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**CONSTRUING TRADE UNIONS:
THE ANTI-TRADE UNION DISCOURSE OF
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENTS (1978 - 2007)**

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Existence reflected in signs is not merely reflected but 'refracted'. How is this refraction of existence in the ideological sign determined? By an intersecting of differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community, i.e., 'by the class struggle'.

(Valentin N. Voloshinov 1996: 23)

INTRODUCTION

In an article written nearly two years before his death in 2002, Pierre Bourdieu, philosopher, sociologist and critical mind of the Western world, turned his eye to a phenomenon which he named “The New Planetary Vulgate”. In the article – published in Italian by the monthly magazine *Le Monde Diplomatique* and in English in the academic journal *Radical Philosophy* - Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant deal with the question of language in society in a way that may seem superficial to a specialised audience like that of discourse analysts. Nonetheless, they demonstrate how the importance of semiosis does not pass unnoticed to sensitive observers of the world.

The 'literary occasion' for this work sparks exactly from the reading of the article referred to above, where the idea of a society that looks at trade unions as obstacles to be removed is advanced.

This is a society characterized by the deliberate dismantling of the social state and the correlative hypertrophy of the penal state, the crushing of trade unions and the dictatorship of the 'shareholder-value' conception of the firm, and their sociological effects: the generalization of precarious wage labour and social insecurity, turned into the privileged engine of economic activity¹.

[emphasis added]

Trade unions, as the organisations for the protection and advancement of the interest of working people, have had a paramount role in the history of Western capitalist societies in general and in the British one in particular. Their development goes hand in hand with that of the economic and political changes that have shaped contemporary societies. Their double role as economic and political

¹ *Radical Philosophy*, 105 (January/February 2001), p. 2-5. The article is a translation of the article appeared in “*Le Monde Diplomatique*” 554, May 2000, pp. 6-7. It has been chosen as it is deemed to be more reliable translation than the one possibly done by the author.

actors makes them one of the forces which drive, and at the same time are subject to the changes which mark the passage from one model of economic and political order to the other. One such change, or I would better say process, is that of the creation of a global capitalist economy, hereafter referred to as *neo-capitalism* (Bourdieu 2000; Jessop 2002).

The role of trade unions as social actors in the neo-capitalist world order is shaped through discourse, mostly through the ideas about them that powerful actors both in the economic and in the political sphere manage to make hegemonic. This makes the study of the construal² of trade unions be inscribed in the general aim of the study of human conditions in this particular economic and political context, as Norman Fairclough makes clear in his “Manifesto for Critical Discourse Analysis” (Fairclough 2003). Here, Critical Discourse Analysis (hence CDA) is described as a research programme that, like all instances of critical social research, aims at better understanding how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects, and how the detrimental effects can be mitigated if not eliminated (Fairclough 2003: 203). Indeed, in line with Bourdieu, the manifesto states that neo-liberal discourse aims at removing the obstacles to the transformations of neo-capitalism and trade unions are listed among other obstacles such as public services.

The ultimate objectives of the approach described so far are making the hidden connections between discursive practice and social change manifest and consequently setting an agenda that may empower the weaker part in the processes of social change. The role of discourse analysis is thus that of driving emancipatory change; the

² The group of the fallible ideas that inform construction (Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2002).

focus is on people being spurred into action and being given the discursive instruments to act.

In the light of these considerations, the research presented here aims at exposing the force of discourse in the progressive weakening of trade unions so as to provide a valid instrument for counteraction. These issues will be dealt with in more detail in the first chapter, dedicated to the theoretical framework, the methodology and the objectives of the study.

Since the problem at the heart of this study is in fact a social process, that is something that evolves over time, the adoption of a historical perspective seemed to be appropriate when the organisation of the findings had to be decided.

The second chapter deals with the anti-union discourse as developed during the winter of 1978-79 through the analysis of the words of Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan and of the leader of the opposition Margaret Thatcher. The first document to be taken into account will be Callaghan's speech at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in September 1978.

Following the course of history, Chapter three shows how the anti-union discourse was developed during the first Conservative Government led by Margaret Thatcher as well as by her secretaries of labour.

The analysis of the 18 years of conservative rule will be divided into two chapters. Thus, Chapter 4 will deal with the discourse as developed during the year-long miners' strike and will continue with the analysis of the second term in office of the so-called Iron Lady.

The fifth and final chapter will try and describe how the discourse against trade unions was interpreted by the New Labour

prime ministers, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. In this way the analysis will close the circle of these thirty years of history by trying to detect how the threatened new “winter of discontent” influenced the current (2007) Prime Minister's relationship with trade unions. The virtual circle will also be closed from the point of view of the social practices under scrutiny. Indeed as the first document analysed is James Callaghan's speech to the Trades Union Congress conference of 1978, the final one will be another speech by a (New) Labour Prime Minister (Gordon Brown) to the TUC conference held in September 2007.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical background and methodology

By methodology I understand the way in which we approach a *topic of research* [...] in order to arrive at '*objects of research*' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), ways of tackling the topic in a theoretically coherent and systematic way – ways of making the topic researchable.

(Fairclough 2006:11)

1.1 Ontological and epistemological premises: a Critical Realist approach

In accordance with the quoted definition of methodology, this introductory chapter will give an account of how from the topic of, mostly, historical and economic relevance, such as the weakening of trade unions in British society, the researcher was able to get to linguistic objects of research in order to make the topic researchable.

In very simple words the topic, problem, is to find out how trade unions have been progressively weakened and their political and economic role drained off, in the country which has seen their birth³. The first step I took was to put the topic in perspective, to see it positioned in an ontological framework that would start suggesting what scientific tools were appropriate to its study and to what kind of result it was possible to get.

The Critical Realist approach⁴ to reality is taken as the ontological

3 The literature on the decline of trade union's importance in British society is very rich; the most accessible accounts of such historical process are: Taylor R. 1993, *The trade Union Question in British politics*; McIlroy J., Fishman N., Campbell A., 1999, *British trade unions and industrial politics* and Cohen S., 2006, *Ramparts of Resistance*.

4 Critical realism refers to any position that maintains that there exists an objectively knowable, mind-independent reality, whilst acknowledging the roles of perception and cognition. in the UK, critical realism refers to the community associated primarily with the work of Roy Bhaskar. A general and accessible outline of the field can be found in *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*, 1998, edited by Archer, M., Bhaskar, R., Collier, A., Lawson, T. and Norrie, A.

basis of the research project. For critical realist scholars reality is tripartite. Indeed a distinction is made between the 'real', the 'actual' and the 'empirical'.

“The 'real' refers to objects, their structures or natures and their causal powers and liabilities. The 'actual' refers to what happens when these powers and liabilities are activated and produce change. The 'empirical' is the subset of the real and the actual that is experienced by the actors.”

(Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2002: 3)

Thus, in the long and still undergoing debate on the existence of reality irrespective of there being an observer to it, the critical realist stance is that according to which reality, in the tripartite form reported above, is there to be known. According to this premise, also the topic of the research can be seen through these three categories and the only part that is actually liable to scrutiny is the empirical part, but still put into a dialectical relationship to the other two spheres. The reason to study it, though, is that by studying the empirical we can get to some conclusions with regard to the actual and the real alike.

Being Critical Realism, apart from an ontology, also an epistemology, a philosophy of science, from the conception of reality sketched above it descends that the findings of a Critical Realist study have to be conceived of as 'explanations':

“Explanation usurps prediction as the goal of science. Explanatory content provides a criterion for evaluating theories. [...] To explain a phenomenon is to give an account of its causal history (cf. Lipton 1993: 33). Significantly, this account is not to be couched in terms of the event(s) that just happens to precede the phenomenon to be explained, but in terms of the underlying, mechanisms, social structures, powers and relations that causally govern the phenomenon”.

(Brown, Fleetwood and Roberts 2001: 6) [emphasis added]

Indeed the epistemological possibilities of Critical Realism are based on an understanding of 'causation' which is different from that

of “causality as event regularity”. It is in fact conceived of as a “power of forces” (Brown, Fleetwood and Roberts 2001: 6) co-concurring to cause the event.

Looking at the problem under study here in the Critical Realist terms outlined above, it is possible to say that the problem of trade unions' weakening in the British society is the result of the dialectical relationship between the activation and working of the forces of objects and the objects themselves. Thus, the researcher can explain the phenomenon by referring to its empirical evidence and trying to take into account all the forces that contribute to it⁵.

Among those forces, semiosis - the making of meaning - has a great impact. Such impact though, does not have to be reduced to the routine assertion that semiosis is performative:

“semiosis is both meaningful and causally efficacious”.

(Fairclough, Jessop, Sayer 2002: 3)

The way in which meaning is made is one of those forces that contribute to the construction of reality. It is a force in this sense because it plays a role in the two moments of construction that is: construal and construction in the strict sense of the word. As Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer put it, it is important:

“to disambiguate construction in its two moments of construal (the fallible ideas that inform it) and construction (in the sense of the material processes, if any, that follow from it).”

(Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2002: 5)

In the present work only the moment of construal will be taken into account, but the research would not have been undertaken if a strong belief in the existence of the second moment too had not been there to convince the author of the importance of such a research in

5 In this respect, the ontological and epistemological premises will find a practical application in the choice of a post-disciplinary approach, which will be better explained in paragraph 1.3.

the comprehension of the phenomena.

Semiotic causal powers intervene in the process of emergence, reproduction and transformation of social structures.

“First, semiotic conditions affect the differential *reproduction* and transformation of social groups, organisations, institutions and other social phenomena.

