployment rate which averaged 14% of the insured workforce between 1921 and 1939.¹ The numbers out of work fluctuated during this period with peaks being reached at 16.9% in 1921 and 22.1% in 1932,² although even these figures hide the true extent of the problem as they omit workers who were not registered, and fail to convey the hardship

¹ S. Constantine, Social Conditions in Britain, 1918-1939, (London: Methuen, 1983), p 6.

² S. Constantine, Unemployment in Britain between the Wars, (London: Longman, 1980), p 3

faced by dependants. Indeed, when dependants are considered, possibly as many as six or seven million people were living on the dole at the height of depression in the early 1930s.³

During the 1920s governments believed that unemployment was caused by a downturn in the trade cycle, with recovery dependant upon an upturn improving the fortunes of staple export industries like coal, shipbuilding and textiles. Hence, in the early years of the decade official opinion was keen to encourage trade revival by reducing the national debt, supporting employers' attempts to lower costs through wage cuts and returning to the Gold Standard.⁴ There was little change in government thinking during the late twenties as both Conservative and Labour administrations were committed to low taxes and the restriction of government expenditure. Although government spending increased partly as a result of unemployment insurance, and although Churchill's budgets were mildly inflationary, there was still strong opposition to the additional expenditure involved in the large-scale employment scheme outlined by Lloyd George in his 1929 pamphlet, We Can Conquer Unemployment.⁵ Outside the benefit system, then, the state did little for the unemployed beyond the Unemployed Grants Committee which helped finance limited local authority works schemes, and the Industrial Transference Board which, after 1928, attempted to direct labour towards more prosperous areas.⁶

The onset of depression after 1929 coincided with the Labour Party's second spell in office. During this time expenditure on unemployment benefit continued to increase as international confidence in the pound waned. The need for economy in this context was emphasised by the May Committee on National Expenditure which, after being appointed by the Government, called for

³ Ibid, p 3.

⁴ See D. Aldcroft, The Inter-War Economy: Britain 1919-1939, (London: Batsford, 1970) p 303, & R. Floud & D. McCloskey, The Economic History of Britain since 1700, Vol 2, 1860 - 1939, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p 339.

⁵ S. Constantine, Unemployment in Britain between the Wars, p 63.

⁶ K. J. Hancock, 'The Reduction of Unemployment as a Problem of Public Policy', Economic History Review Vol XV, No 2, 1962, pp 328 - 343.

stringent expenditure cuts in the face of a serious budget deficit. The Committee's determination to see cuts implemented in unemployment insurance, together with the insistence on the part of foreign bankers that any loans would depend upon an economy package supported by parliament, split the cabinet and set in motion a sequence of famous events that culminated in the formation of a National Government led by Ramsay Macdonald.⁷

The cuts which some of Macdonald's former Labour colleagues had opposed were implemented as expected by the new National Government. But government policy in the early 1930s did deviate to some extent from that of the twenties. Once Britain left the Gold Standard she was able to lower the bank rate to 2% which was justified as a means of encouraging domestic investment. Britain also moved away from the free trade world of the twenties by adopting self-sufficiency measures such as the imposition of tariffs, controls over capital exports and, following the Ottawa Conference of 1932, preferential trading with Empire members. Despite these changes, however, there was no alteration in official thinking on balanced budgets and a reflationary fiscal policy. In the early and mid 1930s the former option was seen as helping create a suitable environment for industry to take advantage of lower interest rates, while deficit financed public works were rejected on the grounds of utilising resources which could be more profitably used by private enterprise.⁸

To some historians the persistence of this high level of unemployment was a clear sign of market failure which legitimised the call for state intervention in the form of a Keynesian fiscal stimulus. Yet, while for much of the post-war period the rejection of Keynesian thought was viewed by many historians as a gross error on the part of the National Government, since the

⁷ For a debate on the relevance of Keynesian economics to the Labour Government, See R. Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929 - 1931*, (London: Harmondsworth, 1970), and R. McKibben, 'The Economic Policy of the Second Labour Government, 1929 - 1931', *Past and Present*, No 68, Aug 1975, pp 95 - 123.

⁸ See D. Aldcroft and H. W. Richardson, *The British Economy, 1870 - 1939*, (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp 239 - 263.

1970s considerable emphasis has been placed upon the question of whether or not this measure would have generated enough demand to reduce unemployment in the depressed areas.⁹ It is also possible to view inter-war unemployment as the necessary consequence of structural change, involving the decline of older staple industries and the rise of a newer breed of production that not only provided the springboard for recovery in the 1930s, but also secured longer term economic vitality. Certain measures like cheap money may have contributed to recovery after 1932, but the central factors in the upturn were a building boom and the growth of new industries, both of which were able to take advantage of rising incomes. However, as industries such as electrical goods, car manufacture and artificial fibres were situated in the South and Midlands, recovery existed alongside heavy unemployment in the areas of outer Britain.¹⁰

Whatever the causes, the existence of mass unemployment could not be ignored by inter-war governments. Despite the absence of adventurous economic policies, the period did see an increase in statutory responsibility for the maintenance of the unemployed.¹¹ The unemployment insurance scheme - originally introduced in 1911 to cover a small number of industries vulnerable to cyclical unemployment - was extended in 1920 to nearly all manual and non-manual workers earning less than £250 per year. With the steep rise in

⁹ See for example S. Glynn and P. G. A. Howells, 'Unemployment in the 1930s: The Keynesian Solution Reconsidered', Australian Economic History Review, Vol XX, 1980, pp 28 - 45, and S. Glynn and A. Booth 'Unemployment in Inter-War Britain: A case for Re-learning the Lessons of the 1930s', Economic History Review, Vol XXXVI, 1983, pp 329 - 348. The Keynes Treasury -Debate is also covered in R. Middleton, Towards the Managed Economy: Keynes. The Treasury and the Fiscal Policy Debate of the 1930s, (London: Methuen, 1985), and G. C. Peden, Keynes. The Treasury and British Economic Policy, (London: Macmillan, 1988).

¹⁰ For a debate on the role of the new industries in economic recovery see D. Aldcroft, The British Economy, Vol 1. The Years of Turmoil, 1920 - 1951 (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1986) pp 137 -161, H. W. Richardson, 'The Basis of Economic Recovery in the 1930s: A Review and a New Interpretation', Economic History Review, Vol XV, No2, 1962, pp 344 - 363 and N. K. Buxton, 'The Role of the New Industries in Britain during the 1930s: A Reinterpretation', Business History Review, No 49, Summer 1975, pp 205 - 222.

¹¹ For more on state welfare provision in this field see, A. Digby, British Welfare Policy: Workhouse to Workfare, (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), pp 51 - 53, D. Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State, pp 172 - 183, B.B. Gilbert, British Social Policy, 1914 - 1939, pp 54 - 97 & 162 - 192 and P. Thane, The Foundations of the Welfare State, pp 171 - 185.

unemployment after 1920, the Coalition Government was forced to supplement the scheme through the introduction of uncovenanted benefit, which was geared towards workers who had paid a set number of contributions but had exhausted their original entitlement. In 1924 this payment was renamed extended benefit and it remained in place until a new unemployment insurance act was introduced in 1927. The 1927 Act followed the Blanesburgh Committee Report's recommendation that standard and extended benefit should be merged into a new payment that was both unlimited in duration, and available to those who had paid either 30 contributions in the previous two years, or 15 contributions in the last year. The Report also advocated a transitional benefit for those who could not meet these requirements, but had paid 30 contributions at any one time, or 8 contributions over the past couple of years. Further change was introduced to the system as a result of the economy measures of 1931: benefit was cut by 10% and limited to 26 weeks, while transitional benefit was to be administered by public assistance committees who were instructed to enforce a household means test on applicants. This regime lasted until 1934 when the Unemployment Act of that year set up the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee to deal with the insurance fund, and the Unemployment Assistance Board to take responsibility for those on transitional benefit, as well as others who were receiving poor relief from the public assistance committees.

The increase in state responsibility for the unemployed was accompanied by frequent attempts to reduce the burden of maintenance. The application of genuinely seeking work and means tests against applicants were the methods favoured by officials during the 1920s and 1930s.¹² The former test was applied to both the insured and uninsured after 1924, and was defended as a means of separating genuine claimants from the work shy; while those applying for uncovenanted benefit between 1922-1924 and 1925-28 were also

¹² For information on the application of the genuinely seeking work test in the 1920s see A. Deacon, In Search of the Scrounger: The Administration of Unemployment Insurance in Britain, 1920 - 1931, (London: Bell, 1976).

subjected to a means test which probably disqualified around 700,000 claims.¹³

The household means test applied by the PACs administering transitional benefit between 1931 and 1934 was, of course, one of the most unpopular aspects of the National Government's Economy Orders.

The workings of the benefit system were closely linked to the question of unemployment and health. As one would expect, the Ministry of Health was keen to minimise the impact of depression and unemployment in this area. In 1933 the Minister, Hilton Young, denied that there had been any general increase in physical impairment and sickness as a result of unemployment, and a year later the Chief Medical Officer argued that mortality rates were not significantly higher in the depressed areas. The Ministry also pointed out that although infant mortality rates were higher in the distressed areas, this was a long-term development which predated the depression.¹⁴ This optimistic conclusion implied that the array of central and local authority welfare services - including unemployment benefit and assistance, and school meals - had protected families from a drastic decline in health.

To others, however, this was a startlingly complacent view of the situation in outer Britain. In the early 1930s family poverty groups such as the Committee Against Malnutrition and the Children's Minimum Council argued that, when compared with nutritionally assessed poverty lines, insurance and transitional benefits were failing to defend large families from the evil of malnutrition.¹⁵ In addition, the Government's faith in existing social services was open to criticism as school meals and free milk were most difficult to

¹³ B. Harris, 'Unemployment and Charity in the South Wales Coalfield between the Wars', p 6.

¹⁴ S. Constantine, Unemployment in Britain between the Wars, p 32.

¹⁵ Health during the depression is covered in J. Macnicol, The Movement for Family Allowances in Britain, 1918 - 45: A Study in Social Policy Development (London: Heinemann 1980), J. M. Winter, 'Infant Mortality, Maternal Mortality and Public Health in Britain' in the 1930s, The Journal of European Economic History, Vol 8, No 1, Spring 1979, pp 439 - 462, and C. Webster, 'Healthy or Hungry Thirties?', History Workshop, Issue 13, Spring 1982, pp 110 - 129.

sustain in depressed areas with a limited rate intake. Thus the effective state provision did not necessarily correspond with those districts most in need.

Regardless of which side was correct in this debate, state provision was clearly unable to meet all the material needs of unemployed families, thus providing scope for charity to act as a gap filler by supplying boots, clothes and household equipment. As Bernard Harris has shown in a recent paper on charity in the South Wales Coalfields, a great deal of charitable activity continued to focus upon the satisfaction of material needs throughout the 1920s.¹⁶ Harris notes that in 1926 the British Legion collected £4000 for the relief of unemployed ex-servicemen in the area, while in the same year the Society of Friends raised money for school feeding and boot repair centres. South Wales was also one of the principal areas covered by the Lord Mayors' Relief Fund of 1928-29. This initiative was launched after appeals by the Mayors of London, Cardiff and Newcastle for resources to provide boots and clothes for unemployed families in Northumberland, Durham and South Wales. By the end of October only £10,000 had been raised with the result that the Government was forced to intervene and donate a pound of public money for every pound given privately. The Fund was then extended to cover distress beyond South Wales and the North East and, by the time it was wound up in April 1929, over £1.7 million had been raised. In addition to supplying boots and clothes, the Fund also spent £389,000 on outfit grants for people returning to work, and £122,595 on food vouchers and school meals.¹⁷

Such initiatives undoubtedly failed to relieve more than a fraction of the material distress endured by the unemployed. Nonetheless, this did not prevent similar forms of charitable provision from carrying over into the 1930s. With the steady rise in unemployment after 1929, established case-work bodies like

¹⁶ B. Harris, 'Unemployment and Charity in the South Wales Coal Field between the Wars' p 14.

¹⁷ See B. Harris, 'Government and Charity in the Distressed Mining Areas of England and Wales' in C. Jones and J. Barry (eds), Medicine and Charity Before the Welfare State, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp 207 - 220.

the COS continued to work in this area. In carrying out this work, the Society conducted rigorous - and often humiliating - investigations into the character and background of those who applied for clothes, bedding and other forms of assistance.¹⁸ The distinction between the deserving and undeserving unemployed was, for example, maintained by the Glasgow COS's Mile End branch which noted in 1931 that its relief work had not only been varied and interesting, but had also "called for much thought and consideration on the part of the committee, as not every applicant is worthy of assistance, and it is often hard to discriminate and assist in such a way that a permanent good will ensue."¹⁹

Mention can also be made of the Personal Service League which, with the Queen as Patroness, was founded during 1932 to collect clothing for distribution to the deserving unemployed in the distressed areas. The League claimed in December 1936 that it had distributed over 3 million garments in the previous four years.²⁰ This work was inspired by the same sense of national community which - as we shall see shortly - underpinned charitable attempts to combat the perceived moral and psychological effects of unemployment. Through organising what was partly the distribution of "cast off" clothing to the jobless, the League acted as a link between recipients who were considered the victims of prevailing conditions, and sympathetic donors as high up the social ladder as the Royal Family.

¹⁸ Tension between charity and the applicant can be found in Max Cohen's I was One of the Unemployed. Cohen described how a relieving officer sent him to the Jewish Board of Guardians to apply for assistance. When he got there his application was rejected on the grounds of his unmarried status. Describing the ordeal of applying for relief, Cohen remarked that the official made him feel like just another "shiftless lad" who "bummed it from town to town preying on charitable organisations." Given this, he refused to "plead for charity" and turned away. Similar tension was noted in Jarrow by Ellen Wilkinson. She observed that men did not want to "answer a barrage of questions" from volunteers in order to obtain a pair of blankets. See M. Cohen, I Was One of the Unemployed, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1945), pp 48 - 49, and E. Wilkinson, The Town that was Murdered: The life story of Jarrow, (London: Gollancz, 1939), p 231.