Second, these evolutionary mechanisms are reflexive in the sense that semiotic conditions affect the *variation, selection and retention* of the semiotic features of the social phenomena.

And third, semiotic *innovation and emergence* are themselves sources of variation that feed into social transformation”.

(Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2002:5) [emphasis added]

Overall, then, semiosis performs its role in social change and reproduction by generating variation, selecting semiotic resources, and making them be retained and/or institutionalised.

The processes of variation, selection and retention are thus carried out through recourse to language and other semiotic systems one articulation of which are 'discourses', conceived of as ways of representing the social practices which cooperate together with semiosis in the process of social change and reproduction, as well as ways used by social actors to self-reflect on their social practices. This is not the most precise and exhaustive definition of discourse, but it is one which makes the following epistemological claim totally understandable.

“In this way we can move to provide explanations that are socially (or semiotically) adequate as well as 'objectively probable' in the sense that they establish the discursive as well as extradiscursive conditions of existence of the explanandum at an appropriate level of concretisation and complexification.”

(Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2002:9)

Thus before moving to a lower level of abstraction in the following section, it has been considered appropriate to make clear that the study aims at supplying adequate as well as objectively

probable, preeminently semiotic, explanations of the weakening of British trade unions since the late seventies. The complexities of the problem were taken into account as much as possible so as to place them, in the most scrupulous way, in relation with its conditions of existence.

1.2 From the problem to the object of research

According to the theoretical framework built above, it has been deemed necessary, moving a step down in the ladder that goes from abstract to concrete, to look for a form of social research which would include the complexities of the problem under study, but which at the same time would place a focus on the semiotic forces at work in social change.

Through such work the object of research will be built in successive stages in the next paragraphs, resulting finally in the title of the thesis: *Anti—union Discourse of British governments from the 'winter of discontent' to the present days.*

Critical Discourse Analysis - sometimes referred to as a programme of study (Wodak and Meyer 2001) and sometimes as a form of critical social research (Fairclough 2003; 2006) – has been considered the most suitable approach to the study; the reasons for this choice are complex and articulate and are given below. Nonetheless, the use of CDA puts to the researcher a question on which, among all the possible approaches is the most appropriate for her/his needs.

CDA, as the general approach to language and society, was chosen in the first place because it allows to account for the role of semiosis in social change. It does it by grounding itself on definitions

of discourse that enable to link semiosis to society in a dialectical relationship: a relationship of mutual influence. All approaches to CDA have a same starting point: a suitable definition of discourse, a definition that could go beyond the commonsensical one and could be seen as the basis of a scientific enterprise. Many scholars in the field think of discourse in Foucauldian terms, as a way of representing social practices and as a form of knowledge about them. But the Foucauldian conception of discourse accounted for just one aspect of how the use of semiotic devices influences our lives. There had to be more than that. What was needed was a theory of discourse which could account for its double role of shaping social behaviors and of being shaped by them.

A suitable definition can be found in Fairclough and Wodak (1997): that of discourse as a social practice, which opens a path to considering its dialectical relationship with institutions and social structure. The subsequent explanation of the concept has been an even more powerful drive towards the adoption of a CDA perspective:

[...]discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is *constitutive* both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it”.

(Fairclough Wodak 1997: 258) [emphasis added]

In this way discourse becomes central to all studies of human interaction in the political sphere.

Another suitable definition of discourse is that given by J. Lemke (1995) who, referring to discourse as a social activity, puts an accent on the dichotomy of concreteness/abstractness pointing at the difference between text and discourses, seen as the result of

“patterns, relations and commonalities that embrace different texts and occasions.”

(Lemke 1995:7)

Lemke also underlines other important features of discourse, such as its dynamic aspect, in accordance to the dynamism of social relations, and its active role in society:

“The role of discourse in society is active; not only it reconfirms and re-enacts social relationships and patterns of behavior, it also renegotiates social relationships and introduces new meanings and new behaviors”

(Lemke 1995:20)

The two definitions strictly link discourse to power because they allow for a role of discourse both in maintaining and trying to subvert power relations as they are. The coming into play of power relations opens the route for the “C” part in the acronym CDA. In his description of a useful social theory for the study of discourse Lemke states:

“The social theory we need must also be a critical theory; it must describe social processes in a way that shows how power is exercised in the interest of the powerful and how unjust social relations disguise their injustice. Discourse functions ideologically in society to support and legitimate the exercise of power, and to naturalize social relationships, making them seem the inevitable consequence of common sense necessity.”

(Lemke 1995:20)

As a result, what is needed is a tool that enables the researcher to account for the role of discourse in the changes that happen in society and to connect the single events of change to larger patterns in social systems; where critique is mainly a commitment to show the interconnectedness of things (Fairclough 1985).

As it can be inferred from these definitions, CDA is not a monolithic methodology for the study of discourse in society, but it can be said that all the approaches which fall within the scope of the

programme of CDA, share some premises and tend to the same goal.

This is at the same time something that makes CDA richer and more difficult to use, if someone is convinced of the rightness and usefulness of more than one method (Fairclough and Wodak 1997).

Among those different approaches, the one shaped by Norman Fairclough in the last 20 years, and which has found a synthesis in the two recent works *Analysing Discourse* (2003) and *Language and Globalisation* (2006), is the one used to shape this research project. The work of 2006 in particular appears to be the most compatible with the philosophical premises set out above.

First of all, Fairclough outlines the question of discourses, genres and styles in a clearer and more concrete way. Indeed the definitions of discourse used so far all refer to the more abstract sense of the word, apart from Lemke's ones. But the focus of the present analysis is not on that abstract, and superordinate, level but the more concrete one. 'Discourse' as a countable noun, that can be used in the plural too. Discourse in this sense is one of the articulations of an 'order of discourse' all along with genres and styles (Fairclough 2003; 2006). Discourses are one of the semiotic moments of social practices:

“I shall distinguish three levels of abstraction within social analysis: *social structures*, *social practices* and *social events*. [...] I use 'events' in a general sense to include all the 'goings-on' of social life. [...] we can use the term '*text*' for the *discourse moment of social events*. [...] At the most abstract level, social structures are the most general and the most enduring (but still relatively enduring) characteristics of societies, such as capitalism as a mode of production or the class structure or the system of gender relations. Again, there is what we can broadly call a semiotic aspect: particular languages can be regarded as social structures of a special sort.”

(Fairclough 2006:30) [emphasis added]

At this point the two extreme levels are determined. What stays

in the middle is what, in Critical Realist terms, ensures the dialectical relationships betwixt the 'real' and the 'actual', that is between things and their 'causal powers' and the action of those powers. In social analysis these are called 'social practices':

“Social practices are habitual, ritual or institutionalized ways of 'going on' which are associated with particular institutions (such as law or education).[...] Institutions and organizations as networks of social practices can be seen at an intermediate level of of social structuring, less abstract than what I am calling 'social structures', and closer to actual events. Social practices also have their semiotic (or Discourse) moments, which I shall call 'orders of discourse'.”

(Fairclough 2006:30-31)

If, according to the definition above, change is determined at the level of social practices, the object of research has to be found at this same level, in the semiotic moment that correspond to the social practice: the order of discourse.

The order of discourse is not a static concept, indeed individuals and groups act in institutions in certain ways, they represent their actions to themselves and to the outer world in certain ways, and they also are in certain ways. Ways of acting in semiotic terms are named genres, ways of representing in the same moment are called discourses and finally ways of being are semiotically encoded in styles (Fairclough 2003; 2006). Inside an order of discourse different genres styles and discourses interact and shape the social practice. Those are not discrete categories, but they are in a relation of mutual influence⁶.

6 For example in a school, a good example of a social practice, the order of discourse is made up of different ways of acting semiotically. The net is very complex because many are the social actors inside the school; taking into consideration just the teachers we can have: a lesson, an informal talk with a colleague, a test, a reprimand. All these are genres, and to be effective they need to respond to some fixed rules and recurrent features: an individual teacher can perform the act of testing a pupil adopting very different styles, according to her/his personality, nonetheless her/his 'maneuver space' is limited by the restrictions imposed by the genre which influences the personal style but is also influenced, through it. Both the ways of acting in the social process and the ways of being inside it are influenced by the perception and representation of the social practice itself. Teachers will be and act in different ways, according, for example, to the way in which education is perceived, thought, and talked of in the village, region, country, economic system where the school is placed. The perception of

Being the focus of the study on the construal of the social actor trade union, and of the social practices in which it is involved, among the three categories sketched above, the interest of the research has been mostly put on the way of representing reality: discourse in its more concrete sense, of one of the semiotic moments of social practices. In this way the first boundaries can be placed around the object of research by specifying that it is

'a discourse'.

But, as stated above, there are many discourses, as well as other forces, that contribute to the shaping of society, and many discourses and other forces were activated in the process of the progressive weakening of trade unions in Great Britain. Which one should be chosen?

According to the definition of CDA as a form of social critique, oriented to an emancipatory aim (Fairclough 2003; 2006, Reisigl and Wodak 2001, Weiss and Wodak 2003), the focus of such effort should be on the way dominant social groups construe reality through discourse. In such a perspective, being the focus of the research on the construal of trade unions and of the social practices in which they take part, it seemed appropriate to focus on instances of such semiotic construal as coined and exploited by the British governments⁷.

According to the above reasoning the topic of the research gets to be further specified by the reference to the social agent that performs it, shifting then from a generic discourse to

'the discourse of British Governments'.

education is mediated through the discourse on education.