¹⁹ Annual Report of the Mile End District Committee of the Glasgow Society of Social Service, 1930 - 31 p 60.

²⁰ The Times, 24th December, 1936, p 8.

This theme is also visible in the activities of the Community Study Council in Brynmawr, South Wales. In the winter of 1931-32 this Quaker inspired initiative appealed for well-off individuals to support a school boot fund through the imposition of a voluntary levy on themselves. In defending this scheme the Council argued that, by helping their neighbours, the better-off were releasing a spirit of sympathy which countered feelings of bitterness and mistrust, especially so soon after the introduction of the Government's economy orders. According to the Council this sacrifice by the well-to-do was "both a binding and unifying force in Brynmawr", and a proof of goodwill which could have "moral and material effects on the outside world."²¹ In her 1934 study of the town, Hilda Jennings noted with satisfaction that the appeal had prompted a good response almost everywhere, even amongst less well-off families who had decided to participate.²²

The Annual Reports of the Unemployment Assistance Board show how the relief of material distress was characterised by a complex set of charitable-statutory relations. Initially the Board's scales of relief fell below those paid by many assistance committees, and this resulted in widespread protest and the introduction of a Ministry of Labour standstill order that allowed relieving officers to pay UAB or old PAC rates, depending on which was higher.²³ Although the means test still operated alongside scales of relief which fell below Rowntree's human needs minimum, the Board's regulations did permit officers to adjust allowances to supply clothes or household equipment in special circumstances, and make grants to deal with exceptional needs arising

²¹ H. Jennings, Brynmawr: A Study of a Distressed Area, (London: Allenson & Co, 1934), p 206.

²² Ibid, p 205.

²³ See P. Thane, The Foundations of the Welfare State, p 182. For an outline on Government thinking in the run up to the Act see F. Miller, 'National Assistance or Unemployment Assistance?: The British Cabinet & Relief, 1932 - 1932', The Journal of Contemporary History, Vol 9, No 2, April 1974, pp 163 - 184. Protests surrounding the Act is covered in R. Croucher, We Refuse to Starve in Silence: A History of the National Unemployed Workers Movement 1920 - 46, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1987), pp 167 - 170.

from disasters like fires and floods.²⁴ It is notable that these special or exceptional needs were often passed to voluntary bodies which were given the opportunity to function before the Board took action. The UAB's 1935 Annual Report stated that it had not pursued a course of action which would "render unnecessary all charitable or voluntary effort so far as applicants are concerned."²⁵ The fact that the strength of voluntary bodies like the Personal Service League and the local Councils of Social Service varied geographically had, according to the 1936 Report, produced a corresponding variation in special circumstances met by the Board.²⁶

The use of charity to meet needs which fell within the responsibility of the UAB did not exhaust statutory-voluntary relations in the relief of distress. Voluntary help was often the "complement of the Board" in cases where needs could not be satisfied from public funds. This is highlighted in the findings of the UAB's district organisations. In 1935 it was revealed that the Kent Council of Social Service had agreed to take on cases that fell outwith the Board's regulations,²⁷ while in Leeds the Personal Service League and Councils of Social Service had readily supplied bedding and clothing to applicants who required them but "whose needs were not exceptional in terms of the regulations".²⁸ A similar development was noted in the Manchester district dealing with Bolton, Rochdale, and Bury. In these towns frequent contacts were made between the Board and the Personal Service League, the NCSS and the NSPCC, all of whom helped in cases where applicants were not eligible for a special grant. Overall, the Board accurately described the different roles played by charity in this field by remarking that private bodies "may have as part of their purpose the supplementation of assistance given by the state, or the

²⁴ See B. B. Gilbert, British Social Policy, 1914 - 1939, p 189.

²⁵ Annual Report of the Unemployment Assistance Board for the Period ended 31st December, 1935, Cmd 5177, p 45.

²⁶ Ibid, 31st, December, 1936, Cmd 5526, p 29.

²⁷ Ibid, 31st, December, 1935, p 102.

²⁸ Ibid, 148.

assistance of types of persons included in the households with which the Board is concerned."²⁹

The failure of state assistance to satisfy basic material needs ensured that the unemployed continued to be an object of charity. In the 1920s and 30s, however, sections of the charitable world were increasingly focusing attention upon the mental problems associated with prolonged idleness. The 1930s saw the emergence of a theory of the social psychology of unemployment revolving around the work of the psychologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Marie Jahoda. These writers famous 1933 study of unemployment in the Austrian mill town, Marienthal, looked at specific frames of mind exhibited by a sample of 100 unemployed families.³⁰ Although some families managed to sustain their hopes for the future and were thus described by the study as "unbroken", the majority had fallen into a resigned response which kept the household together but lacked any hope or plans for the future. The research referred to two other categories which were described by the words "despair" and "apathetic": families in the former group also managed to sustain the household, although they had succumbed to an attitude of futility and despair resulting in the abandonment of any attempt to find work, while the latter category was characterised by the absence of an ordered household and a neglect of children, alongside "apathy, indolence and complete passivity". Out of the 100 hundred families studied, 23 were in an unbroken state, 70 were resigned to their situation, while the remaining 7 fell into the broken and apathetic categories.³¹ Although the study was not ignorant of household income, only near the end did it suggest that different stages of psychological deterioration ran parallel to the "narrowing of economic resources and the wear and tear on personal belongings."³²

²⁹ Ibid, 31st, December, 1936, p 46.

³⁰ M. Jahoda and P. F. Lazarsfeld, Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community, (London: Tavistock, 1972).

³¹ Ibid, p 56.

³² Ibid, p 89.

The study of the social psychology of unemployment was developed further by Paul Lazarsfeld in two articles written in 1935 and 1938. The first appeared in the Journal of Social Psychology and commented on 57 autobiographies of unemployed men published by the Institute of Social Economy in Warsaw.³³ Lazarsfeld and his collaborator, B. Zawadowski, spoke of the unemployed exhibiting six different changes of mood in response to their circumstances, including injury, numbness and apathy, adaptation to the situation, fading hope, hopelessness and finally acquiescence.³⁴ Three years later Lazarsfeld made another contribution to the field by reviewing the available psychological literature from Europe and America in an article written with Phillip Eisenberg.³⁵ Once again a stage theory came to the fore as the authors categorised people's response to unemployment under the headings shock, optimism, pessimism and a broken attitude.³⁶

It is not the objective of this chapter to survey the psychological literature on unemployment in the 1930s. Yet, as Ross McKibbin argues, there was nothing particularly new in observations of languor in the personal and collective life of the unemployed. McKibbin quotes Rowntree and Lasker who, in 1911, spoke of the unemployed suffering psychically and enduring acute despair because of repeated disappointments and failures in searching for a job.³⁷ Moreover, long before the publication of Marienthal, voluntary activities were taking a growing interest in what has been called the "life and happiness of the unemployed man and his family".³⁸ Ralph Hayburn has shown that as early as 1927 the Society of Friends' educational settlement at Maes-Yr-Haf was

³³ B. Zawadowski, and P. F. Lazarsfeld, 'The Psychological Consequences of Unemployment', Journal of Social Psychology, Vol 6, No 2, May 1935, pp 224 - 251.

³⁴ Ibid, p 235.

³⁵ P. Eisenberg and P. F. Lazarsfeld, 'The Psychological Effects of Unemployment', Psychological Bulletin, Vol 35, No 6, June 1938, pp 358 - 385.

³⁶ Ibid, p 378.

³⁷ Quoted in R. McKibbin, 'The Social Psychology of Unemployment' in The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880 - 1950, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p 232.

³⁸ B. Harris, 'Unemployment and Charity in the South Wales Coalfield between the Wars' p 17.

organising educational classes for the local unemployed.³⁹ In the same year the Workers Educational Association set up a service club for the jobless at Lincoln which, in a city where around 3000 factory operatives were out of work, provided a workshop that was, amongst other things, used to construct toys and furniture for local childrens homes.⁴⁰ Countering the perceived monotony of unemployment was also an objective of the Joint Committee for the Promotion of Education in the South Wales coalfield which was formed early in 1929 at the insistence of the NCSS. The Committee administered a Carnegie Trust grant of £5000 for the support of adult education classes and weekend schools.⁴¹

The worsening economic situation post 1929, together with a growing concern about the psychological effects of unemployment, stimulated voluntary attempts to deal with the mental effects of joblessness. Particularly notable in this respect was the Pilgrim Trust⁴² whose first Annual Report spoke of the need to counter some of the worst effects of continued unemployment by preventing "many places where moral and intellectual leadership is absent from sinking into despair."⁴³ Indeed, throughout the 1930s the organisation supported a wide range of voluntary activities that worked in this field. In deciding how to allocate resources it excluded certain classes of activity from consideration, notably those projects receiving support from either the state or other voluntary bodies. Grants were made, then, to a variety of educational

³⁹ R. Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement', 1932 - 39, Journal of Contemporary History, 6, 1971, pp 156 - 171

⁴⁰ NCSS, Work with the Unemployed: An Account of Some Experiments, (London: NCSS, 1932), p 14.

⁴¹ R. Hayburn, The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement, p 157.

⁴² The Pilgrim Trust's 1938 Report, Men Without Work, contained a section on the psychology of unemployment which categorised individuals attitude to work under three headings: those who thought in terms of work, those who began to accept unemployment as a normal state but still looked for work out of habit rather than conviction, and others who had already accepted it as their normal situation and would thus find it difficult to take work if available. The Report referred to a stage approach, or process of adjustment, whereby a person moved from one category to another. See Men Without Work: A Report Made to the Pilgrim Trust, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp 143 - 179.

⁴³ Annual Report of the Pilgrim Trust, 1930 - 31, p 5.

settlements for the unemployed in such areas as Spennymoor, County Durham, the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, and Dowlais, South Wales.⁴⁴ The Trustees also supported boys' and girls' clubs in the belief that a "most urgent social responsibility" was the fight against deterioration amongst thousands of young people in their mid-teens who were on the unemployment register.⁴⁵ In 1934 over £9000 was donated to a variety of organisations including the Yorkshire Association of Boys Clubs, the Manchester Citizen's Clubs Association and the Irish YMCA Belfast Club for Unemployed Youth.⁴⁶ Holidays for young people also featured in the Trust's programme, with a bloc grant of £5,500 being set aside in 1931 for camping holidays which would provide fresh air, discipline, exercise and amusement following a "long hard winter".⁴⁷

By mid 1932 a wide range of voluntary schemes were attempting to arrest the mental decline associated with unemployment. A NCSS pamphlet entitled, Work with the Unemployed, reviewed a number of schemes including the Maes-Yr-Haf settlement, the Lincoln People's Service Club and an allotments scheme in Sheffield. The foreword to the pamphlet was written by the Scottish Tory writer, John Buchan, who talked of the psychological dimension to the unemployment problem. The jobless were, he observed, having their minds "dulled and soured" through enforced idleness, and so the efforts of the volunteer were a godsend as they provided men with an opportunity "to keep their hands in and have something to occupy their thoughts."⁴⁸ Referring specifically to occupational clubs associated with the Maes-Yr-Haf settlement in South Wales, the pamphlet praised the attempts that

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1931 - 32, pp 32 & 35.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1933 - 34, p 18.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p 18.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 1930 - 31, p 13. The Trust actually curtailed some of its activities amongst youth in the mid to late 1930s because of the emergence of the King George Jubilee Trust and the National Fitness Council, both of which were involved in supporting youth clubs and juvenile camping holidays. Ibid, 1936 - 37, p 22.

⁴⁸ NCSS, Work With the Unemployed: An Account of Some Experiments, p 5.

had been made to combat, "the loss of vitality" "bitterness, and apathy" that prolonged idleness and its attendant hardship caused.⁴⁹

The value of this attempt to prevent an erosion in the work ethic was increasingly recognised in official circles. As the rise in cyclical unemployment pushed the number out of work towards the three million mark during late 1932, the Cabinet created an Unemployment Committee which acknowledged that any decline in skill and morale could both weaken the capacity of industry to take advantage of a future upturn in world trade, and encourage social unrest. In his evidence to the Committee, Hilton Young spelled out the Government's dilemma by noting that opposition to a sizeable public works programme existed side by side with the continuing deterioration of morale faced by the jobless. With an eye on limiting expenditure, Young attempted to square the circle by advocating the expansion of voluntary occupational schemes under the aegis of the local authorities.⁵⁰ On the whole this suggestion was acceptable to the committee as it shared Young's view that occupying the minds and bodies of the jobless was a sound national investment. Nevertheless, the Committee also felt that neither local nor central government should assume direct responsibility for work which could best be undertaken by "private agencies supported by limited financial assistance from public funds."⁵¹ Consequently, the organisational role envisaged by Young was granted to the Special Unemployment Committee and regional councils of the NCSS, rather than the local authorities.

Two important points emerge from these discussions amongst cabinet ministers. Firstly, there was a clear link between Government economic policy and state support for voluntary occupational schemes. As both the Treasury and the Ministry of Labour were dismissive of the claim that a fiscal stimulus would

⁴⁹ Ibid, p 17.

⁵⁰ Memorandum by Minister of Health to Cabinet Unemployment Committee, September 1932, PRO, CAB, 27 / 490.

⁵¹ Interim Report of Cabinet Unemployment Committee, October 1932, PRO, CAB, 27 / 490.

provide a quick and permanent solution to the unemployment problem, inexpensive social service projects were, as Frederic Miller has claimed, an option in any attempt to fend off pressure for such action.⁵² Faced with an unadventurous economic policy that offered no quick and easy solution to the unemployment problem, the Cabinet searched for a suitable agent whose actions would help shore up the unemployed's ability to undertake work and keep protest at a manageable level. The NCSS readily accepted this role which it carried out through its Special Unemployment Committee. Secondly, the payment of public money to a voluntary body engaged in relieving mental distress was yet another example of the agency relationship which formed an important part of charitable-statutory relations between 1914 and 1939. The State was willing to assume some responsibility for keeping the unemployed occupied, although it delegated the tasks of organisation and advice to a suitable ally from the voluntary sector.

The role granted to the NCSS by the Ministry of Labour greatly enhanced its national profile. However, it also subjected the council to criticisms from all sides of the political spectrum. To those on the left who viewed the occupational centre movement as a state ploy to excuse its economic conservatism, the council replied that its work was not a substitute for solving the unemployment problem, but an attempt to ensure that mental and moral deterioration did not render men unemployable in future. For others - mainly on the right of the political spectrum - there was a danger that the Council's reliance upon public funds would threaten its independence.⁵³ When faced with this argument the NCSS pointed out that the role of adviser and co-ordinator allowed the Committee to "make full use of its initiative free from central regulation and control."⁵⁴

⁵² F. Miller, 'The Unemployment Policy of the National Government 1931 - 1936', Historical Journal, 19, 2, 1976 pp 453 - 476.

⁵³ M. Brasnett, Voluntary Social Action, p 78.

⁵⁴ Annual Report of the NCSS, 1932 - 33 p 10.

In some ways this remark was inaccurate as the NCSS was permitted to spend Ministry funds in a limited number of areas like the administrative machinery of the movement and the capital costs of struggling centres. Nonetheless, within these limits, the freedom granted the NCSS was unlikely to trouble the Ministry as the occupational drive was directed by public spirited citizens who claimed to be serving the national interest. The membership of both the Council's Executive and its Special Unemployment Committee reads like a list of "the great and the good." Among the officers of the NCSS were the Tory MP, and speaker of the House of Commons, F.A. Fitzroy, and the Oxford Professor of Political Theory, W.S.G. Adams. Another Oxford philosopher, A. D. Lindsay, was Chair of the Special Unemployment Committee, and amongst his colleagues were the former cabinet Secretary, Dr Thomas Jones, and a Director of the Bank of England, Sir Edward Peacock.⁵⁵

The Special Unemployment Committee set up various regional organisations which were given responsibility for encouraging the creation of occupational centres, advising on their upkeep and providing services such as instruction in handicrafts, physical training and other activities. By March 1935 the Ministry had given the NCSS around £80,000 to spend in these areas.⁵⁶ Thus regional bodies like the South Wales and Monmouthshire Council of Social Service were aided in strengthening their own organisation and meeting the capital costs of local centres in areas of heavy and sustained unemployment. It was mentioned earlier that this practice of making large sums of public money available to the NCSS prompted some to question whether the organisation could still be considered voluntary. The standard reply pointed to the substantial amounts of private money raised by the Council, the regional bodies

⁵⁵ The dominance of the "great and the good" was also manifested at a Scottish level. During 1935 Scotland's co-ordinatory body, the Scottish Council for Community Service During Unemployment, fielded a 24 person Executive Committee, with 14 members being either OBEs, JPs or Doctors. See Annual Report of the Scottish Council for Community Service During Unemployment, 1934 - 1935, p 2.

⁵⁶ M. Brasnett, Voluntary Social Action p 78.

and local clubs. Between January 1933 and March 1935 over £100,000 was raised in this way, thus allowing the NCSS to argue that acceptance of state funds did not necessarily contradict the charitable impulse to give.⁵⁷

Both the ministry of Labour and the NCSS contributed to a voluntary movement which, by mid 1935, could point to the existence of over 1000 centres for unemployed men.⁵⁸ As national organisations, neither the Ministry nor the Council wished to deny the part played by local initiative in this endeavour. Many clubs were, after all, founded by promotion committees consisting of representatives from various area or town voluntary bodies. These committees tended to retain control over fund raising and advice while delegating day to day management to centre members and local public spirited citizens. By leaving everyday costs to local advisory committees, it was possible to merge a degree of central co-ordination with what was perceived to be the self-directed contribution of the local community.

So the occupational centres were based upon co-operation involving local and national organisations as well as voluntarism and the state. This co-operation succeeded in introducing the unemployed to a wide range of different activities. Some of these took place within the workshop which, according to a survey of centres conducted by the NCSS in 1939, was an essential factor in practically all men's clubs.⁵⁹ In drawing this conclusion the Council could have pointed to earlier evidence from Liverpool. In January 1933 the Secretary of the Liverpool Council of Social Service, H. C. Jackson, remarked that cobbling and carpentry were the chief occupations in all 30 centres associated with his organisation.⁶⁰ Similarly, the Men Without Work study found that cobbling

⁵⁷ Ibid, p 78

⁵⁸ R. Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement,' p 159.

⁵⁹ NCSS, Out of Adversity: A Survey of the Clubs for Men and Women Which have grown out of the Needs of Unemployment, 1939, p 22.

⁶⁰ H. C. Jackson, 'The Problem of the Unemployed on Merseyside', Social Service Review, January 1933, p 6.

and carpentry were popular activities in clubs stretching from County Durham to Leicester and Deptford.⁶¹

The occupational centres also developed some forms of occupation which lay outwith the workshop. In 1939 the NCSS observed that throughout the clubs there was a great deal of educational idealism. According to the Council, in the first quarter of 1938 nearly 14,000 classes were conducted in subjects varying from biology to current affairs.⁶² The regional voluntary organisations would often supply their own teachers, or negotiate provision with a local education authority or voluntary body. Occupational centres in Crook, County Durham, frequently relied upon the county's Community Service Council for educational tutors and lecturers, while the South Wales Council of Social Service utilised the teaching services of the WEA, the YMCA and the National Council of Music.⁶³

So far this chapter has paid attention to the relationship between the Ministry of Labour and the NCSS. It has been shown that the deliberations of the Cabinet Unemployment Committee resulted in public money being used to develop voluntary effort. After 1934, however, there was another channel through which the State used the NCSS as an agent. The fall in national unemployment between the spring of 1933 and 1934 weakened the pressure on the Government for a national public works programme. Attention now focused more closely upon depressed areas in which long term unemployment had drastically reduced prosperity. The Government's response took the form of a Special Areas Act through which appointed Commissioners for England, Wales and Scotland were initially given the meagre sum of £2 million for limited measures of economic development and social improvement.⁶⁴ The

⁶¹ Men Without Work, pp 310 & 316.

⁶² Out of Adversity, NCSS, 1939 p 15.

⁶³ Men Without Work, p 318, and Annual Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas, 1935 - 36, (England & Wales), Cmd 5090, p 91.

⁶⁴ F. Miller, 'The Unemployment Policy of the National Government 1931 - 1936', pp 468 - 469.

social side of this work involved support for various forms of voluntary action. Although the NCSS was receiving money from the Ministry of Labour, the Commissioner for England, Malcolm Stewart, provided additional assistance for land and buildings in some areas where need was greatest.⁶⁵ Moreover, between 1935 and 1936 £12,500 was distributed by the Commissioner for England and Wales to the NCSS for expenditure on education and drama in occupational centres.⁶⁶ The Commissioner also provided grant aid for women's clubs, with the result that, by mid 1935, over 300 centres for unemployed women and the wives of jobless men were in operation.⁶⁷ Within these clubs women were viewed primarily as housewives and mothers, and so every effort was made to improve the standard of home management and motherhood through instruction in child welfare, cooking and sewing.

Not all of the voluntary initiatives supported by public money took place within the social service centre. An important aspect of voluntary work concerned the use of unemployed labour for community service. One early example of this was the Brynmawr scheme started in 1929 by Peter Scott of the South Wales Society of Friends. Here, the unpaid labour of the jobless was - amongst other things - directed towards turning a slag heap into a flower garden. The obvious objection that men were being invited to work without pay did not prevent the Commissioner for the Special Areas from supporting similar schemes after 1934. Starting from the premise that such work was uneconomic and unlikely to be undertaken otherwise, Malcolm Stewart decided to assist by supplying money for food, clothes and tools, in order to ensure that unemployed volunteers were not materially worse off through giving their labour. In 1935 grants totalling £516 were made to a scheme in Toft Hill, County Durham, which engaged 20 unemployed men in the creation of a

⁶⁵ Annual Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas, 1935 - 36, p 83.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p 81.

⁶⁷ R. Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement,' p 159.

recreation ground,⁶⁸ while in nearby Tow Law a grant of £648 was made to a project involving 140 men in the preparation of a site for a social service centre.⁶⁹ By the end of 1935 the Commissioner had distributed around £22,000 to schemes attracting over 2100 volunteers.⁷⁰

The "agency relationship" between the State and the NCSS had important implications for the role of the Pilgrim Trust in the movement. As the Trust had no wish to fund projects which were being supported by another body the trustees reported that less money would be given after 1932 to occupational centres, which were increasingly becoming the concern of the Ministry of Labour and the NCSS.⁷¹ By the same token the support given to settlements, work schemes and youth organisations by the Special Commissioners allowed the Trustees to switch resources to similar schemes in districts which, despite suffering from a considerable degree of unemployment, were not covered by the Special Areas Act.

The upturn in world trade after 1933 did not eliminate voluntary action amongst the unemployed. True, Men Without Work observed that a reduction in unemployment had lowered the membership of Liverpool's centres between 1933 and 1936.⁷² Nonetheless, throughout the mid to late 1930s the unemployment level remained above one million, with those out of work for a year or more forming an ever larger proportion of the official total. This obviously provided continued scope for voluntary action. As the Pilgrim Trust stated in its 1938 Annual Report, the continuing plight of the distressed areas "is a shadow which darkens the picture of more widespread prosperity and makes a special challenge to the voluntary services not to slacken their efforts for social amelioration."⁷³ In the same year the NCSS recognised this problem by

⁶⁸ Annual Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas, p 73.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p 74.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p 72 - 73.

⁷¹ Annual Report of the Pilgrim Trust, 1932-33 p 4.

⁷² Men Without Work, p 335.

⁷³ Annual Report of the Pilgrim Trust, 1936 - 1937, p3.

pointing out that the largest percentage of men who attended the clubs were in the 40 plus age group, with many having been out of work for a year or more. So whereas in the early 1930s the centres were partly viewed as a means of keeping men fit for future employment, by the second half of the decade they were increasingly providing comfort for older men who were thought unlikely to work again. This is confirmed by the experience of various centres up and down the country. Men Without Work pointed out in 1938 that many clubs in the Rhondda Valley were increasingly becoming a service for the older unemployed. In one centre covered in the Survey, 74% of members were over the age of 45, with around 50% falling into the 55 plus age group.⁷⁴ Moreover, in Crook, County Durham, the fall in unemployment between 1932 and 1936 had a greater impact on those centres with a high proportion of younger members. At Helmington Row, for example, the average age of the club management committee rose from 29 to 49 as younger active participants left to take up employment, while centres with a higher proportion of middle-aged members, like those at Stanley and Sunnyside, saw little change in the average age of club membership.⁷⁵

In the early 1930s the occupational movement emerged at a time when unemployment was a national problem. The failure of economic recovery to touch "outer Britain" during the middle of the decade provided considerable scope for the continuation of voluntary effort. By 1938, however, the smaller number of jobless in these areas, together with the existence of a hard core group of elderly unemployed, forced voluntarism to consider the future of its work in this area. Both the NCSS and the Pilgrim Trust recognised, as we have just seen, the increase in average age of membership experienced by many clubs. These organisations also noted that some clubs were increasingly encouraging membership amongst those who had found employment. The

⁷⁴ Men Without Work, p 310.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p 380.

NCSS's 1937 Annual Report observed that this had long been practice amongst centres in more prosperous parts of the country, and Men Without Work concluded that one of the present tendencies within the club movement was the extension of membership to the employed.⁷⁶ Although this tendency was limited in parts of the depressed areas, it did point to a future in which some clubs would serve as community centres providing leisure opportunities for all.

In looking ahead neither the NCSS nor the local centres could avoid the issue of future relations with the state. During 1938 the NCSS persuaded the Ministry of Labour to reaffirm its commitment to assist part of the advisory and instructional costs of the Council and its regional bodies. But neither the Ministry nor the Unemployment Assistance Board were keen to aid community centres which also catered for those in work.⁷⁷ Moreover, the termination of the Special Areas Act in 1939 raised the question of funding for educational activities and women's clubs. Out of discussions which took place between various government departments in October 1938, it was suggested that LEAs' and the Board of Education might act as future sources of finance for such activity.⁷⁸

VOLUNTARISM, UNEMPLOYMENT AND IDEOLOGY

As we have seen charity was involved in tackling both the material and mental problems caused by enforced idleness. In dealing with the latter the NCSS and local community service schemes entered into the form of agency relationship with the state which formed an important part of charitable-statutory relations during war and reconstruction. However, it would be unwise to suggest that this activity was motivated solely by benevolence. In a society deeply divided by social class neither the Cabinet nor public spirited public citizens could, especially at the local level, rule out the possibility of unrest over the unemployment issue. True, the decade after 1921 had been, on the whole,

⁷⁶ Ibid, p 383.

⁷⁷ Minute Sheet, Ministry of Labour, January 1938, PRO / MH / 57 / 371.

⁷⁸ Grant from Special Areas Fund, October 1938, PRO / MH / 57 / 371.

one of political and industrial defeat for an organised working class led by union leaders who, especially after the General Strike, were trapped in a defensive and conciliatory frame of mind. Yet this did not prevent groups such as the National Unemployed Workers Movement from calling for united working-class action against the National Government. The argument in this section will be that voluntary welfare schemes were, in many ways, directed against those militants who struggled to mobilise the jobless for direct action. Occupational schemes encouraged social solidarity by urging citizens of all classes to support this attempt to integrate the unemployed into the local and national community.