7 Other actors, such as journalists, political analysts and economists have a great role in the process, but it is believed that being governments the agents which, apart from discursively construing also carry out most of the enactment of the discourse, focussing on their discourse would be the most fruitful way to tackle the topic.

Indeed texts, as the discursive moment of social events have 'ideological effects' on reality. They contribute to establish, maintain and change social relations of power (Fairclough 2003, Van Dijk 1998). Government, in its role of executive power of the State, is a powerful agent in societies, at least because it has the power to transform its discourse in laws: rules that influence the interaction of individuals with one another as well as with the state. What is more, it is also considered to be an actor interested in the process of weakening trade unions, for reasons that are given below.

Thompson (1984) calls ideology 'meaning at the service of power' (quoted in Fairclough 2003:9). That is a reason to frame textual analysis in social theory so that we might be able to detect where power really rests. In their *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels state that

“The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”.

(Marx and Engels 1998: 36)

The genre of the text above, which has propagandistic purposes, does not allow for scientific explanations. But scholars working on the wake of Karl Marx have elaborated on that and an explanation that can be shared is that found in Bob Jessop's *The Future of the Capitalist State*. Here Jessop advances a definition of state that draws on both Gramsci's and Paulantzas's ideas:

“an ensemble of socially embedded, socially regularized and strategically sensitive institutions, organizations, social forces and activities organized around (or at least actively involved in) making collectively binding decisions for an imagined political community. *State power can be understood in turn as a power relation that is mediated in and through this institutional ensemble*”.

(Jessop 2002:6) [emphasis added]

According to this account the power of the state is not exercised

by the state, the state not being a subject, but by its institutional components of which government is just one.

If we conceive of capital as a relation which needs regulation, as Jessop (2002) does, we allow again for the role of the state in that regulation, but this does not necessarily mean that the actions of the components of the state derive mechanistically from the needs of capitalism. Indeed the state, and the government as its executive hand, need to operate and mediate in an environment where many forces are at work, the power of which changes through time and space. Among them, this can be said, the economic factor has gained 'ecologic dominance' (Jessop 2002). In such a state of affairs the government has to grant the conditions for production, of which the supply of labour-power as a fictitious commodity is one (Jessop 2002, Marx 1965).

Capitalists, as well as trade unions, are just two of the forces between which the executive of the state, that is the government, has to exercise its 'strategic selectivity' (Jessop 2002: 40). Nonetheless, the necessity to keep the supply of labour-power going is considered a sufficient motivation to look at British government's discourse on trade unions as the most powerful and as fundamentally capital-oriented. It could not be otherwise in one of the most advanced Western capitalist economies, where the ecologic dominance of capital is spreading over all kind of social practices.

It is thus necessary to add another attribute to the topic of research. In order to answer to the powerful requests of capital, the government needs to put into force legislative measures and economic policies which guarantee the supply of the fictitious commodity of labour-power. To accomplish such deed it must also use a discourse

that undermines the role of those actors that interfere with that mechanism, that is trade unions. Summing up, the topic of the analysis has been so far specified as 'the discourse of governments *against trade unions*' or, in other words,

'the governments' *anti-union* discourse'.

1.3 When History comes into play: further specifications of the object of research

With next step methodology, in its more orthodox sense, is entered. Such step is made with the help of a different version of CDA, developed by Ruth Wodak and Andrew Mayer in 2001 which is known as 'Discourse-historical approach' (hence DHA), which enables a very strong systematization of the research process, and supplies an effective system for the evaluation of the findings: the process of *triangulation*. Such practice consists in a continuous movement to and from the four ladders of a quadripartite concept of context:

1. the immediate, language internal co-text;
2. the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts genres and discourse;
3. the extralinguistic social/sociological variables and institutional frames of specific "context of situation";
4. the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, which the discursive practices are embedded in and related to.

(Wodak and Meyer 2001: 67)

The regular movement along these four elements in order to evaluate the findings of each level should guarantee that we are not falling in misinterpretation and that we are not ignoring any aspect that is important in the creation, perception and reception of, in this case, anti-union discourse.

According to such quadripartite notion of context, the DHA sees

as fundamental the analysis and integration of the historical context. The integration of history into the analysis of discourse makes the notion of change inherent in it. The Discourse-historical approach is, as all approaches to CDA, problem oriented and not centred on specific linguistic aspects. The focus is on social problems, and the fact that those are studied from a text and discourse perspective does not preclude other possibilities of looking at it. This is the reason why a strong claim for interdisciplinarity is made.

The approach succeeds in turning one of the criticisms often made to CDA into a point of strength: it advocates for eclecticism in the choice of theories as well as methods for the analysis. Again, this is a consequence of its being problem oriented: the focus lies on social problems which are never one-dimensional but always entail the interaction of many different forces and institutions. It rests on the sensitivity and the intellectual fairness of the researcher to choose the theories and methods of analysis which can shed a light on the phenomenon and justify her/his choices. This approach, put in the framework of triangulation and coupled with the abductive movement from theory to data and back, guarantees the possibility of innovative thought and findings, but always controlled against sheer invention or biasness. The above mentioned movement to and from the four stages finds its propelling power in the idea of the relationship among different disciplines.

The answers to such a quest for dialogue among disciplines are different according to the different approaches to CDA and range from the idea of interdisciplinarity advocated for by the discourse-historical approach (Weiss and Wodak 2001), to the transdisciplinary approach advocated in the past by Fairclough (Fairclough 2003b), to the post-

disciplinary approach outlined by Bob Jessop and Andrew Sayer. Being an all new theory this last one has little literature to back it but (Jessop and Sum 2001, Sayer 2001), as it will be shown, has valid motivations to be chosen in the present research.

Interdisciplinarity puts together different scholars of different disciplines around a same social problem. It is a highly valuable method for analysis, it indeed saves from the dangers of oversimplification of the different disciplines, and, it should not be underestimated, actually helps starting permanent spaces of dialogue among people coming from very different backgrounds. It is quite evident, nonetheless that interdisciplinarity cannot be pursued in an individual enterprise such as a PhD research.

The *transdisciplinary* approach is fascinating for its claim to “put the logic of other disciplines at work” in the study of discourse, allowing for the individual researcher to deal with the different disciplines. As the same Norman Fairclough explains it:

“working in a transdisciplinary way is one way of working in an interdisciplinary way, which is distinguished by a commitment to *enter a dialogue with other disciplines and theories, put their logic to work in the development of one’s own theory, methods, research objects, and research agendas*. It is not simply a matter of adding concepts and categories from other disciplines and theories, but working on and elaborating one’s own theoretical and methodological resources so as to be able to address insights or problems captured in other theories and disciplines from the perspective of one’s particular concerns.”

(Fairclough 2003b: 16) [emphasis added]

Elaborated in the last years by the researchers based in Lancaster's Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS), namely Bob Jessop and Andrew Sayer, the *post-disciplinary* approach takes its move from the consideration of the necessity to make a stance for a reinvigoration (Jessop and Sum 2001) of a Marxist pre-disciplinary approach and then

makes a move towards the cultural turn in political economy thus harbouring in the new concept of post-disciplinarity. Indeed as Jessop and Sum state:

“[...] we describe our shared approach as pre-disciplinary in its historical inspiration and post-disciplinary in its current intellectual implications”.

(Jessop and Sum 2001: 89)

Pre-disciplinarity is not an approach limited to Karl Marx only. The history of thought, and economic thought in particular, is full of polymaths such as Adam Smith and John Locke (Jessop and Sum 2001), to name just a few. Such complex scientific backgrounds fused in only one person gave birth to the most enlightening, fascinating and thought-provoking explanations of society. The claim for post-disciplinarity can be thus interpreted as an attempt to overcome the crisis of received categories for analysis, that gave birth to the disciplinary boundaries that led to the abandonment of pre-disciplinarity, and the will to start research from

“the assumption that the economic and extra economic are intimately interrelated and co-constitutive”.

(Jessop and Sum, 2001: 99)

In addition to this, and only in the evaluation of the author, a claim for post-disciplinarity is a claim for active resistance to a system that has built its power thanks to specialization and thanks to the abstraction of the workers from the same process of production they take part in. Academics are workers in the broad sense and the division of their studies into non-communicating disciplines has prevented them from placing their work in a broader context and gain some sort of voice in the matter of social development. As Sayer (2001) puts it, the decline of disciplines should thus be celebrated rather than mourned by academics:

“as an opportunity to ask how they can redefine and reaffirm their core aims, to decide how they can regain a sense of a common purpose, and to develop a higher and more respected profile in public life”. (Sayer 2001:83)

A post-disciplinary approach allows the researcher to follow the Ariadne's thread which guides her/him through the problem under scrutiny. The clearest description of the process of a post-disciplinary research is given by Sayer:

“Postdisciplinary studies emerge when scholars [...] follow ideas and connections wherever they lead instead of following them only as far as the border of their discipline. It therefore does not invite to dilettantism [...]. On the contrary, it differs from those things precisely because it requires us to follow connections.”

(Sayer 2001: 88)

The further specification of the object of the research and the subsequent methodology of both data gathering and analysis are strongly rooted in the approach described above.

A first step of the research consisted in placing the problem of trade union 'crisis' against the relevant historical background. According to cultural political economy a drift from the Fordist economic system, which had prevailed until the decade of the seventies of last century, to a neo-liberal system has been gaining prevalence towards the end of the 1970s (Jessop 2002). This has had implications in the way the executives of national states have been fulfilling their role of granting the supply of labour-power. Indeed that shift has been coupled with the transition from a Keynesian Welfare National State (KWNS) to a Schumpeterian Competition State (SCS) (Jessop 2002).