This political objective is worthy of more attention than it has received in the literature on the social service movement. In 1969, the NCSS's official historian, Margaret Brasnett, described the occupational centre movement in a favourable way, leaving little room for an analysis of its ideas. More recently writers have focused upon the interaction of state and charity in satisfying welfare needs, rather than the broader social strategies surrounding such action. Ralph Hayburn is content to follow this path, although he does at one point make the unsubstantiated value judgement that voluntary schemes were "a more worthwhile alternative" to the unemployed than the protest activities of the National Unemployed Workers Movement.⁷⁹ Bernard Harris's work on charity and unemployment in the South Wales Coalfield provides a useful survey of state support for schemes operating in the area, although, as he himself admits, it still leaves plenty of room for research into the impact of voluntarism on social solidarity.⁸⁰

The importance of social solidarity was revealed in the speeches and writings of those academics and public figures who were associated with the occupational movement. The Warden of Toynbee Hall, Dr J. J. Mallon, was one leading member of the London Council for Voluntary Occupation during

⁷⁹ R. Hayburn, 'The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement', 1932 - 39, p 157.

⁸⁰ B. Harris, 'Voluntary Action and Unemployment: Charity in the South Wales Coalfield Between the Wars' Unpublished paper, University of Bristol, 1991, p 8.

Unemployment who provided a consensual philosophical justification for voluntary action. Although Mallon acknowledged the potential for unrest as a result of industrial problems, he told Glasgow's Queen Margaret Settlement in January 1933 that the settlement movement could take credit for encouraging both sides of industry to remember that, regardless of differences, there were common traditions and memories which united them.⁸¹ Within this frame of mind, it was possible for Mallon to portray voluntarism's response to the psychological effects of mass unemployment as a societal concern which deserved the support of all sections of the community.

The Master of Balliol College Oxford, A. D. Lindsay, also justified his work as chairman of the NCSS's unemployment committee by stressing the need to subordinate class or sectional interests to the common good. Lindsay was a teacher of idealist philosophy who believed that a healthy democracy depended upon a sense of common interest transcending class or sectional interests. Marxism, he argued, was incompatible with this form of government as men who pursued only their economic interests were incapable of subordinating them to a common life. As the state's role was to harmonise this common life, the administrator's task would be eased somewhat by the existence of an educated public committed to the same end. For our purposes it is important to note Lindsay's belief that there was no a priori reason why, during an economic crisis, men's community interests should not prevail over their sectional ones. Indeed, the Master of Bailliol believed that the solution to this problem depended upon the extent to which individuals were educated in citizenship, and thus aware of a common good.⁸² The occupational centre movement was, therefore, one means of promoting this desirable aim as granting the unemployed the opportunity to "express their personalities" through

⁸¹ Annual Report of the Queen Margaret College Settlement Association, 1932 - 1933, p 16.

⁸² A. D. Lindsay, The Essentials of Democracy, (Oxford: OUP, 1935) esp pp 4 -5 & 71 - 72.

cobbling and other activities was an urgent necessity requiring contributions of time and money from members of all classes. In this way the voluntary response to the unemployment revealed to individuals in work their place within a benevolent national community which had not forgotten its less fortunate members.

This theme was clearly identifiable in the speeches and letters of those prominent figures who appealed on behalf of the voluntary movement for public support. Ramsay Macdonald came to the microphone in December 1932 to introduce a series of talks run by the BBC on the efforts of volunteers to alleviate the mental distress caused by unemployment. As Paddy Scannell points out, Macdonald explained the Government's economic position before going on to call for personal friendship and the need for the human hand to supplement the state machine.⁸³ The Prime Minister was also aware of the need to place the issue of unemployment within the context of social cohesion. In his days with the Labour Party he had, of course, adhered to an organic view of socialism which championed the growth of society rather than the victory of a social class, and also looked forward to the day when both capital and labour would cease to prey upon each other to the detriment of the whole. Against this background it was hardly surprising that Macdonald should view the co-operation of people from all classes in voluntary effort as being conducive to the defeat of the class division and conflict which endangered industrial and social life. It was, he contended, "an attempt on a national scale to find new ways of employment, to put a new spirit of co-operation and independence in our people, so that through distress and failure we may find a way to national unity and the well-being of the commonwealth."⁸⁴

A similar argument was invoked one month later by the Prince of Wales who, as patron of the NCSS, was invited to follow Macdonald to the

⁸³ P. Scannell, 'Broadcasting, and the Politics of Unemployment' Media, Culture and Society, 1980, 2, pp 15 - 28

⁸⁴ The Listener, 28th December, 1932, p 918.

microphone.⁸⁵ After describing those out of work as "unfortunate fellow citizens", he suggested that co-operation to aid the jobless might flatten the "mountains of misunderstanding" which encouraged social division. The Prince also invoked the experience of war in his attempt to associate the voluntary movement with greater social unity. Although some had disagreed with war in principle, all had, he suggested, co-operated through recognition of a national emergency. Recognition of a similar emergency in mass unemployment would, he concluded, encourage class co-operation around this objective of relieving the mental distress endured by less fortunate citizens.⁸⁶

The advocates of this argument were critical of those who failed to join in the community spirit. The militant members of the NUWM were clearly a lost cause to voluntarism, but the same could not be said for those sections of the middle class who showed little interest in this national movement of social amelioration. As early as November 1932 one supporter of the Lincoln People's Service Club, Alice Cameron, complained of the "inadequate psychology" manifested by employers who held that any attempt to improve the lives of the unemployed would discourage them from finding work.⁸⁷ Similar thoughts were on the mind of the Tory MP for Blaydon, County Durham, T. B. Martin, who, in April 1935, criticised some employers for arguing that voluntary

⁸⁵ The Government did not always get its own way with the broadcasters. While the Prince's speech drew attention to SOS, a programme in which the writer S. P. B. Mais produced a sympathetic portrayal of voluntary work amongst the unemployed, another BBC production, *Time to Spare*, invited a handful of unemployed workers to describe their living conditions to the public. The Labour MP, George Dagger, used extracts from the programme to attack the Government in the third reading of the 1934 Unemployment Bill. Worried by the effect *Time to Spare* might have upon Government popularity, Macdonald made an unsuccessful attempt to force the BBC to scrap it. See P. Scannell, 'Broadcasting and the Politics of Unemployment', p 19.

⁸⁶ The Listener, 11th January, 1933, p 37. This idea of Britain as a national community with unfortunate members was also deployed by Malcolm Stewart to justify his activities as a Special Areas Commissioner. He spoke of voluntary social service for the "less fortunately placed" as a great British tradition. Once again it had come to fore as the "whole community" struggled to present the jobless in the depressed areas with the opportunity to use their talents in a positive way. Annual Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas, (England & Wales), 1936 -1937, Cmd 5303 p 80.

⁸⁷ A. Cameron, 'The Lincoln Peoples Service Club', The Highway, November 1932, Violet Markham papers, Unemployment, 5 / 8.

workers were exaggerating the nature and scale of distress in the areas of outer Britain. Implicit within the arguments of both Cameron and Martin was a fear that employer intransigence could damage the community ideal. In fact Martin warned employers that: "It is not the economic arguments of the socialists which are the means of gaining so many of the workers to the ranks of socialism, but the fostering of this bitterness."⁸⁸

Like war and reconstruction the voluntary response to unemployment was viewed as an opportunity for the promotion of national unity. As L. F. Ellis of the NCSS pointed out at a conference on social service in the distressed areas during January 1933, "people of all sorts, employed and unemployed alike, are uniting in the common effort to wrest something good out of this evil of unoccupied time."⁸⁹ Ellis also acknowledged that if a sense of greater social cohesion was to emerge, the unfortunate unemployed would need to feel part of this community. Voluntary social action would have to extend beyond influencing the views of those in work, to influencing the attitude of the unemployed themselves. This was also the view of the Manchester University settlement which, detecting a feeling of despondency amongst the jobless in October 1932, warned: "if it is unrelieved, it must inevitably produce a deterioration of moral fibre, and a daily increasing bitterness against a society that appears to have no use for their work, and which lets them drift into heart breaking poverty."⁹⁰ This fear that the isolation of the jobless could introduce an undesirable note of bitterness into politics was touched upon by Men Without Work which felt that the greater self-pity found amongst the unemployed in South Wales was encouraging an "almost pathological state of mind" and an erratic temperament in some men.⁹¹

⁸⁸ The Times 16th April, 1935, p 17.

⁸⁹ Report of the Full Conference on Social Service in the Distressed Areas of South Wales and Monmouthshire, 27th - 30th, January, 1933, Violet Markham Papers, Unemployment, 5 / 8.

⁹⁰ Manchester University Settlement, 'Day clubs for Men and Boys: An Experiment and an Appeal', October 1932, Violet Markham Papers, Unemployment, 5 / 8.

⁹¹ Men Without Work, p .277

Although voluntarism appealed for time and resources from all classes in society, middle-class citizens tended to occupy positions of power and influence in the running of schemes. With regard to the occupational centres, local people of social standing often exerted influence over club activities and finance through their positions on promotion committees, and in some clubs guidance was provided by full-time supervisors or wardens responsible to town or regional voluntary bodies. Moreover, the voluntary labour schemes supported by the Commissioner for the Special Areas were usually conceived by members of the local middle classes. In Howden Le Wear, County Durham, the driving force behind a scheme to convert a waste pit into a recreation ground was a local schoolmaster, while in the Toft Hill project mentioned earlier, the initiative was once again taken by a local schoolmaster supported by a body of middle-class trustees.⁹² In justifying the activities of these individuals, the NCSS argued that many of the unemployed lacked the experience of social and industrial leadership necessary for such work. The Chairman of the Council's Special Unemployment Committee, A. D. Lindsay, agreed when in June 1933 he argued that as a result of this lack of expertise "the unemployed had to be helped beyond its own circle."⁹³

But some commentators from the right of the political spectrum were more revealing than Lindsay on the significance of middle-class participation in charitable projects. During April 1934 the Spectator journalist H. Powys-Greenwood called upon the unemployed middle class to seek the society of jobless workers in occupational centres. For Greenwood the principal social objective facing the country was the "demolition of class antagonism through the promotion of co-operation between all classes."⁹⁴ By visiting these centres, the middle-class unemployed teacher could help forge an understanding

⁹² Annual Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas, 1935 - 36.

⁹³ A. D. Lindsay, 'Unemployment: The Meanwhile Problem', Contemporary Review, June 1933, p 210.

⁹⁴ The Spectator, April 6th 1934, p 532.

between unemployed workers and other sections of society.⁹⁵ In Greenwood's view this would help eliminate bitterness by ensuring that the jobless were "incorporated into the tradition of our civilisation as to enrich rather than impoverish it."⁹⁶

Here, then, was an attempt to ensure that any feelings of anger, frustration and alienation did not, to quote Miliband in a different context, "turn into a generalised availability to radical thought."⁹⁷ Some volunteers like, for example, the University Council for Unemployed Camps, were quite open and enthusiastic about this challenge. This organisation was the outcome of an experiment at Eastnor in 1932 where a camp staffed by students provided various activities for 100 unemployed men. With the formation of the Council, students from British universities were invited to become involved in such initiatives during their summer holidays. In 1935 alone 10 camps staffed mainly by students from Oxford, Cambridge and London were organised for over 100 men: activities included manual work, swimming, games and educational classes. In a letter to the Spectator the Council explained that the practice of using students to staff the camps had provided numerous opportunities for understanding between the unemployed and other sections of the community. Comfort was drawn from quoting a miner who remarked that the camps were doing more than anything he knew "to crush the spirit of class hatred and misunderstanding."⁹⁸

Observers from both the right and the left of the political spectrum noted that some of those who were members of an occupational club appeared

⁹⁵ However, such middle-class participation was not without problems. Peter Scott, the founder of the Brynmawr scheme, was worried that voluntary work amongst the jobless was appealing to unsuitable types. Speaking in January 1933, he referred to students whose lives were divorced from working-class reality, and others who, suffering from sexual repression and various disappointments in life, hid their inferiority under a cloak of service and surface superiority. According to Scott this could encourage, rather than eliminate, bitterness. See Report of Full Conference on Social Service in the Depressed Areas, January 1933.

⁹⁶ The Spectator, April 6th, 1934, p 532.

⁹⁷ R. Miliband, 'Counter Hegemonic Struggles', in 'The Retreat of the Intellectual', Socialist Register, 1990, p 347.

⁹⁸ The Spectator, May 10th, 1935, p 135.

unlikely to subscribe to militant ideas. In April 1934 H. Powys-Greenwood told Spectator readers of his surprise at the moderate and patriotic attitude adopted by those men he had met in the centres. Some, he observed, had even voted for the National Government in 1931. While Powys-Greenwood viewed this as a positive development, others were more critical. That most famous of English socialist writers, George Orwell, visited a number of social service centres in Lancashire and Yorkshire during 1936. Recalling his experiences in Road to Wigan Pier, Orwell spoke of there being a "nasty YMCA atmosphere" in many centres and concluded that the unemployed men who frequented them were "mostly of the cap touching type who tells you oilily that he is temperance and votes Conservative."⁹⁹ As a socialist it was unlikely that Orwell would take to such men, but the anger in his remark should not allow us to forget that the acceptance of such values by a section of the unemployed could not be taken for granted indefinitely, and thus had to be continually defended and nurtured in the occupational clubs.

This is not to say that the occupational clubs only attracted unemployed workers who were of a conservative disposition. The NCSS continually argued that the centres contained men of all shades of opinion, and were thus free from any specific bias. In seeking to discourage class militancy the social service centres undoubtedly sought the participation of men who remained loyal to the Labour Party and TUC. However, given this objective, it is hardly surprising that the occupational movement had little time for those who sympathised with the militant NUWM. In his book, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, the Secretary of the NUWM, Wal Hannington, revealed that the management of occupational clubs were "openly hostile" to members of his organisation who were viewed as "troublemakers" and refused membership for engaging in propaganda against both the National Government and the voluntary

⁹⁹ G. Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier, (London: Penguin 1989), pp 76 -77.

movement.¹⁰⁰ This observation clearly contradicts the centres claim that they were free of political bias, and also highlights how voluntary action refused to view politics in narrow party terms. For the NCSS and the local charitable committees it was important to show the unemployed that their plight could be eased within the existing economic and social order, regardless of the Communist argument that unemployment was a problem caused by the bankruptcy of capitalist society.