Thus if a periodisation of the research had to be found, it had to be looked for in the light of such international trends, by also taking into account the national peculiarities of the British economic and

political system. This enabled to place in its broader context the understanding of what the most problematic moments in the relationship of British governments and trade unions were.

The *Winter of discontent*, is one such moment. It is a season of tough confrontation betwixt government and trade unions, that took place in the winter of 1978-79, and it can be argued that it was strongly influenced by the international economic 'climate' referred to above. The winter of discontent, though, must not be looked at as the starting point of the confrontation, but it has to be considered

“a symbolic moment [that] signifies the crisis in the *legitimacy* of the KWNS, not the structural crisis in the KWNS”

(Jessop, personal communication 26/06/2007)

The symbolic value attached to the Winter of discontent made it the most appropriate discursive 'entry point' (Fairclough 2003) to the problem. Indeed the definition, borrowed by journalists from Shakespeare (*Richard III*), has been such a powerful one that it has survived until our days and it has been used throughout the years as a bugbear in any occasion when union action was referred to. The expression is now witnessing a new revival since newspapers, on the verge of the handover of power from Tony Blair to Gordon Brown, have started to warn of the possibility of a new Winter of discontent in British industrial relations.

Thus, through triangulation and thanks to the cultural political economy-knot in the thread of the present research, the temporal boundaries of the study have been identified (1978 to 2007), leaving the researcher with the following object of research:

'the discourse of British governments against trade unions *from the Winter of discontent to our days*'.

The historical insight made it also clear what the meaningful genres in the creation of the specific discourse were; indeed initially it had been considered enough to concentrate on Prime Ministers' speeches and interviews and electoral manifestos of the years under study, whereas the complexity of the phenomenon made it clear that the genres through which anti-union discourse was conveyed had to include also other documents, such as debates in the House of Commons. A fundamental genre considered in the analysis is that of Green and White papers on industrial policies. Green and White papers are government policies in the making, but differently from actual bills they show instances of argumentation and evaluation of the situation. A study of the legislation that regulates the industrial relations in Great Britain was carried out and also the impact of the common law system was taken into due account in the evaluation of the findings.

1.4 From theory to practice in three stages

1.4.1 Gathering the relevant documents

The individuation of the relevant documents was thus driven by the careful consideration of the historical development. First of all, the party manifestos from 1979 election onwards were taken from the Internet websites and the sections dealing with industrial policies isolated from the rest.

Then the speeches of Margaret Thatcher were retrieved from the website of the foundation which bears the name of the former Prime

Minister. The website allows for a search by topic and comprises both parliamentary speeches, interviews and press releases, thus accounting for many of the genres that constitute her discourse against trade unions.

For the governments of John Major and Tony Blair the research was carried out on the website of the Parliament and of the Government that also allow for a research by topic. Differently from Margaret Thatcher's governmental experience, that of Tony Blair has not been gathered up till now in an all encompassing website, thus a research on the archive of newspapers was carried out to find relevant texts for the analysis. The most recent Green and White papers were found on ministerial websites, but the older ones were not easily retrievable and they were retrieved in the months spent at the British Library in London.

Another genre which surprisingly established itself as fundamental for the interpretation of the phenomenon was that of the speeches held by Labour prime ministers to the annual congress of the Trade Union Confederation (TUC). Those documents were found at the TUC library collection at the Metropolitan University Library in London. The texts gathered in this way were all read thoroughly, but only the ones that were deemed more representative were chosen to be analysed in depth for the purpose of this work.

1.4.2 Outlining the topics and topoi of anti-union discourse through argumentation theory

The complexity of the phenomena under study is also represented by the intricate net of relations that can be drawn between different genres, public spaces, texts and discourses. Discourses are indeed realised in both genres and texts, but more interestingly in topics.

Acknowledging such characteristic of semiosis in social interaction allows for a more complete picture of social phenomena. Thus again through the process of triangulation the impressions gathered during the reading of the texts were put into dialogue with the four levels of context referred to above, and with disciplines such as labour law and industrial relations, as well as with accounts of the role of trade unions which differed from the hegemonic ones. This is when *argumentation theory* comes into play. It is indeed through the analysis of arguments, the individuation of *loci communes* or *topoi* and the hunt for them throughout a discourse that the researcher can draw a satisfactory picture of its articulation through different fields of action - in our case from government to manufacturing of public opinion through passages like developing party-internal consent and vote getting (Wodak and Meyer 2001: 66).

Argumentation theory has its basis in ancient disciplines such as rhetoric but in the years it has developed in many different directions, reaching as far as formal logic. For the purposes of this study an approach based on Toulmin (1958; 1984) model has been considered appropriate. Indeed such model, proves to be illuminating for the possibility it gives of decomposing arguments into their elements.

Toulmin's approach allows also for the study of how a rhetorical strategy is normally built, and helps to point out the possible argumentative fallacies (errors in reasoning) that most of the times go unnoticed when discourses are made public. Or as Reisigl and Wodak put it

“a critical discourse analysis oriented towards argumentation theory and rhetoric [...] can contribute greatly to answering the question of what are the good reasons, because such an approach provides the criteria, which enable one to distinguish between manipulative and suggestive procedures of persuasion and discursive procedures of convincing argumentation”

(Reisigl and Wodak 2001:265).

For the sake of clarity, I will provide an account of the terminology used in order to take advantage of argumentation theory as a tool for the analysis. 'Argumentation' is here used to denote the practice, the “social activity” (van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Kruiger 1987: 2) of advancing reasons in order to convince others of one's standpoint. “Argument” has to be looked at as the product of such practice. The “claim” is the opinion which needs support. “Premises” are the instances of information used to support the arguer's opinion. *Topoi* are rhetorical moves which guarantee the transition from the premises to the opinion of the arguer. In simpler terms *topoi* can be looked at as the mechanism that makes the premises and the claim (opinion) accepted.

The passage from the argument as it is realised in the text to the argumentation scheme, which is needed for the analysis, will be made following the suggestions made in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992). The reconstruction of the information in the utterances will be carried out in order to get to a “logical minimum”, i.e. to a form of the argument which fulfills the needs of a logically valid argument. The

process can be seen in the treatment of the following classic example:

As we all know our friend Socrates is a man, this means that he will necessarily have to die some day⁸.

From which the following argumentation scheme can be extracted:

SOCRATES IS A MAN
(ALL MEN ARE MORTAL)
claim: SOCRATES IS MORTAL

Here only the fundamental information is retained, while the missing premise is added and put in parentheses. Missing premises are sometimes the place where the *topoi* are hidden, but in more complex argumentation also simple premises can be missing. Whether they are *topoi* or not, the missing premises are important in that they normally represent pieces of information that the arguer thinks can be taken for granted, because the audience can infer them. They represent shared, common knowledge on which the argumentations rest. Therefore their individuation is an unavoidable passage in the critical analysis of an argument.

As Iețcu (2006: 26) points out, according to the three types of persuasive discourse there are special *topoi*:

In DELIBERATIVE discourse (the discourse to make your point of view accepted and to spur people into action) the *topoi* are: the good (Bonum), the worthy (Dignitas), the advantageous or useful (Utilitas)

in JUDICIAL discourse the *topoi* are: justice or injustice

in CERIMONIAL discourse the *topoi* are: virtue and vice, the noble and the base, honour and dishonour

Topoi are thus discourse-specific, and they can rightly be considered one of the features of different discourses. The reading of the documents in this light has allowed to spot some of the most

⁸ The sentence has been devised in order to make clear how the process of extraction works.

frequent and effective ones in anti-union discourse. The *topoi* individuated during the first reading were then grouped in the more general category of 'macro-topics'⁹. Thanks to the identification of the macro-topics I had the possibility to tackle the analysis without prejudices as well as with a guide through the texts.

Such macro-topics are concerned with:

1. union fundamental values
2. union action
3. economic and institutional landscape

The first macro-topic takes into account the highly debated problem of the internal division of trade unions between their bureaucracies and their members and the way in which this was used in the discourse of governments¹⁰. This macro-topic contains topics such as trade union internal democracy, the opposition between individual rights and collective rights, the interpretation of the formula of 'the right to work'. By dealing with such topics governments manage to widen the pre-existing division inside trade unions between officialdom and rank-and-file representatives by appealing in different moments of the confrontation to one or the other part of the trade union movement according to their convenience.

The second macro-topic is concerned with the construal of the actions that the trade unions undertake in their day to day work. The topics which make it up are different representations of strikes, sometimes referred to as breaches in contract, sometimes as dangerous attacks to the democratic state, and bargaining, or the use of the

⁹ The term topic is here used in the general, day-to day sense, as synonym of subject or theme.

¹⁰ This has always been a very debated theme in the Labour movement, at least since the Webbs who approached the problem both in their *History of Trade Unionism* (1894) and in *Industrial Democracy* (1897). More recent accounts can be found in Alex Callinicos's article *The rank-and-file Movement today* (1982) and in Sheila Cohen's *Ramparts of Resistance* (2006).

'closed shop', but also the will of trade unions to have a say in more general questions, what could be referred to as the political side of trade union activity¹¹.

The third is the construal of the conditions in which such acts are carried out, and this implies a construal of the role of the government in the economy which descends from the interpretation of what a nation is (Jessop 2002). This last instance is developed through the search for topics such as class struggle as opposed to national interest, and to the way in which the opposition between wages and profits is interpreted through governmental discourse.

Before moving on the concepts used above have been put together in a graphical representation of the social dimensions of the anti-union discourse which synthesises what has been said so far.

¹¹ For an account of those practices and the political role of trade unions that can be opposed to the mainstream ones see: Karl Marx's *Wages, Salaries and Profits* (1865); Rosa Luxemburgh's *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions* (1906) and *Marxism and Trade Union struggle* (1986) by Tony Cliff and David Gluckstein.

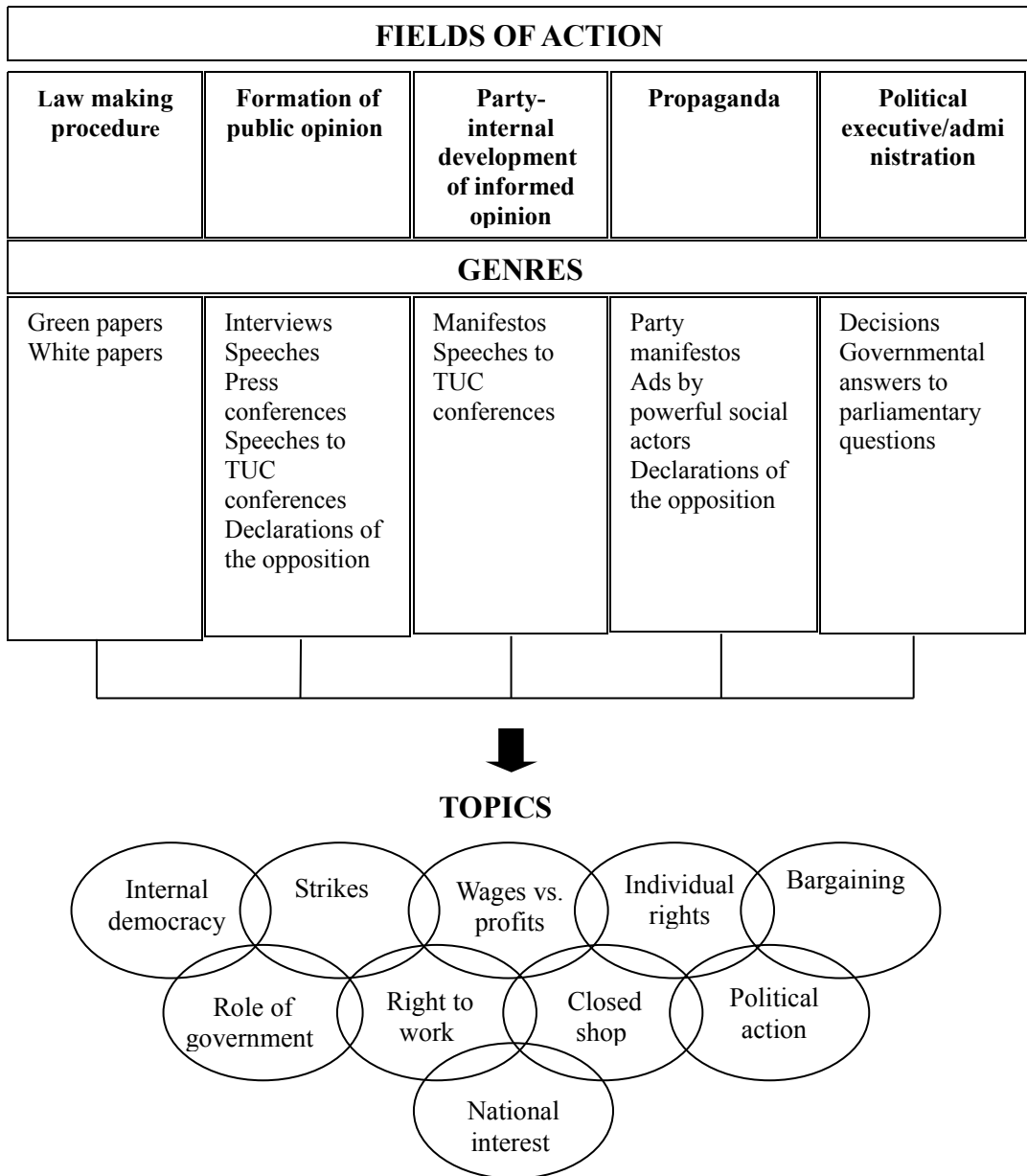


Figure 1 Selected dimension of discourse as social practice, adapted from Reisigl and Wodak (2001)

The figure puts together all the components used above and makes the relationship between them clearer. As it is possible to see from this figure, some genres can be ascribed to more than one social practice, indeed they can easily be directed to different audiences and doing more than one 'job' at the time. The visual representation of the topics also adds some pieces of information because it explains their

mutual relationship in a better way. Topics are not, in fact, closed clusters: they are all interconnected in the discourse of governments against trade unions.

1.4.3 Systemic functional linguistics as a second tool for the analysis

The analysis of which the results are shown in the present work has thus been undertaken with those topics in mind. Other characteristics which are considered to contribute to the identification of a specific discourse are taken into account, adapting the framework designed by Norman Fairclough in his work *Analysing Discourse* (2003). As in the work referred to above, the main point of reference in dealing with linguistic data has been Systemic Functional Linguistics, in the newer version of the discipline as illustrated by the new edition of *An introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday and Matthysen 2004). The approach has been considered the most suitable for the present analysis, as it is concerned with the relationship of language with other aspects of social life thus allowing for a linguistic analysis of texts always oriented to their social character. Thanks to this approach an operationalization of the research questions into the following linguistic categories was made possible.

Representation of social actors: the way in which texts construe trade unions and workers will be taken into account by looking at the grammatical features signaling inclusion/exclusion, grammatical role, activation/passivation. Semantic choices made in the attribution of characteristics to the social actors, will also be taken into account.

Classification: the way in which relations of equivalence and difference are built inside the texts. This is a very important facet of

the discourse about trade unions in that it shapes the way people think and act as social agents (Fairclough 2003). Instances of classification are identifiable in texts by the building of semantic relations of contrast between clauses and sentences (by the use of conjunctions such as 'but', 'instead of' and the like, or by the use of adverbials like 'however'). Relations of equivalence are built in texts by means of additive and elaborative relations (or example the use of lists puts the objects included in a relation of equivalence to one another).

Appearances vs Reality: The opposition between the representation of reality and the reality itself is done through the individuation of ideological representation of reality. The instruments needed for this form of critique, which is inscribed in the Marxist tradition, are the individuation of assumptions; the use of *topoi* and the use of unexpressed premises in the arguments. According to such approach the assumptions - be they existential, propositional or value ones- made in the texts under study will be looked for, and an evaluation of their possible ideological nature will be made. The appraisal of the soundness of an argument is not limited to the assessment of its formal correctness but it has to evaluate the truthfulness of the premises using the knowledge, of the researcher or of other specialists in the field, of the matters under discussion (Iețcu 2006; van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992).

CHAPTER TWO

The winter of discontent

2.1 A turning point in British history

The historical moment which came to be known as the 'Winter of Discontent' can be conventionally limited to the period of time which stretches from the starting of Ford car workers' strike (October 1978) to the defeat of the Labour government of James Callaghan in a motion of no confidence in the month of March (1979), thus bringing to a general election which saw the victory of the Conservative Party led by Margaret Thatcher¹². It is this a moment in which the crisis of the corporative organisation of British industrial policies – according to which trade unions as well as entrepreneurial representation bodies were consulted in matters of economic policies – that had been prevailing since the post-war years, shows its weakness in the most striking and evident way. Indeed after the car workers also the lorry drivers and the whole of the public sector workers went on strike, asking for wage rises which went far beyond the five per cent limit imposed by Callaghan's government for that year.

It is mostly with the images with which the media reported the public sector workers' strike that the moment of crisis has settled in the public imaginary, and it is those images that are recalled in a British citizen's mind whenever the expression Winter of Discontent is used. Television programmes and newspapers were full of images of uncollected rubbish, people sent back from hospitals and unburied bodies in cemeteries. The definition in itself is was a product of

12 On May 3rd general election the Conservative Party conquered 339 seats , against the Labour Party's 268. The turnout was a quite high one for Great Britain: 75 per cent of the electorate expressed its preference in the polls.

journalistic creativity; indeed it was coined by the then editor of *The Sun*, Larry Lamb. A second watchword which remains strictly linked with the historical moment is the expression “Crisis, what crisis?” wrongly, if not culpably, attributed to the Prime Minister by the same newspaper¹³. The expression became a symbol of the supposedly irresponsible attitude of James Callaghan in front of the problems which Britain was facing on his return (10th of January 1979) from an international summit in Guadalupe. Actually, Callaghan had never uttered those words. Indeed the expression had been previously published by the *Daily Mail*:

'Crisis, what crisis?' Seemed to be Whitehall's nonchalant response to the Premier's movements. Apparently, communications between Downing street and Barbados, where Mr Callaghan is going today, are so good that he can afford to make the most of his junket in the tropics.¹⁴

Thus the sentence was used by the tabloid to resume an attitude, but it was clearly not a reported speech. As Colin Hay (1996) rightly points out, the political protagonists of the Winter of Discontent were Margaret Thatcher and James Callaghan. The two were represented quite differently in the tabloids: as being nonchalant and unaware of the disruption in the country the Prime Minister, and active and rightly worried the contender, and forthcoming Premier, Margaret Thatcher. For this reason the texts chosen to represent this turning point in British history have the two of them as authors.