This attempt to defuse the anger of the unemployed was not without its ideological difficulties. Mention was made earlier of elements within the business community who felt that the occupational drive encouraged idleness. By 1938 similar concerns were being more openly expressed within voluntary circles. The Pilgrim Trust was concerned that donations from the prosperous were sapping the character of some club members. Men Without Work recognised that there was something of value in bringing a prosperous firm or town into contact with a club in the depressed areas through funding, although this should not be allowed to undermine the men's own efforts. According to the Report this had already occurred in several Durham clubs where donations from adopting bodies had "pauperised their beneficiaries" by undermining initiative and effort.¹⁰¹ Men Without Work also claimed that in prosperous towns like Leicester and Deptford there was a real danger of clubs encouraging some younger men to acquiesce in long term unemployment. It quoted one warden from a Leicester centre who spoke of the need to deal with "difficult" members that were part of city's "residual problem".¹⁰² This implied that, in the face of an improving economic situation, a conflict was emerging between societal benevolence on the one hand, and the needs of the labour market on the other.

¹⁰⁰ W Hannington, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, (London: Gollancz 1937), p 213.

¹⁰¹ Men Without Work, p 283.

¹⁰² Ibid, 326.

The difficulties voluntarism faced in imposing a routine on the unemployed was revealed by S.P.B. Mais, the travel writer who toured the country visiting schemes for the BBC programme, SOS. In January 1933 Mais spoke of an occupational centre in Felling on Tyneside where the alertness and independence of some members was a contrast to an indisciplined group of youths "who tumbled out of bed late and had no sense of time at all."¹⁰³ Four weeks later Mais visited Leicester where, after visiting one centre, he complained about 17 and 18 year olds who sat aimlessly in front of a fire, occasionally rising to smash a chair or piece of furniture. Not only did these youths refuse to mend what they smashed, but they also resisted any attempt to make them "turn a spade" to a piece of derelict land outside.¹⁰⁴

Discipline was also a problem in instances where there was supposedly little hope of future employment for older men. This applied to the Subsistence Production Society created by Peter Scott in Cwmavon, South Wales, during 1935. The Society aimed to give older men the opportunity to raise their living standards by purchasing, at cost price, clothes and food produced by the society. With the support of the Special Areas Commissioner, the membership gradually increased from 8 to 377 between 1935 and 1938. In January of the latter year a Times leader noted that this increase in membership had been accompanied by a growth in slacking and pilfering which had forced the organisers to rely upon expulsion in some cases.¹⁰⁵ This problem of discipline was also acknowledged by Marie Jahoda who criticised those that joined for short periods in order to buy cheap products without making any real contribution through work.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, according to Jahoda, the problem of bad debts had become a serious administrative and economic difficulty.

¹⁰³ The Listener, 25th January, 1933, p 118.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 8th February, 1933, p 250.

¹⁰⁵ The Times, January, 13th, 1938, p 13.

¹⁰⁶ M. Jahoda, 'Unemployed Men at Work', in D. Fryer and P. Ullah, Unemployed People. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), pp 1 - 73.

All in all the existence of mass unemployment in the inter-war period was a challenge for both charity and the state. The commitment of inter-war governments to holding down public expenditure was always likely to provide considerable scope for voluntary social action. This could be seen in the work of the COS and the Personal Service League which spent considerable time and money supplementing state provision through the distribution of clothes, bedding and other forms of material assistance. The state's commitment to orthodox economics was also a factor in the cabinet's decision to fund the occupational centre drive, although it would be wrong to view this development as simply an attempt to find a cheap means of keeping men fit for re-entering the labour market. Middle-class voluntarism was not devoid of ideology, and so was used to portray unemployment as an opportunity for national unity. As was the case during war, reconstruction and the general strike, voluntarism placed itself at the service of the existing order and thus entered the arena of political controversy.

Although the occupational centres and other forms of inter-war voluntary activity touched the lives of only a fraction of the unemployed, a considerable amount of debate was generated on the left about how to respond to such initiatives. In the next chapter we shall look at the arguments and actions of those left-wing activists and unemployed workers who rejected voluntarist ideas of citizenship and community; viewing them as an attempt to shore up the economic system which had created unemployment in the first place. This position shall be contrasted with the attitude of the labour and trade union leadership.

CHAPTER SIX: VOLUNTARISM, THE LEFT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

While the last chapter concentrated on analysing the objectives behind voluntary work amongst the unemployed, this chapter will examine left-wing views of occupational schemes. An attempt will be made to contrast the views found within the TUC and Labour Party with those of the National Unemployed Workers Movement and the Communist Party of Great Britain. It is well known that sharp disagreements existed between these organisations on a number of issues relating to unemployment, including the question of protest action through hunger marches and demonstrations. As it was argued in the last chapter that voluntary schemes were partly motivated by a desire to discourage this form of extra-parliamentary politics, the pages ahead will look at how the difference in outlook between the moderate and militant wings of labour influenced the left's thinking about occupational initiatives.

The official labour movement - which consists of the TUC and Labour Party - has been criticised by the Marxist writer Ralph Miliband for failing to lead a movement of protest on behalf of the unemployed. In his history of the Labour Party, Parliamentary Socialism, Miliband notes that the TUC was willing to do little more for the unemployed than encourage local trades councils to set up unemployment associations in which individuals engaged in recreational activities.¹ The moderation criticised by Miliband was clearly visible in February 1933 when the TUC organised its only national demonstration on the unemployment issue. On this occasion the Secretary of the militant NUWM, Wal Hannington, was refused permission by the organisers to speak from any of the official rostrums in Hyde Park.² Left-wing writers like Miliband have also criticised the Labour Party, arguing that, although its Annual Conference was willing to pass resolutions against the means test, the leadership's commitment to parliamentary politics prevented it from

¹ R. Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961).

² J. Stevenson & C. Cook, The Slump, p 201.

encouraging agitation outwith the House of Commons.³ Perhaps the clearest example of this conservatism can be drawn from the 1936 Labour Party Conference when the MP Ellen Wilkinson was heavily criticised for her involvement in the famous Jarrow March of that year. Despite the exemplary behaviour of the marchers, and the organisers' claim that the event was non-political, Wilkinson was rebuked on the grounds that marches were a communist tactic which threatened social order.⁴

But other commentators have been more sympathetic to the official labour movement. In a study of society and politics during the depression John Stevenson and Chris Cook agree that traditional labour institutions failed to cope with the unemployment situation for much of the 1930s. Nevertheless, they argue that there were a number of obstacles which prevented the TUC from launching the forthright campaign which writers like Miliband would like to have seen. Firstly, it was difficult for unions to retain links with the unemployed as they "were essentially organisations of men in work, at their plant, factory or other workforce, and they were not adapted either in attitude or organisation to minister to the out of work."⁵ Secondly, the financial situation facing many unions, including the militant AEU, made it difficult to offer exemptions or concessions on union dues to the unemployed. Moreover, even when the TUC leadership did try to retain contact with the jobless, its efforts met with limited success at the local level. Although in 1932 the General Council encouraged local affiliates to set up unemployment associations, by 1937 it was complaining that the same trades councils were catering for the jobless year after year, with the result that the total number of associations had fluctuated around the 100 mark for some time.⁶

³ R. Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism, p 212.

⁴ J. Stevenson & C. Cook, The Slump, p 207.

⁵ Ibid, p 177.

⁶ Report of Proceedings of the 69th Annual Trades Union Congress, 1937, p 116.

The concern shown by the TUC and Labour Party for public order was always likely to work against extra-parliamentary activity, and this distinguishes the official labour movement from the NUWM which, in the words of Henry Pelling, "was the one body which agitated fiercely on behalf of the unemployed as such."⁷ Formed in 1921 as a militant organisation dedicated to fighting benefit cuts and preventing the use of the unemployed as blackleg labour in industrial disputes, the NUWM campaigned relentlessly for the unemployed during the depression. Despite facing the hostility of the official labour movement throughout much of the 1920s and the thirties for its links with the Communist Party, the NUWM struggled throughout the latter decade to keep the unemployment issue near the top of the political agenda. At the local level it was frequently involved in disturbances outside the offices of public assistance committees, like that in Birkenhead where, during September 1932, four days of unrest forced an increase in relief scales and the introduction of a town public works scheme paid at trade union rates.⁸ At the national level the NUWM organised every national hunger march in the thirties with the exception of the 1936 Jarrow March, and, in early 1935, it was involved in the nation-wide protests surrounding the cuts in relief introduced by the new Unemployment Assistance Board.⁹ Although the NUWM never appealed to more than a fraction of unemployed men and women, it was, according to the historian Richard Croucher, an option for those who believed in actively resisting their situation.¹⁰

Even when the NUWM became less critical of the TUC after the adoption of the united front line by the communist movement in 1933, marches

⁷ H. Pelling, The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile, (London: Adams & Charles, 1958) p 64. For material on the NUWM see R. Croucher, We Refuse to Starve in Silence, J. Stevenson and C. Cook, The Slump, pp 163 - 185, R. Hayburn, 'The Police and the Hunger Marchers', International Review of Social History, Vol 17, 1972 pp 625 - 644, and 'The NUWM, 1921 - 1936: A Re-appraisal', International Review of Social History, Vol 28, 1983, pp 279 - 295,

⁸ See R. Croucher, We Refuse to Starve in Silence, pp 133 - 135.

⁹ Ibid, pp 167 - 171.

¹⁰ Ibid, p 204.

and demonstrations continued to be frowned upon by the leadership of the official labour movement. But if a sharp and clear disagreement existed between the Labour leadership and the NUWM over this issue, it would seem that, on the surface at least, the same could not be said for attitudes towards state-sponsored occupational activities. In the upper echelons of the labour and trade union movement it was felt that the promotion of voluntary work amongst the unemployed was, amongst other things, a means by which the state could pretend to show concern for the jobless whilst avoiding a commitment to provide work or adequate maintenance. Similar criticisms were also heard in the more militant circles of the NUWM and CPGB, although here greater emphasis was placed upon the role of the centres in discouraging protest against the Government. With this in mind two main themes will emerge in the pages ahead: firstly, although the criticisms levelled at voluntarism by labour and TUC leaders and communists may have overlapped at some points, it was the latter that produced the most consistently hostile and ideologically coherent criticisms; whilst secondly, and partly as a reflection of this, the Labour and TUC leaderships were unable to sustain a position of outright opposition to voluntarism, with the result that some collaboration did occur at local, regional and national levels.

The decision by the Ministry of Labour to use the NCSS as an agent for co-ordinating voluntary work amongst the unemployed was met by criticism from both the industrial and political wings of the labour movement. Given their commitment to constitutional politics, the arguments of Labour MPs were always more likely to focus upon the relationship between voluntarism and Government policy than the prospects for extra parliamentary struggle amongst unemployed workers. Within the Labour Party there was a fear that the Government was using charity as a substitute for a constructive economic programme. Although the Labour leader, George Lansbury, recognised the value of attempting to alleviate mental distress, he also believed that the House

should seek a remedy to the problem through public works rather than "reading rooms or places, where men may mend their clothes or the boots of their children."¹¹ Lansbury's statement was echoed on the Labour back benches by the MP for Spennymoor, County Durham, J. Batey who argued that the Government appeared to be using the NCSS and its occupational centres to justify their own inactivity on the unemployment problem.¹² This was also the view of the Labour Party and TUC Journal, the Labour Magazine, which greeted the Government's announcement of a £10,000 grant to the NCSS with the defiant claim that the labour movement would have nothing to do with this "shirking of responsibility" on the part of the state. According to the Magazine it was a disgrace that the Government was unwilling to sanction certain local authority public works schemes at a time when it was making "unemployment a matter of private charity."¹³

The suspicion within labour circles that charity was being used as a substitute for meaningful action carried over into the mid and late 1930s and was used by the Labour MP, Arthur Jenkins, in his attack of the Eastern Valley Subsistence Production Society. As was shown in the last chapter this South Wales initiative was the idea of the Quaker Peter Scott who hoped to give older men in Cwmavon the opportunity to purchase goods produced by the scheme for their own sustenance rather than for open sale. Jenkins visited the Society in October 1936 and, after noting the absence of unemployed control in the running of affairs, expressed his concern that people might come to view such schemes as a solution to the unemployment problem. If this became an acceptable view it would, he suggested, act as a barrier against the argument that the state should either locate industries in the distressed areas, or provide a rate of unemployment benefit adequate for healthy maintenance.¹⁴ In 1939 Ellen

¹¹ Hansard, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, Vol 272, Nov 22 to Dec 9, 1932, Col 488.

¹² Ibid, Vol 292, July 9th to July 31st, 1934, Col 1842.

¹³ The Labour Magazine Vol XI, No 8, December 1932.

¹⁴ Report by Arthur Jenkins, MP, PRO / MH 57 / 365.

Wilkinson made a similar point about occupational centres by suggesting that they were simply a means of teaching the unemployed how to use their leisure time, rather than tackling the unemployment problem directly.¹⁵

Labour's criticisms of voluntarism also referred to the demand for adequate maintenance. The TUC and Labour Party argued that if the Community could not organise resources to provide work for willing citizens, then it had a responsibility to maintain the unemployed. The economy measures of 1931 were viewed as a gross attack on the living standards of the jobless, and, with this in mind, the TUC General Council refused to participate in the work of the NCSS as it could not condone the Government's attempt to place responsibility for unemployed welfare onto the shoulders of a voluntary body.¹⁶ As the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, Ernest Bevin, remarked the National Government had conveniently issued the unemployed with a small charitable handout shortly after it had cut unemployment benefit and imposed the means test. This was, he felt, merely the "old dodge of robbing a man and then turning around and trying to make him believe you are being kind to him."¹⁷

This argument was acceptable to figures within the Parliamentary Labour Party like George Dagger who told the Commons that the Ministry of Labour's £10,000 grant to the NCSS had to be placed alongside a means test which robbed the unemployed of £1 million per year, and a cut in unemployment benefit which claimed another £12.8 million.¹⁸ George Lansbury also drew a connection between social policy and charity, especially with regard to the supply of clothing and other basic needs. He told the Commons of his outrage at seeing railway posters appealing for cast off-

¹⁵ E. Wilkinson, The Town that was Murdered: The Life Story of Jarrow, (London: Gollancz, 1939) p 242.