The first document is James Callaghan's speech at the TUC conference in Brighton (5th September 1978)¹⁵ shortly before the beginning of the Winter of Discontent, followed by two parliamentary debates held during the public sector strike of January 22nd 1979. The

13 *The Sun*, 11 January 1979

14 *The Daily Mail*, 8 January 1979

15 See appendix 1.

other document is an interview given by Margaret Thatcher to Itn tv (7th January 1979), in which the topics and strategies of the electoral campaign are set and presented to the general public.

2.2 Prime ministerial address to the TUC annual conference

2.2.1 The genre and its features

This genre has never been studied in depth, but some general characteristics can nonetheless be individuated. As it was shown on page 40, the address of the prime minister to the annual conference of the Trade Union Congress can be placed in two complementary governmental practices. On the one hand, by such semiotic device the Labour Prime Minister in charge was shaping public opinion, as parts of his speech were published in newspapers and thus the contents of it were bound to be read and interpreted by a vast discourse community (Swales 1990) – virtually as vast as the entire British population. On the other hand he was trying to create party internal consent to his policies, as trade unions, since the creation of the embryo of Labour in 1900, are the largest section of the party.

Nonetheless the most direct discourse community addressed by Labour Premiers is that of the delegates to the congress: trade unionist. Thus, one of the characteristics of the genre is the need of a direct appeal to the delegates, sometimes referred to also individually and by name, so as to show the familiarity of the speaker with the discourse community. The speeches are consequently always in the first person; sometimes referring to the prime minister alone (first person, singular), and sometimes to the government (first person, plural).

The purpose of the speech is multiple: it has to reaffirm the

belonging to the same party and the sharing of the general political project; that of inscribing the past government action in the wake of that project, and finally to ask for support of future policies on the same grounds. The fulfilment of such purposes is normally performed in the same temporal order described above.

This particular address was given by the prime minister before the wave of strikes started. In those days the relationship between the government and the trade unions was starting to show some problems because of the insistence on the part of the government to substitute free collective bargaining with a compulsory limit on pay increases. Nonetheless the TUC conference voted a motion in which they promised to support the Labour government at the forthcoming general election of 1979. The speech is a very famous and important one because Callaghan made it clear that he had no intention to call a general election before the natural end of his mandate.

2.2.2 Trade Unions as bulwark of working people's rights

Callaghan starts by challenging the image of trade unions as a problem for British industry given by the media:

I am very glad to have the opportunity of coming once again here and to express once more in the presence of a distinguished cohort of reporters my profound belief that the British trade union movement, strong and free, is an essential bulwark to protect the interests of every man and woman working in industry in this country. It ought not to be necessary to say this, but I say so because day by day a distorted image is being presented to the public of the work that is done by trade unionists in this country.

(Lines 1-5)

Following Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992), the structure of his argument is as follows:

1 THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IS A BULWARK FOR

THE PROTECTION OF THE WORKERS
2 A DISTORTED IMAGE OF IT IS GIVEN BY THE MEDIA
THUS
claim: PEOPLE SHOULD BE GIVEN A LESS DISTORTED
IMAGE OF TRADE UNIONS

In order to get from point 2 to his claim Callaghan, explains how the image of trade union's activity is distorted by the media: where he develops the sub-argument showed right after the abstract.

British industry as a whole is not a battleground. The overwhelming majority of firms in this country do not suffer strikes. Problems are resolved through negotiation. New practices and new methods are introduced by agreement. That is the standard form. That is the usual pattern. But it is the abnormal, the problems of one particular industry that catches the headlines and are then used to damn the whole. And they ignore the constructive work of thousands of union officials, many of you here today, who keep the production processes flowing smoothly.

(lines 8-14)

The structure of the argument is the following, with the premises numbered in increasing order and the claim reported at the end:

1 BRITISH INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE IS NOT A
BATTLEGROUND
1.1 THE STANDARD FORM OF THE RESOLUTION OF
PROBLEMS IS BY NEGOTIATION
1.2 IT IS THE NON-STANDARD FORM OF
RESOLUTION THAT CATCHES THE HEADLINES
1.3 THE CONSTRUCTIVE WORK OF TRADE UNIONS
IS IGNORED
2. (NEWSPAPERS DEPICT IT AS A BATTLEGROUND)
THEREFORE
claim: A DISTORTED IMAGE OF TRADE UNION ACTION IS
GIVEN BY THE MEDIA

The argumentation scheme is a subordinatively compound one; in it the first premise and the missing one put into parentheses relate to the standpoint while premises 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 refer to the first (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992:77). Such an argumentative choice is normally made when the arguer (author) thinks that the single

argumentation will not be accepted because it is itself in need of defence (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992:82). In the case under analysis, the choice made by Callaghan is justified by the fact that he was directly addressing the reporters present at the conference and only tangentially the trade unionist, as the first abstract reported shows. It is to the audience of journalists that this first argumentation is directed, indeed both to the audience of trade unionists and to himself “it ought not to be necessary to say this”. It could be argued that this move has to be ascribed also to the purpose of creating the sense of belonging to the same project, referred to above as a feature of this genre: by defending the trade union movement, Callaghan manages to put himself and his government on its side.

At a first glance the argument seems to be all in favour of British trade unions, but at a deeper and critical level the classic *topos of division* appears to be working against them. Indeed another missing premise to the line of thought here expressed is that the tough confrontation through strikes and pickets that makes British industrial relations be perceived as a battleground, is the non-standard, in a way, the wrong one. On the contrary, the cooperation of trade unions with the bosses is taken to be the norm. The *topos of division* is a rhetorical device normally used to counter the use of the *topos of generalization* (attaching the attributes of the species to the entire genus), by making the difference between the whole of a phenomenon and its parts clear. It is usually a clarifying one; one that is supposed to be welcomed by journalists because it is in accordance to what is normally considered part of their professional ethics. But in governmental discourse about trade unions this distinction is a tricky one, especially if made by a Labour politician, who should be quite aware of the fact that the strike

is just one of the possible initiatives that a trade union can undertake. Thus, in this case the part/whole *topos* works to make a distinction between good and bad trade unionism, where good unionism is the collaborative one and the bad one is the confrontational one. The systemic functional analysis of the actual realisation of the argument sheds more light on this fact.

Looking at the clause complex realised from line 1 to line 5 (quoted above) we see that the Trade Union movement is construed as the carrier of the attribute of being “an essential bulwark”; the clause is then expanded by the purposive subordinate clause “to protect the interests of every woman and man working in industry in this country”. Such a construal of Trade Unions doesn't come as a surprise from a man on the left of the political spectrum. The claim according to which Trade Unions are misrepresented by the media has as its first premise that “British industry as a whole is not a battleground” (lines 8-9, also quoted above), a relational clause with industry as a carrier of the attribute of 'not being a battleground'. In order to define the actions of trade unionists, Callaghan finds it necessary to focus the attention of those who listen to him on the environment in which trade unionists operate. What doesn't go unnoticed is that the carrier is postmodified in a way (“as a whole”) that leaves space for exceptions to the rule of not being a battleground.

This concept is then expanded by the clause on lines 9 to 11 (quoted above). In it “firms”, or better, “the overwhelming majority” of them, are the senser of the mental process of 'suffering', in the negative polarity, the painful phenomenon of “strikes”. This is quite a surprising way of representing the event of a breach in bargaining and the use of strikes, from a man on the left. Without directly

condemning the workers for the problems of industry, strikes are indeed construed as nearly natural events with no agency behind them. Callaghan construes the firms as victims and, what is more, capable of feeling pain.

In the lines 9 to 11 Callaghan construes, through a classification realised by building a list made by four non modalised relational clauses, the idea of what a 'standard form' or 'usual pattern' is in industrial relations: it is one in which problems are resolved through negotiation and new practices and methods are introduced through agreement.

Premise 1.3 of the argumentation scheme described above is realised in the text from line 11 to 14 (still quoted above). There, journalists are the sensors of the mental process of 'ignoring' the most common phenomenon of the “constructive work” of the “union officials”. The following clause, paratactically linked to the other, elaborates (Haliday 2004:378) on the “constructive work” by means of a material process where trade union officials are actors of the process of 'keeping the production process flowing smoothly'. Trade unionists, or at least trade union officials, are construed here as the only guarantee for a 'strike free' workplace; at the same time the production process is represented as something totally natural which would flow smoothly if the obstacles of strikes and union action were not on its way.

The same concept is repeated differently in the clause complex which closes the direct appeal to the press:

It is through an organised, self-disciplined workforce of trade union members that any enterprise will best secure co-operative production to meet its needs and to understand the needs of those who sell their labour to it.

(lines 20-23)

Here, through the use of the emphatic “it is” as starting point of the clause the author is enabled to put the prepositional group, which is a mere circumstance of manner (Halliday 2004:280), as the theme of the clause; thus the workforce is in thematic position in the clause, but from an ideational point of view is not even construed as a participant in the process. The material process of 'securing something' has “any enterprise” as the actor and “co-operative production” as its goal. The workforce will represent a favourable circumstance for enterprise to if it is “organised” and “self disciplined”, which, read on the light of the previous paragraph, means rapid and compact in responding to the orders of the officials.

2.2.3 Callaghan's Keynesian 'swan song': the role of the government in the corporatist organisation of the economy

Another important aspect for the working of trade unions is the conception of the role of government in the economy. Callaghan deals with the topic in lines 60 to 110. Here the Prime Minister makes it clear that the changes facing the British economy for the eighties, by which he means the technological changes (as the mechanisation of more production processes), but also a more competitive international market (lines 39-41 and 42-44), need an intervention by the government. That is why the opening statement of the section is a relational clause in which “an important role” is attributed to it.

The government has an important role to play in this. The actions of the governments in matters of economic policy will not by themselves, however, improve industrial performance.

(lines 60-62)

The statement of the first sentence is countered by the one that

follows it, where the governmental part is represented by “actions of governments” functionally working as actor of the material process of 'improving' the all important goal of “industrial performance”. The process is polarised: saying that the action of the government alone will not suffice for the goal, but it still creates a role for the government in the process. What is important here is that the use of the plural collective noun “actions” and “governments” makes it clear that the reference is not to the Labour Government but to any national government. Thus the responsibility of what happens in the economy taken far from national governments; naturalised as a phenomenon to which governments can only react. In the following clause the Prime Minister gets back to the British government, more specifically to the British Labour Government:

As a Government we can, and we will take measures that will create the right background for growth.

(lines 62-63)

The government is here construed as the actor of the material process of 'taking measures'; measures that are elaborated by the following clause as actors of the material process of creating “the right background” for growth. The clause complex is a linguistic representation of the Keynesian economic creed still defended by progressive governments at the time, with a strong emphasis on the role of governments as economic agents but a general acceptance of the laws of markets as natural laws. How ideological this is, is demonstrated by the fact that such a law has been widely challenged both in Marxist thought and by monetarists and 'hard-core' liberals such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, who managed to change both the ideological superstructure and the economic structure

at work in their countries, just a few months after this Keynesian *swan song*.

Such path of reasoning is taken to its end, and the role of the 'individual firm' in the success of the strategy is underlined.

But when it is all done, they will not by themselves bring a real industrial breakthrough. That will only happen at the level of the individual firm, in the management and on the shopfloor.

(lines 69-71)

The sentence is an adversative one, as the adversative preposition “but” signals: the function of the sentence is that of extending what has been said before by adding something new to it. The role of the private firm comes after the government intervention in the economy: “when it is all done”. Callaghan makes it clear that the real industrial success is the fruit of management and shopfloor cooperation: the opposite sides, capital and workforce, of the individual firm. Then he builds a classification (Fairclough 2003) with which he clarifies who is actually responsible, on this second level, for industrial success. From the government point of view those two sides, together with “government representatives” (line 75) are the “working parties”:

Hence the importance which the government has attached to the working parties in a number of industries.

(lines 72-74)

This classification puts forward a corporatist type of approach to industry, where the producers are not only the salaried workers, as it would be in a Marxist perspective, but all of those with a participation in the production process. Again such a perspective is fully an accordance, as well as functional to, a Keynesian approach to the economy.

2.2.4 *“It is up to you whether you take good advice or not”*.
'Argumentum ad baculum' in Callaghan's discourse

After a long part of the speech dedicated to explain how national policies are linked to, and limited from, other countries' choices, Callaghan puts forward a new argument dealing with the problem of inflation and the policies chosen by the Labour Government to fight it. Policies which were then being questioned by trade unions. Hence the need for an argumentation of the government's position which differs from the one of the trade unionists in the audience. The argumentation scheme is of an outstanding complexity. Indeed we have a multiple argumentation (the co-occurrence of more than one argument backing the same claim) claiming that the government policy against inflation should be accepted by trade unions. In its turn the second of those multiple arguments is a compound one:

At the July summit there was general agreement when we discussed Britain's position, that the best contribution we could make to renewed world growth would be for our Government to hold the rate of inflation firmly in check. Unless we do so we shall not be able to take advantage of any upturn in the world economy for which the others are now preparing. It was with this knowledge and against this background that the government published six weeks ago its policy for winning the battle against inflation. I come here today once more to ask for your support for this policy.

(lines 165-172)

The argumentation goes as follows:

1 OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS SAY THAT OUR
CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD ECONOMY WOULD
HAVE TO BE THAT OF REDUCING INFLATION

2 THE GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED A POLICY FOR
WINNING INFLATION

THUS

claim: YOU SHOULD SUPPORT OUR POLICY

In the first premise Callaghan makes reference to external

authorities, the other world leaders, as the source of an unquestionable truth from which the action of the government descends. The recourse to authorities, be it international governments or documents is a very common *topos* in political rhetoric, and it is defined by Aristotle as a sub-type of the *topos of testimony*. It works by making the statement very difficult to be countered because that would need a delegitimization of the external authority first.

The document — your document, my document — goes on to resolve that reducing the rate of inflation will continue to be a vital objective. Not only is there no difference between the trade union movement and the government on this, but what is more there is general acceptance of the need to beat inflation in the country as a whole. This has been a source of great strength to the government during the last 12 months. If we were left to fight the battle against inflation on our own it would be like putting the cavalry in to charge the tanks. So the Government continues. and will continue, to take the utmost care to acquaint the British people with the facts about inflation and the prospects for the future. You know my view — I have expressed it before — that pay clearly is not the only element that affects inflation.[...]

But although pay is by no means the only element in inflation, it is a vital factor and — just as important — it is a factor which lies within our control.

(Lines 178-197)

The coordinate argumentation is the following; the main one is presented first than each of the numbered premises is presented as a claim of the subordinate ones:

1 WE SHARE THE SAME OBJECTIVES
2 WE SHOULD INTERVENE ON PAY
3. (THE POLICY WE PROPOSE INTERVENES ON PAY)
THUS
claim: YOU SHOULD SUPPORT THE POLICY

1 YOU SIGNED A COMMON DOCUMENT ON INFLATION
THUS
claim 1: WE SHARE THE SAME OBJECTIVES

2.PAY IS NOT THE ONLY CAUSE OF INFLATION
1. PAY IS A CONTROLLABLE CAUSE OF IT
2. THE ONLY POSSIBILITY WE HAVE IS TO ACT ON

PAY

THUS

claim 2: WE SHOULD INTERVENE ON PAY

The *topos* which makes the first subordinate argumentation work is again one of testimony, in which the reference to a document is used as source of authority. The second subordinate argumentation finds its *locus* in a form of the *topos of advantage* which can be paraphrased as “if an action under a specific relevant point of view will be useful then one should perform it” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001:75).

Callaghan does not try to make the effectivity of the policy proposed pass as an incontestable truth. Indeed he knows that trade unionists do not agree with him on that. He tries then to explain the phenomenon by using the *topos of history*: he uses the figures of the previous year as a demonstration of the rightness of the policy. From line 217 to line 229, that is exactly what the Prime Minister does by making a list of the other measures of economic policy taken during the previous year: tax cuts, increase in public expenditure and pension increases, stating that they were successful. But stating as well that the fact that trade unions had accepted pay increases above the suggested 10 percent had undermined the policy:

I will tell you the reason why I think it has not been an unqualified success. A year ago we asked for increases in earnings to be limited to 10 per cent. Instead they look likely to turn out at about 14 per cent, although perhaps that figure could be reduced reasonably by one or two per cent because of self financing productivity deals. But the fact that earnings have gone over the ten per cent mark is making for more difficulty than we need, as indeed I forecast it would when I addressed you a year ago and urged you to keep within the ten per cent.

(Lines 230-232)

Callaghan cannot say directly to the trade unionists in the

audience that it was their fault, so he manages to say it indirectly. In the second sentence, remembering his former request of the 10 per cent limit, the Prime Minister puts the government as a sayer in the verbal process of *asking* but he does not specify who the receiver of the question is. He just puts an accent on the verbiage, the function that corresponds to what is said, representing it as a class of things (Halliday 2004:255), that is the wage freeze, which is in turn the actor of the material process of 'limiting' thus again hiding the social actor trade union. The actor is not even made explicit when the standard argument of trade unionists against the pay increase limit is reported by the prime minister.

I have heard it argued if inflation is around eight per cent then why do you expect us to settle for 5 percent?

(Line 244)

Indeed he starts the clause that projects the supposed words of trade unionists with a mental process where he is the senser and the position of the trade unionists the phenomenon, expressed in the dominant clause. In this way the trade unions are still excluded from the discourse. They get on the stage only in the clause complex unfolding from line 246 to 248, and only to be addressed directly as 'friends', what is more as "My friends". Once the emphatic appeal has been done, the responsibility of what happens is put altogether on the shoulders of trade unionists.

My friends, if you push for settlements on that basis you will be stepping on the escalator going up once again.

(Lines 246-248)

And the choice they have to make is construed as being as simple as that of choosing to take an escalator which brings directly to

inflation, or not.

Once the responsibility is made clear, the prime minister makes a direct appeal to them by building two opposed future scenarios with two parallel argumentations which is worth quoting and seeing schematized.

I say to you that if you accept five per cent, insofar as other factors remain constant, than inflation will probably be lower by the end of 1979 than it is today.

(Lines 248-250)

1 IF YOU ACCEPT 5 PER CENT
2 AND IF OTHER FACTORS STAY THE SAME
claim: THE INFLATION WILL BE LOWER

The parallel and opposite one goes from line 251 to 254:

On the other hand, exert your muscle, secure wages settlements higher than five percent, and I say to you [...] that if that is the outcome then inflation will probably be higher in a year's time than it is today.

1 IF YOU TAKE MORE THAN FIVE PER CENT
claim: INFLATION WILL BE HIGHER

The first striking difference is that in the positive scenario an uncontrollable element is included. What Callaghan says has to be taken as true only if the second condition is true. This means that if trade unions agree on the five percent and the year after inflation goes up it will be due to other factors. There is no certainty in the positive solution to the problem. That is why Callaghan modulates his statement by saying that “probably” inflation will be lower.