¹⁶ Report of Proceedings of the 65th Annual Trades Union Congress, 1933, p 120.

¹⁷ The Daily Herald, December 22nd, 1932, p 11.

¹⁸ Hansard, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, Vol 274, Nov 7th to Feb 24th, 1932 - 33, Col 1241.

clothing, before concluding that it was "disgusting and a disgrace" that private charity should shoulder this responsibility.¹⁹ Both Dagger and Lansbury were suggesting, then, that voluntarism should not be used to hide cuts in provision like those introduced in the economy orders of 1931. The unemployed deserved rights as citizens rather than the harassment of the means test or the stigma of private charity. Any attempt to use voluntarism as smokescreen to hide the economy orders which were repeatedly condemned at Labour Party Conferences in the early 1930s, had to be rejected.²⁰

The harsh language used by Lansbury and Bevin suggests that the NCSS had few friends in the TUC and Labour Party. This is supported by the claims of many volunteers and their supporters. Although the NCSS's 1939 Report, Out of Adversity, denied that centres were being used to sell goods and undercut local tradesmen, it was also forced to admit that co-operation with the trade unions had been rather incomplete, thus forcing some men to choose between loyalty to the labour movement and membership of a club.²¹ Hilda Jennings made a similar point about the Brynmawr scheme in South Wales. Pointing to the Labour Party's control of both the Urban District Council and the Town's representation on the Breconshire County Council, she argued that the class conscious outlook not only made the community appear less important than the Labour interest, but also "diminished the importance of pioneer adventures which were conducive to a healthy social life".²² Indeed, the labour interest had had an adverse effect on Peter Scott's plans to "beautify the town" by using unemployed labour to construct a swimming pool out of waste land. Jennings noted how fears that voluntary labour would weaken union bargaining power had adversely influenced public opinion, and limited the supply of volunteers.²³

¹⁹ Ibid, 1207.

²⁰ A resolution opposing the orders and re-affirming the Party's commitment to work or maintenance was passed at the 1932 Conference. See report of the 32nd Annual Conference of the Labour Party, 1932, p 172.

²¹ NCSS, Out of Adversity, p 39.

²² H. Jennings, Brynmawr, p 82.

²³ Ibid, p 207.

This depressing situation was exacerbated by the local Labour Party which, under the influence of the Miners Federation, remained hostile in its attitude. The same hostility was directed towards the later Eastern Valley Subsistence Production Society. Marie Jahoda noted considerable early opposition from the local Labour Party and the trade unions who wished to avoid "any connection with the Government" through the scheme, and feared the introduction of compulsory work in the society as a return for unemployment benefit.²⁴

Likewise, the labour movement's newspaper, the Daily Herald, was harshly critical of state support for voluntary initiatives. In December 1932 it published an editorial entitled 'Charity is Not Enough' which supported the decision of the TUC General Council not to participate in the work of the NCSS.²⁵ According to the editorial it appeared that a Government which had failed to organise industry, and had reduced maintenance, was now shifting its responsibility onto the shoulders of private individuals by granting a paltry sum of £10,000 to the NCSS.²⁶ In January 1933 the Daily Herald also questioned the competence of the NCSS to develop occupational work. Noting that both the TUC and the Christian Social Council had criticised the occupational centre movement, it accused the NCSS of hopelessly bungling its co-ordinating task before calling upon the Government to "wind up the occupational farce" altogether and face its responsibilities towards the unemployed.²⁷ Furthermore, relations between the paper and the Council were not encouraged by A. D. Lindsay's contribution to the "Time to Spare" radio programme in July 1934. As Paddy Scannell has shown, the inclusion of Lindsay was a concession to a National Government which felt it had been treated unfairly in earlier contributions by unemployed men and women.²⁸ Lindsay's supposedly balanced end to the series argued that strains on the official machinery had often

²⁴ M. Jahoda, 'Unemployed Men at Work' p 15.

²⁵ The Daily Herald, December 22nd, 1932, p 8.

²⁶ Ibid, p 8.

²⁷ Ibid, 28th January, 1933, p 8.

²⁸ P. Scannell, 'Broadcasting and the Politics of Unemployment', 1930 - 1935, p 21.

resulted in individuals receiving less help than the authorities were willing to give them. For the Daily Herald, however, this was an inadequate and in some respects dangerous conclusion which suggested that proper provision was being made for the unemployed, despite the reduction in unemployment benefit and the application of "poor law standards" to those who had exhausted their insurance entitlement."²⁹

Criticisms of voluntary schemes were also found in the more intellectually heavyweight New Statesman and Nation. In December 1932 it published an article entitled 'Poverty and Charity' which argued that the Government's unwillingness to introduce a public works programme, together with the uneasy consciences exhibited by its supporters, had resulted in the rediscovery of charity as a national policy. The New Statesman noted that the work of the Society of Friends and the NCSS had been going on for some time, but with the support of the Conservative press and "the old school of professional philanthropist", an attempt was now being made to multiply activities which were a mere "bucketful in an ocean" when compared with the overall problem.

Nonetheless, despite the criticisms levelled at voluntarism by Lansbury, Bevin and the New Statesman, and the opposition mounted by Labour to some local schemes, it would be wrong to suggest that the attitude of the entire working-class movement was a totally hostile one. There was in fact an element of ambivalence in labour thinking about voluntary schemes, and this was clearly revealed in the views of George Lansbury whose Christian pacifism had always rejected the class-war road to socialism. Lansbury placed alongside his condemnation of charity as a substitute for social justice admiration for the work of the Quakers, the NCSS and others who were trying to keep "heart and soul" in the Unemployed.³⁰ Moreover, he even wrote the introduction to an NCSS

²⁹ The Daily Herald, July 2nd 1934, p 8.

³⁰ Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Oct 18 to Nov 4th, Vol 269, Col 2129.

pamphlet entitled, Unemployment and Opportunity, arguing that although there was a real need for the Government to solve the economic and social evils of the time, it was wrong to stand aside and do nothing in the face of the mental distress afflicting the unemployed.³¹ Nor did Lansbury forget the voluntary sector in his 1936 work My England. Here he told his readers of his appreciation for the work of the Society of Friends and NCSS "in so far as it helps the unemployed man and woman to realise that they are not alone."³² Charity was, therefore, a valuable counter to the immediate problem of demoralisation, even if it was no alternative to either a constructive economic programme or the means of living a decent life. The work of the NCSS was, on its own, an admirable attempt to "soften the horrors of unemployment."³³

If anything Lansbury's stance on the occupational centre movement was closer to the view of a liberal like Violet Markham than it was to the militant Marxist position of Wal Hannington. During April 1934 Markham wrote a letter to The Times echoing Lansbury's initial criticism by arguing that the Government should raise an emergency industrial loan for the depressed areas rather than play "around indefinitely with occupational centres and recreation rooms."³⁴ In May 1934 she told Neville Chamberlain of her fear that charitable appeals could act as a "dangerous narcotic to the national conscience" by misleading the public into thinking that something constructive was being done for the jobless.³⁵ Yet although Markham was worried about Government misuse of charity, she did not view the efforts of the NCSS in a totally negative light. Writing to Peter Scott she praised the NCSS for developing a new forward-looking leisure technique and for saving at least some individuals from the demoralisation of enforced idleness.³⁶ Once again it appeared there was

³¹ The Daily Herald, November 24th, 1932, p 11.

³² G. Lansbury, My England (London: Selwyn & Blount, 1936), p 86.

³³ *Ibid*, p 86.

³⁴ The Times, 19th April, 1934, p 15.

³⁵ V. Markham, Letter to Neville Chamberlain, 17th May 1934, Violet Markham Papers, Unemployment, 5 / 9.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

nothing intrinsically wrong with voluntary attempts to relieve mental distress amongst the unemployed. For Markham, like Lansbury, the problem did not stem from voluntarism's good works but rather their manipulation by a Government seeking to justify its inertia in economic policy.

Although the TUC refused to associate itself with the work of the NCSS, and was constantly on its guard for evidence of centres undermining trade union principles by selling goods on the open market, it did grant local trades councils autonomy in determining their attitude towards schemes if there was no evidence of such practices. Indeed, the General Council stressed in 1933 that it did not wish to "infringe upon the rights of local trades councils or trades unionists to co-operate in local schemes if thought desirable."³⁷ It also pointed out that even though many trades councils had refused to associate themselves with local committees, a number of affiliates were working amicably with local councils of social service. According to the results of a circular issued to trades councils in March 1933, 60 bodies were in direct association with social service committees as opposed to 105 who were not.³⁸

Moreover, the General Council was willing to encourage its own unemployment associations to co-operate with elements in the voluntary sector. In defending the setting up of associations, the Labour Magazine argued that unemployed workers should not be left to the tender mercies of "charity mongers and well intentioned people whose ideas do not rise above the bun and blanket stage."³⁹ However, for the General Council this clearly did not apply to the Society of Friends whose allotments scheme was frequently recommended to local associations. The support of the Pilgrim Trust and National Playing Fields Association was also enlisted in the distribution of sports equipment to trades councils for use by the jobless. The General Council estimated in its Annual Report for 1933 that, as a result, 262 footballs, 60 sets of cricket gear

³⁷ Report of Proceedings of the 65th Annual Trades Union Congress, p 101.

³⁸ Ibid, p 121.

³⁹ The Labour Magazine, December 1932, p 349.

and 43 pairs of boxing gloves had been granted to unemployment associations.⁴⁰ With its eyes on the left of the political spectrum, the Labour Magazine admitted that, although these activities were mere palliatives, there was no truth in the allegation, carefully fostered in certain circles, that they were intended to "dope" the unemployed.⁴¹

In Scotland co-operation between voluntarism and the Labour Movement took place at the national level as the General Council of the Scottish Trade Union Congress agreed to place representatives on the Scottish Council for Community Service during Unemployment. When justifying this decision at the 1932 Congress, the General Council adopted a stance similar to that of Lansbury: whilst it recognised the need for a constructive economic policy on the part of the Government, it also felt that social advantage could be derived from properly organised attempts to occupy the minds of unemployed men and women through educational and recreational activities. Having established that such activity was useful in itself, the General Council fended off criticism from some local trades councils by suggesting that the STUC did not possess the necessary resources or machinery to organise such provision itself.⁴²

Furthermore, as early as 1932 the Council tried to appease its critics by arguing that representation within voluntary circles would help minimise the dangers occupational centres might cause trade unionism. For the Council co-operation at the national level made it possible to guard against both the production of cheap semi-skilled labour and the sale of goods on the open market.⁴³ At the 1936 Congress this position was reiterated by one delegate, J. Crawford, who suggested that the TUC's decision to ignore the NCSS had denied the English labour movement the safeguards against anti-unionism that were gained through exercising guidance over community service.⁴⁴ In 1938

⁴⁰ Report of Proceedings of the 65th Annual Trades Union Congress, p 121-122.

⁴¹ The Labour Magazine, December 1932, p 349.

⁴² Annual Report of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, 1933, p 51.

⁴³ Ibid, p 51.

⁴⁴ Annual Report of the Scottish Trade Union Congress, 1936, p 146.

the General Council argued that the recent increase from 2 to 4 in its representation on the Council for Community Service had re-inforced this safeguard.

But many trades unionists were critical of labour movement co-operation with the occupational centres. The May 1933 Annual Conference of Trades Councils in Birmingham may have supported the TUC leadership's decision to avoid the NCSS, but it was also concerned that the freedom granted to local councils by the General Council could be used to co-operate with misguided social service committees.⁴⁵ In Scotland the General Council's participation in voluntary work was attacked on a variety of grounds, some of which were identical to the criticisms put forward by the NUWM. At the 1933 Congress, Mr F. Stephenson of the Glasgow Trades Council, described the whole atmosphere in the centres as one of "monarchy" encouraged by pictures of royalty and captains of the territorial forces. It was regrettable, then, that the STUC leadership had fitted itself into the plans of a capitalist class which wished to "stem the militant tide of action" amongst the unemployed.⁴⁶ In addition, the Congress heard from those who rejected the argument that membership of the Scottish Council would influence voluntary attitudes towards trade unionism. One delegate from the National Union of Vehicle Builders argued that two members on an executive of 15 would "cut little ice", and were thus "figureheads with absolutely no power" who had discredited Scotland in the eyes of British trade unionists.⁴⁷

Communists were also critical of the leadership of the official labour movement in this context. As a result of the "class against class" line adopted by the Comintern in 1928, the Communist Party had adopted a bitterly hostile attitude towards the TUC and Labour Party. On the 28th December, 1932, this hostility informed a Daily Worker article entitled, 'How the Labour Party helped

⁴⁵ Report of the Proceedings of the 65th Annual TUC Conference, 1933, p 101.

⁴⁶ Annual report of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, 1936, p 89.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p 93.

the Social Service fraud,' which claimed that the TUC General Council's decision not to participate in the work of the NCSS had caused considerable confusion amongst those Labour leaders who saw some merit in voluntary action. Such figures included George Lansbury and the Secretary of the Manchester Trades Council, A. A. Purcell, who was involved in plans to create an unemployment centre under the auspices of the Lord Mayor. But the paper levelled its fiercest criticism at the TUC General Council for issuing a circular to local trades councils recommending the work of some local charities. Consequently, the decision not to co-operate with the NCSS was described "as a feeble imitation of the policy of the NUWM" brought on by rank and file opposition to charity.⁴⁸

All in all the willingness of the Labour Party leadership and TUC General Council to see some value in voluntary action left them vulnerable to criticism from local trades unionists, communists and some of the unemployed themselves. There emerged from within these circles arguments against voluntarism that were more militant and ideologically consistent than those found within official labour circles. It was a left-wing writer, Harold Stovin, who set about constructing a Marxist critique of the citizenship and community ethos which, as we saw in the last chapter, inspired leading figures in the occupational centre movement. In his work, Totem: The Exploitation of Youth, Stovin noted that the NCSS was behind the "community mongering and fellowship" which was being paraded as both an ideal of conduct and a remedy for social ills.⁴⁹ Some, he continued, were even of the opinion that class barriers were being dismantled by members of the Royal Family meeting unemployed miners on tours of voluntary schemes in the distressed areas. This was clearly logical to those who laboured under the illusion that a mere veneer of comradeship through occasional conversations between members of different

⁴⁸ The Daily Worker, 28th December, 1932, p 1.

⁴⁹ H. Stovin, Totem: The Exploitation of Youth, (London: Methuen & Co, 1935), p 63.

classes was evidence of a classless society.⁵⁰ Within this argument lay the crux of the opposition between the Marxist left and the NCSS. Class antagonism arising from the material reality of capitalism could not be overcome by transferring ideas of community to the sphere of conversations or leisure activities. In fact, according to Stovin, such arguments were merely an attempt to salvage the very system which perpetuated class division, unemployment and poverty.

A commitment to extra-parliamentary action featured heavily in the NUWM's critique of the occupational centres. Hannington denied that voluntary schemes countered the corrosion of idleness, suggesting instead that they encouraged political passivity amongst the jobless. This in itself was a form of demoralisation which robbed unemployed workers of courage and self-reliance. Of course Hannington could point to plenty of instances of such courage. In 1931 the NUWM had launched a determined drive to mobilise the unemployed against the economy measures of the National Government, and this was followed by unrest in a number of cities which continued into 1932 and culminated in the October hunger march and mass demonstration in Hyde Park. As this upsurge in direct action provided the background to the Ministry of Labour's decision to support the development of occupational centres, Hannington argued that the state was involved in a cunning attempt to "sap the unemployed's spirit for political activity".⁵¹ As unemployment was caused by an economic disorder which lay within the boundaries of human action, there could, he contended, be no justification for diverting the jobless away from the struggle against their situation.

The 1933 NUWM conference took up this theme by calling for the organisation of a social life which would draw the unemployed into struggle.⁵² A resolution presented to the 1934 Conference noted that progress had been

⁵⁰ Ibid, p 114.

⁵¹ W. Hannington, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, p 197.

⁵² The Daily Worker, April 18th, 1933, p 3.

made over the previous year in the development of the organisation's social life, and this was indeed a valuable counter to the "anti working-class influence of the social service schemes". The resolution also noted that the large numbers who had been drawn into the "centres and clubs of the ruling class" revealed an on going demand for such provision, and this placed an onus on the movement to continue to develop similar activities that could help draw individuals away from the charitable schemes.⁵³

The role played by charity in attempting to pacify unemployed workers was also noted by some well-known left-wing writers who sympathised with the NUWM. The communist writer Allen Hutt took up Hannington's point about demoralisation in his work, The Condition of the Working Class in Britain. For Hutt the essence of demoralisation was distraction from the class struggle, and this was given the widest encouragement in the activities of the churches, Quakers and other "charity mongers" who wished to "dope" the unemployed.⁵⁴ George Orwell also believed that the occupational centres were an attempt to keep the unemployed quiet. Most of the socialists he had spoken to on his tour of Lancashire and Yorkshire denounced the movement on this basis. Like Hannington, Orwell recognised the importance of a social life for the unemployed, under working-class control, and after praising the NUWM as an organisation built upon the efforts and pennies of the jobless themselves, he hoped its politics could be combined with the sort of activities carried out in the occupational centre.⁵⁵

The emphasis placed upon direct action by the NUWM did not mean that, even in the early 1930s, there was no overlap in the criticisms directed at voluntarism by the social democrats and communists. Wal Hannington was as capable as Lansbury or Bevin of drawing a correlation between occupational

⁵³ NUWM, The Fight Against Unemployment: Our Plan for Action, (London: NUWM, 1934) p 6 - 7.

⁵⁴ A. Hutt, The Condition of the Working Class in Britain, (London: Martin Lawrence, 1933), p 46.

⁵⁵ G. Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier, p 77.

schemes and Government economic and social policy. The Secretary of the NUWM maintained that voluntary schemes helped the government to evade its duty to provide work, and also encouraged it to express questionable sympathy for the jobless shortly after the economy measures of 1931.⁵⁶ With regard to the employment provision, Hannington noted that the Special Areas Commissioner, Malcolm Stewart, had praised the Eastern Valley Subsistence Production Society as an attempt to find some solution to the "hard core of unemployed". This implied that the provision of normal work for men in the valley was, "out of the question", and so the subsistence schemes were a suitable means of "dealing with the problem."⁵⁷ When it came to social welfare, Hannington pointed out that those Government figures like Ramsay Macdonald and Henry Betterton who promoted occupational schemes were the same men who had imposed hardship on many families through the means test and the introduction of a 10% cut in unemployment benefit. Moreover, despite all its plans to supposedly improve the lives of the unemployed, the NCSS had failed to support any of the organised attempts to force the Government into providing work, abolishing the means test or increasing benefit scales. This was, Hannington felt, undoubtedly one of the reasons why supporters of the National Government found its activities so appealing. As he remarked:

It was not long before we had the spectacle of Lord this and Lady that, mayors and alderman, Tory members of parliament and night club patrons, chairmen of courts and referees and means test officers, local magistrates and police superintendents, all doing their bit in opening new temples of leisure for the unemployed. As though in the night the leopard had changed its spots.⁵⁸

It should be remembered that the NUWM was also concerned about the impact of voluntary social action on trade unionism. This included the fear that

⁵⁶ W. Hannington, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, p 206.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p 211.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p 196.

encouraging men to work without pay undermined trade union principles, even if the centres were not training men or women, or selling goods to the public as some trades councils feared. The insistence that men should work for wages at trade union rates was one of the arguments Hannington used against the Eastern Valley Subsistence Production Society. When visiting Cwmavon in 1936, Hannington spoke to large numbers of unemployed workers most of whom felt that money from the Special Areas Commissioner would have been better spent on schemes which provided proper waged employment.⁵⁹ It was also acknowledged within the NUWM that some occupational centres were involved in the recruitment of blackleg labour during strikes. In 1932 one centre in St Pancras told its members that there was employment available at a Firestone tyre factory in Brentford which was involved in a bitter industrial dispute, while in Birmingham's Gas Street centre a representative from a Watford firm hit by a strike visited with the intention of recruiting blacklegs.⁶⁰

The above survey of left opinion reveals that both Labour and communist circles had their criticisms of voluntary social action amongst the unemployed. Some of these criticisms like, for example, the relationship between government economic policy and voluntarism were found in all sections of the left, whilst others, including the role of occupational centres in discouraging direct action by the unemployed, were much more likely to be found in communist and militant trade union circles. In addition, the NCSS received a degree of co-operation from elements within the official labour movement which, even if it was not as extensive as the volunteer would have liked, was condemned by the more class-conscious left.

For a section of the unemployed the criticisms levelled at the NCSS by the NUWM and some trade councils clearly made sense. This is revealed in contemporary accounts of unemployment. The Pilgrim Trust Report, Men

⁵⁹ Ibid, p 211.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p 208.

Without Work, spoke of the dole queue creating an unemployed community which generated opinions on the Unemployment Assistance Board and occupational clubs which were frequently criticised as "dope".⁶¹ Unemployed contempt for charity also surfaced in one or two of the contributions to Beales and Lambert's Memoirs of the Unemployed. One skilled engineer from the Midlands spoke of how he would rather receive food from friendly neighbours than "futile professional charity organisations",⁶² while a house painter from London attacked those "plastic, weak-minded and unscrupulous unemployed" individuals who were attracted by the "pretending to be nice variety" of social service scheme.⁶³ Moreover, in July 1933 an unemployed man wrote to the New Statesman describing the occupational centres as "graveyards" where the jobless could listen to speeches by well-fed individuals at a time when all hope of work had evaporated.⁶⁴ This mistrust was certainly present in some of the conversations Ellen Wilkinson had with unemployed men about the social service movement in Jarrow. There was, she noted, a kind of stigma attached to social service activities, especially amongst unemployed men at the local Labour club who despised everything connected with occupational centres.⁶⁵

We saw earlier that both Hilda Jennings and Marie Jahoda were aware of Labour Party opposition to voluntarism in South Wales. For Peter Scott there was the problem of opposition from the unemployed themselves. In 1933 he told S.P.B. Mais that many were adamantly refusing to give their labour power to voluntary schemes since it was the only thing they had left to sell.⁶⁶ Scott was also concerned about the aloofness of some voluntary helpers and the effect this was having on the unemployed. Speaking to a Conference on Distress in Monmouthshire and South Wales in 1933, he feared that helpers

⁶¹ Men Without Work, p 161.

⁶² L. Beales & R. S. Lambert, (eds), Memoirs of the Unemployed, (New York: Garland, 1985), p 75.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p 173.

⁶⁴ The New Statesman and Nation, July 1st 1933 p 11.

⁶⁵ E. Wilkinson, The Town that was Murdered: The Life Story of Jarrow, p 242.

⁶⁶ The Listener, February, 1st, 1933, p 163.

with lives of comfort and ease, and idealists from school or college, possessed a sense of superiority which instilled resentment in the jobless.⁶⁷ The Spectator noted this resentment in October 1935 when it spoke of the South Wales unemployed being "ferocious" in their opposition to voluntarism. Indeed, it felt this helped to explain why Peter Scott's plan to build a swimming pool in Brynmawr had attracted only a score of volunteers who faced stone throwing and cries of blackleg.⁶⁸

The ability of some individuals to act upon this sentiment was not lost on the Prince of Wales whose visits to voluntary schemes in the distressed areas were sometimes met by angry groups of unemployed men and women who viewed him as a supporter of the National Government. One unrehearsed incident from the November 1932 tour of Lancashire, which was widely reported in the left-wing press, involved an unemployed railway worker confronting the Prince over the harsh treatment he had faced under the means test.⁶⁹ To the anger of the Daily Worker and the NUWM, the Prince replied that such treatment was "hard luck". The inability of the Prince to deal with these political questions helped ensure that his 1933 tour of central Scotland did not pass without incident. In Airdrie police batons were drawn against those who greeted the patron of the NCSS with a counter demonstration, while at Bellshill a section of the unemployed protested by singing the International.⁷⁰ When visiting a local juvenile instruction centre in Cowdenbeath, the Prince was met by calls for the downfall of the National Government by those who viewed him as an ally of the Government.

Hannington's chapter on the social service centres in The Problem of the Distressed Areas refers to a number of instances in which his organisation clashed with volunteers for the loyalty of the unemployed. These ranged from

⁶⁷ Conference on Social Service in the Distressed Areas of South Wales and Monmouthshire, 1933, p 36.

⁶⁸ The Spectator, October 25th, 1935, p 660.

⁶⁹ The Daily Herald, November, 24th, 1932, p 1.

⁷⁰ Ibid, March 31st, 1933, p 11.

launching a propaganda campaign in Brentford against the centres' attempt to find jobs for Firestone's strike-afflicted tyre factory to opposing the attempts of wealthy landowners to utilise unemployed labour for work on their estates.⁷¹ Yet perhaps the most amusing example of the movement's winning over some of the unemployed stems from Stoke Newington where the borough's Mayor, Herbert Osmond, launched a campaign to build an occupational centre by calling a meeting of the local jobless. Supported on the platform by three vicars and what the Daily Worker described as, "a group of assorted local bigwigs", Osmond told the gathering that the council was unable to provide work, with the result that an occupational centre would be useful in preventing men from "lounging around the streets." At this point two members of the Hackney NUWM intervened and moved a resolution calling for local public works schemes and the abandonment of the proposed occupational centre. The refusal of the mayor to accept the motion was met with such derision from the audience that the platform was eventually forced to concede a vote. Although a handful of men were willing to support the centre, the overwhelming majority accepted the argument of the NUWM and opposed it. The Daily Worker took great pleasure in describing Osmond's reaction: "The mayor showed a little bit of temper. He got up and shouted: I am acting on the wishes of the Government, and whether you like it not this scheme is going through. You can all go now."⁷²

Overall, then, the left was united on some issues concerning voluntarism and divided on others. Both the labour movement leadership and the NUWM viewed voluntary projects as an inadequate substitute for a constructive economic and social policy and a possible means of weakening trade unionism. Yet the politics of the former were based upon a commitment to parliament and the wait for the return of a Labour government. This, together with the absence

⁷¹ W. Hannington, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, p 207.

⁷² The Daily Worker, March 31st, 1933 p 4.

of a class-war analysis in the thought of Lansbury and others, prompted some to argue that voluntary work amongst the unemployed was not entirely negative, especially in the short term. However, according to the NUWM, the CPGB and some local trades councils this position was unsatisfactory, as it overlooked the manner in which the ruling class was skilfully using charity as a means of discouraging direct action over the unemployment issue. Consequently, co-operation with the occupational movement was frowned upon and efforts were made to hinder the activities of volunteers. It is impossible to assess accurately the success of the NUWM's attempts to frustrate the NCSS; nevertheless there is evidence to suggest that the militant critique of the centres struck accord with at least some of those who were outwith Hannington's organisation.

CONCLUSION

This study has focused upon the part played by certain voluntary bodies in the satisfaction of welfare needs created by war, reconstruction and unemployment. Two main themes have emerged in the course of research. The first concerns voluntary relations with the state during a period of growth in statutory welfare provision, whilst the second suggests that, regardless of the twists and turns which characterised this relationship, voluntary bodies were united in emphasising the importance of citizenship and community when faced with war and class conflict. Some further elaboration on these points is called for in the remainder of this conclusion.

War, industrial unrest and unemployment not only placed new welfare demands upon the state, but also emphasised the importance of justifying government actions in the face of internal hostility. As we saw during World War One, the needs of groups ranging from servicemen's dependants to Belgian refugees stimulated charity as government delay in the payment of allowances or the provision of hospitality left room for agency provision. However, the interplay between both sectors in social service delivery should not allow us to forget the wider ideological function performed by voluntarism: its role in encouraging cross-class identification with the war effort. The appeals of the National Relief Fund, the Red Cross, the War Camps Library and the YMCA may have satisfied a variety of material and mental welfare needs, but they also encouraged people to identify with the state and military struggle as servicemen, their dependants and injured comrades were all considered suitable objects for patriotic voluntary action.

This dualism in opportunity also carried over into the years of post-war reconstruction. Chapter three showed how areas such as training and employment were not only concerns for state departments like the Ministries of Pensions and Labour but also a variety of voluntary bodies including the SSHS, the YMCA and the British Legion. Nevertheless, the plight of the discharged

serviceman also posed wider political problems for voluntarism. The supposed unity of the war years had been replaced by class tensions, involving grievances amongst ex-servicemen over homes and employment. The attempts by some socialists to exploit this anger for purposes considered detrimental to the national interest were a concern for post-war military charity. Hence those organisations which came together to form the British Legion in 1921 combined their welfare activities with anti-Bolshevik campaigns geared towards securing the loyalty of the ex-soldier for the crown. In addition, even outwith the realm of military charity, voluntary groups were unable to avoid the wider social and political scene. The COS, the NCSS and the YMCA may have stressed the importance of co-ordinating social service, but they also advocated, and at times actively organised, joint initiatives between capital and labour. Whatever differences may have existed between these organisations regarding the correct balance between state and voluntary provision, the deployment of the term community united them in their response to post-war industrial conflict and the existence of the mass franchise.

This was also the case with the General and coal strikes of 1926. The nine-day strike involved volunteers from the YMCA and Red Cross in the maintenance of supplies. Yet this practical activity was accompanied by considerable discussion within the voluntary world about the industrial lessons that could be learnt from the events of May. Like war and reconstruction, the General Strike encouraged voluntarism to go beyond the confines of welfare and examine the question of social and political stability. For voluntarism, and indeed the state, this latest bout of industrial unrest was a challenge to the idea of a common good which united social classes. The response of those groups who surveyed the situation re-iterated the theme of national community, even if some found it impossible to do this without attacking the TUC for damaging the national interest through strike action. This question of social stability took an even sharper turn in the relief of distress in the coalfield. Charity may have

been able to supplement poor relief at the local level, but in doing so it faced a minefield of questions centring around whether the community's interest was best served by preventing isolation of the mining communities through relief, or blaming distress amongst dependants on the miners themselves. The presence of Soviet money and the labour interest in this area merely fuelled the controversy over charity's actions.

In the case of mass unemployment a similar set of developments were at work. Like war and industrial unrest, unemployment raised the profile of some voluntary bodies by propelling them onto the pages of newspapers and government reports. The existence of material and mental distress amongst the unemployed once again presented charity with the opportunity to enter into agency and supplemental relations with the state. Indeed, bodies ranging from the Quakers to the COS were involved in relieving material hardship, while the NCSS acted as the Government's agent in developing occupational centres to combat the boredom and monotony associated with enforced idleness. However, this endeavour was yet again justified by reference to the idea of citizenship based upon a common good. If during reconstruction and the General Strike the emphasis was on ensuring that capital and especially labour avoided a fight to the finish by recognising their joint interests, the focus now shifted to helping the deserving victims of misfortune feel part of the community. The British family, then, was seemingly capable of using voluntary social action as a means of preventing isolation and bitterness from spreading amongst what David Vincent has called its "valued but dependant members."¹

Hence, regardless of disagreements over the voluntary-statutory welfare mix, the upheavals of the first four decades of the century involved charity in both patriotic social service delivery and deliberations centring around the national interest. Significantly, war was invoked time and time again to further the latter objective. This experience was of direct importance to those military

¹ D. Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p 87.

charities that struggled to halt the growth of militancy amongst ex-servicemen in the immediate post-war years. As we saw in chapter three the loyalty of men who had fought the war had to be sustained at a time in which economic grievances were being exploited for anti-national purposes. Moreover, even within the more mainstream voluntary welfare bodies, it was felt that the battle for reconstruction could learn from the war effort. War had revealed how unity around a common purpose was possible, and the utilisation of this spirit was crucial in transcending class conflict and promoting social improvement.

As one might expect the application of the war spirit to peace also characterised the response of charity to the General Strike. The Red Cross likened the spirit which informed its activities at this time with the loyalty which had inspired it during military conflict; although it was the military charities which made the most frequent use of the war experience. During the strike the British Legion and Empire Service League spoke of Britain once again facing a "common peril," which was of course caused by the treachery of the TUC leadership. Fittingly, the Legion responded by calling upon those who served the country during war to once again offer their services to the authorities. With the end of the Strike, though, war could be invoked in the service of conciliation as Field Marshall Lord Haig recognised when he spoke of the value of remembrance day in revealing to the world that Britain was a nation once again.

The application of the war spirit to peace also appeared during the trough of depression in the early 1930s. As we saw in Chapter five, voluntary social action received a major stimulus in early 1932 when the Prince of Wales called upon the British people to view it as a response to unemployment. The criticism that such action was inadequate given the severity of the problem was met by a resurrection of the war experience. The Prince, it will be recalled, pointed out that unity in war had been secured through recognition of a national emergency, and it was the generation of a similar feeling of urgency which he

hoped would promote unity around the need to restore to the unemployed their place within the national community.

Another theme which has run throughout this thesis is the potential conflict between charity and the will to work. As a capitalist society Britain depended upon a class of wage labourers committed to the production process. The belief that indiscriminate charity might discourage participation in the labour force was an old theme that was well known to 19th century Poor Law commissioners and voluntary bodies like the COS. Yet it would seem from the evidence in this thesis that a similar problem carried over into the 20th century. The effect of patriotic voluntarism on the will to work was, for example, raised in the minor issue of lotteries for war charities during World War One. Lotteries might have contributed to war funds and promoted identification with the war effort, but for some MPs there was the fear that they could encourage a "something for nothing" attitude amongst younger workers.

Yet it was in attitudes towards the unemployed that this fear was most pronounced. The Lord Provost's Relief Fund in Glasgow made much of the research which went into an applicant's circumstances before relief was granted. Similarly, during the 1930s concern was expressed within some right-wing circles that occupational centres were encouraging men to acquiesce in long-term unemployment. The points made by voluntary enthusiasts such as Alice Cameron and the Tory MP, T. B. Martin, were a rebuttal of this view when applied to the distressed areas. Nevertheless the similar criticism in Men Without Work about centres in prosperous areas such as Leicester and Deptford reveals that fears of demoralisation were not restricted to hard-line businessmen.

The tendency of recent work to emphasise the junior status of voluntarism in the welfare mix paints an incomplete picture of developments during the inter-war period. The state was undoubtedly becoming the major partner in providing welfare necessary for the reproduction of labour power under capitalism; however the generation of values conducive to social stability

remained legitimate areas of concern for voluntary organisations operating within civil society. The problem with this latter project is its vulnerability to the criticism of concealing structural inequalities and class division.

In 1939 both voluntarism and the state were forced to respond to the challenge of another war. Many of those organisations which have appeared in this thesis once again came to the aid of the state in the satisfaction of welfare needs. The NCSS, for example, was involved in the development of Citizens' Advice Bureaux to satisfy the need for information arising from maintenance allowances, evacuation, damage compensation and so on.² Moreover, organisations like the local Councils of Social Service, the YMCA, the Friends War Relief Service and the Personal Service League supplied equipment and staff to centres for evacuated mothers, while the British Legion's Benevolent Department dealt with illness and permanent incapacity amongst its members.³ The moral concerns surrounding servicemen that had exercised the YMCA during World War One also appeared again; this time in the form of Women's Volunteer Service welcome clubs which aimed to prevent fraternisation between American soldiers and "good time girls".⁴

Of equal importance for the voluntary sector was the impact of war on thinking about future welfare provision. The famous Beveridge Report of 1942 was not only committed to the introduction of a comprehensive social insurance scheme but also family allowances, a national health service and full employment. As is well known, the Report met with widespread public approval, although there was opposition within business circles together with a feeling amongst some Tory politicians, including Churchill, that it distracted attention away from the war effort. Nonetheless, opposition or unease towards Beveridge was swimming against the tide of societal development. The full-employment conditions created by war strengthened the position of labour and

² M. Brasnett, Voluntary Social Action, pp 100 - 102.

³ G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, p 236.

⁴ A. Calder, The People's War, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), p 309.

its desire to prevent a return to the conditions of the 1930s. The Coalition Government itself was forced to recognise the necessity of greater intervention in welfare as seen in the White Papers of 1943-44, and the introduction of legislation dealing with education and family allowances in 1944 and 1945. The implementation of these measures, together with the introduction of a more developed social insurance system and national health service by the Attlee Government, created a structure of social policy that was part of the consensus in British politics during the 1950s and 1960s.⁵

The voluntary sector was therefore forced to respond to an increase in statutory responsibility for welfare provision. The clearest example of this concerned the voluntary hospitals which, contrary to the wishes of the 1944 White Paper, were nationalised by the Labour Government in 1946. These separate institutions were eliminated, then, in the interests of intelligent planning and co-ordination. Yet it would be wrong to conclude from this that voluntary provision in the hospital system was totally eradicated. Those previously active in voluntary work often served on regional hospital boards and hospital management committees, while a variety of services including trolley shops, out-patients canteens, libraries and visiting were supplied by the volunteer to the new state system.⁶

Moreover, the continuing importance of voluntarism was also recognised by those who were committed to the new social order. In his 1949 work Voluntary Action Beveridge noted the tendency of the state to extend its activity into fields pioneered by the volunteer, thus proving voluntarism's continuing ability to experiment ahead of the state, as well as give advice on various social matters.⁷ The existence of the voluntary sector alongside public provision was

⁵ See for example M. Hill, The Welfare State in Britain, (London: Edward Elgar, 1993) p 46.

⁶ For a survey of voluntary service in the early NHS see John Trevelyan, Voluntary Service and the State (London: George Baker & Son, 1952).

⁷ W. H. Beveridge, Voluntary Action: A Report on Methods of Social Advance, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1949), p 302.

also approved by the 1952 Nathan Committee on Charitable Trusts, and the 1959 Younghusband Committee on social work which pointed to the existence of agency relationships between voluntary groups and local authorities in the provision of a statutory service.⁸ Although there still existed tension and uncertainty in the relationship between both sectors, official thinking clearly did not envisage a monopolistic system which rendered voluntarism obsolete.

In the 1950s many subscribed to the view that the partnership of economic growth and the welfare state had done much to eliminate hardship. Although he recognised the need to direct more national resources into the social services, Anthony Crosland argued during 1956 that nine-tenths of the poverty that existed twenty years earlier had disappeared. However, such optimism was in danger of obscuring the fact that considerable hardship continued to exist alongside affluence, especially amongst groups such as the elderly, single parents and large families on low incomes.⁹ In the 1960s growing recognition of this fact, together with the underlying difficulties faced by the economy, conspired to cast doubt over the earlier optimism surrounding the welfare state. Poverty emerged as a more visible issue with both the publication of Abel-Smith and Townsend's The Poor and the Poorest in 1965,¹⁰ and the emergence of progressive voluntary organisations such as the Child Poverty Action Group and Shelter. Here were bodies which existed to pressure the state into dealing with poverty and homelessness through such measures as progressive taxation and increased house building.

But if the failure of the welfare state to eliminate poverty or even bring about a substantial redistribution of income in favour of the working class were concerns for the left, the economic and social implications of state provision were also beginning to attract more trenchant criticisms from the right. The assumption that the welfare state contributed to growth through the creation of a

⁸ See G. Finlayson, Citizen State and Social Welfare, p 292.

⁹ See D. Vincent, Poor Citizens, pp 133 - 148.

¹⁰ B. Abel-Smith and R. Titmuss, The Poor and the Poorest, (London: Bell, 1965).

more efficient labour force was questioned in the 1970s by a New Right which viewed it as an unproductive burden on the productive part of the economy.¹¹ This, and a variety of other criticisms, suggested a fundamental re-appraisal of the post-war consensus including the Welfare State. Right-wingers argued that state welfare had depressed alternative forms of provision, and they looked to a future in which the voluntary sector expanded at the expense of public provision. As Geoffrey Finlayson puts it "the New Right wished to get off the collective train."¹²

In commenting on the New Right this thesis has returned to its place of origin. The attention paid to New Right ideas in the 1970s and eighties has encouraged historians to look at the history of welfare in a way which highlights the persistence of voluntary provision. But this study has attempted to draw attention to the political significance of unity between voluntary bodies and the state in unstable conditions. Its structure is geared towards showing that, on its own, the delivery of social services is an incomplete way to view the inter-play of both sectors, as the ideas and actions of those groups studied suggests a commitment to the social order in the face of upheaval. Voluntarism's reaction to war, industrial unrest and unemployment was not without significance for the future. When a new upturn in class conflict hit Britain in the late 1960s and early 1970s the role of the volunteer in strike breaking irritated the left.¹³ Moreover, during the winter of discontent in 1978-79, one enthusiast for voluntarism, the then Leader of the Opposition, Margaret Thatcher, openly applied the central point of this thesis to the contemporary political situation:

We have a great national tradition of voluntary service. There are enough people in this country resolved to keep it going, and determined not to yield to bullying. At such a time it would be

¹¹ See R. Bacon & W. Eltis, Britain's Economic Problem: Too Few Producers, (London: Macmillan, 1976).

¹² G. Finlayson, Citizen, State and Social Welfare, p 357.

¹³ J. Davis-Smith, An Uneasy Alliance, p 1.

the duty of the government to harness this spirited reserve to the service of our people.¹⁴

Thatcher may have been speaking at the end of the 1970s, but her remark could have been made in 1919 or 1926. Overall, it reveals that the criticisms of voluntarism made by the young Richard Crossman were not without significance over forty years later.

¹⁴ Ibid, p 3.

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