On the other hand, the negative scenario has as its only premise and cause the non-acceptance of the five per cent limit. A choice construed by Callaghan as a simple demonstration of strength by trade unionists: “exert your muscle”. The negative scenario is still defined

as 'probable' but no other element is taken into consideration.

According to the rules of a correct critical confrontation between two parties, outlined in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992), here Callaghan is committing a fallacy in the confrontation with the audience which does not share his point of view, as he knows. The Prime Minister is indeed using an *argumentum ad baculum* not in the sense that he is threatening the physical safety of the opponent, but because by threatening disastrous results he infringes its personal liberty by denying “the right to advance a standpoint, or to criticise it, as an attempt to eliminate [trade unions] as a serious partner in the discussion” (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992: 108).

The same authors argue that recognising an argument *at baculum* is not an easy task, but they provide some examples of the way in which such strategy can be realised stating that expressions such as “of course I leave it entirely to you to take your stand” or “naturally it is for you to know what you will or will not accept” followed by adversative statements (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992: 110) are an indication of it. This allows for the analysis above to be based on a safer ground.

Indeed on line 292, when talking about the possibility of reducing working hours as a premature one and asking for requests in that direction to be stopped, Callaghan states that:

It is up to you whether you take good advice or not.

This seems the last attempt of a father to convince a teenage son or daughter, when he knows that the only possibility of getting them do what he wishes is by scaring them, but in the end he knows they will do as they want. And they did. A few weeks later Ford car

workers were on strike, followed by lorry drivers and only after that by civil servants. The winter of discontent had started.

2.3 Report to the House of Commons on the Industrial Situation

2.3.1 House of commons Public Questions (PQ): characteristics of the genre and context of situation

The parliamentary PQ has been formally recognised as an institution in the British Parliament since 1869. the same institution, with the further specification of it being focussed on the Prime Minister dates back to 1961. As in most political genres, parliamentary Pqs have more than one discourse community of reference, but the Members of Parliament are still the most direct receivers of the information, while the general public of voters only gets a grasp of what goes on through newspaper or television reports.

The rules for the question time have been settled in the “British parliamentarians' rule book”, as well as its official function: 'to obtain information and to press for action'. But in the day to day use of the institution other functions, such as that of continuing the battle between the parties, have been found to be fulfilled (Chilton 2004:92). The genre is characterised by a system of question and answer that has been further developed during parliamentary practice in a simple device for turn taking. Questions are no longer used as requests of information, but purely “as initiations” (Chilton 2004:98) for the introduction of a topic, whereas the right of the “questioner” to comment on the answer received is an unmissable occasion to score a point in favour of the opposition party. When the question comes from the benches of the ruling party it is normally used to give the occasion

to the Prime Minister to state the point of view of the government. The information-function of the exchange is lost in favour of that of governmental defence of its policies.

The document under study here is a report of the House of Commons PQ held on January 22nd 1979, on the eve of a public sector strike decided by two of the unions representing civil servants, the Civil and Public Sector Association and the Society of Civic and Public Servants. The strike was the first one of the public sector, after the actions taken by Ford car workers and lorry drivers, and was followed by similar initiatives taken at every level by workers in the public sector in the following months. The importance of the document chosen lies in the fact that the prime minister and the leader of the opposition have a direct confrontation on the subject, and in the fact that this is just the beginning of the protest by employees in the public sector. It also marks the passage of the focus of the discussion from economy to “law and order” and “trade union power”.

2.3.2 An unjustifiable protest: the public sector strike

In this text Callaghan states that only two out of the nine trade unions present in the public service were going to go on strike. Ironically on the same day those words were spoken, London was witnessing the biggest walkout in its history since the general strike of 1926 as reported by the BBC¹⁶.

After stating that the two unions were to go on strike, Callaghan makes an evaluative statement about the action. The strike is called “unnecessary and unjustifiable” and “wrong both in principle and in

¹⁶ The march through London was the biggest street demonstration by trade unionists in Britain since the unofficial 1971 stoppage against the Industrial Relations Act, when 140,000 took part. http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/22/newsid_2506000/2506715.stm

practice”.

Rarely can there have been a more *unnecessary and unjustifiable* strike. This action and any continuing disruption are *wrong both in principle and in practice*. They are against the best long-term interests of the Civil Service and are contrary to the guidance recently issued by the TUC—to which both unions are affiliated—which emphasises that strikes are to be used only as a last resort. In no circumstances can the present position on negotiations be interpreted in that way.

(lines 17-22) [emphasis added]

The Prime Minister puts out an argument, trying to convince those trade unionists in parliament, and indirectly the MPs who had a strong link with trade unions, to renounce to the action. The argument being:

claim: THE STRIKE IS UNNECESSARY
1 THE STRIKE IS A LAST RESORT
 c) THE TUC STATED THIS IN A DOCUMENT
2 THE SITUATION IS NOT ONE TO STRIKE
 2.1 because THE CONTRACT HAS NOT EXPIRED YET
 2.2 and because THERE IS A COMMISSION WORKING
 ON PAY
 2.2.1 (THE GUIDELINES OF THE COMMISSION
 ARE ESSENTIAL TO START THE
 CONFRONTATION)
3 NEGOTIATION WILL START ONLY WHEN THE
COMMISSION WILL ISSUE ITS RECOMMENDATIONS
4 (WORKERS CAN GO ON STRIKE ONLY WHEN
NEGOTIATION IS AT A STANDSTILL AND LIKELY TO FAIL)
5 (BUT HERE NEGOTIATION HAS NOT EVEN STARTED)

The argumentation scheme used here is a symptomatic one, in which the acceptability of the premises is transferred to the claim (standpoint) by “making it understood”(Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992:97) that there is a relation of 'concomitance' between them. Thus to critically challenge the argument we could ask questions such as: is it true that the strike is only to be considered a “last resort”? The argument answers by making explicit reference to a document as a source of authority. We could go on, then, by asking

whether the TUC is entitled or not to decide when a strike should be used. Going on from this point, the argument states that the situation is not one to strike because talks have not even started, so they cannot have failed, and, here comes the *topos*: strike is an action that workers are allowed to take only if talks have failed, a specific version of the common *topos* according to which a reaction should be proportioned to the provocation received, a *topos of degree* (Reisigl and Wodak 2001). The argument only stands if the definition of strike as a last resort is shared, and the soundness of the second part of the argument is only of interest once the first one has passed the test. Strike is commonly felt as a last resort, also by the workers, because workers on strike have always lost their money in the action.

But a strike is not only an escalation in the confrontation between the two parties. It is also an instrument for the union to measure how far the discontent among their midst has gone, and a way of building unity and solidarity between the workers, by sharing a possibly painful experience; it is, in very few words, an instrument to build class consciousness (Luxemburg 1971). Thus it can be objected that the standstill of negotiation is a point too late in time for trade unions to go on strike. What is more, towards the employer, be it a private enterprise or the state, a strike is a demonstration of strength, which could be of use at the moment when the negotiations actually start.

Moreover, the timetable is not exactly as Callaghan depicts it. Indeed, the strike was decided by the lowest paid workers in the public sector for whom the announced limit of a five per cent increase – which the Prime Minister had no intention to withdraw – would mean a very grim perspective. If they were to wait for the commission

to issue its recommendations concerning pay in the public sector, which could come as late as the end of August, the contract would have had well expired.

2.3.3 Strikers as irresponsible militants

After the guarantee by the Prime Minister that the necessary measures to ensure basic services during the strike would be taken, the leader of the opposition Margaret Thatcher takes her turn and provokes his answer on a) the issue of the untrustworthiness of trade unions (who according to her were breaching an agreement signed with the government); b) the effectiveness of the contingency plans designed by the government and, finally, c) the closed shop as an institution that goes against individual rights. On the issue of the worthiness of signing agreements with the unions, or better with the TUC, Callaghan introduces the concept of 'responsibility'.

The proposed strike shows the importance of keeping the agreement with the TUC. I promise the right hon. Lady and the scoffers on her side of the House that there must be a sense of responsibility when agreements are entered into because nothing but a sense of responsibility will keep people at work.

(Lines 54 to 57)

Responsibility is construed in these lines as the factor that determines the respect of the agreements and the only thing that will keep people at work. This is done by construing it as an actor in the existential clause on lines 54-55 and in the material process on line 55-56. By putting an abstract concept as that of responsibility in actor's position, knowing that it will be interpreted as trade union's 'responsibility', the speaker 'locks the utterance'. Indeed if what he represents as a positive result of there being responsibility (respect of agreements and workers abstaining from the strike action) does not

happen, the negative result is automatically attributed to the lack of it.

While trying to reassure the House that contingency measures had been taken in order to keep essential services going, Callaghan construes trade union action, the specific trade union action dealt with in the House at that moment, through the following representation.

On contingency plans, I am told that what is planned by the unions is "a demonstration of what we can do". I hope that the right hon. Lady will not press me to say what the Government's response will be. There is no doubt that the unions propose a series of guerrilla actions to try to discomfort the public and to get at the Government machine in the most vulnerable areas. I ask the right hon. Lady not to press me to say what we are doing in response. I do not want to give those who are planning these strikes any more ammunition than I have to.

(Lines 60-66)

In line 60 Callaghan projects a locution which is supposedly spoken by the strikers, according to which the action taken is 'a demonstration of what they can do'. Then, classification (Fairclough 2003) is used to show what that means. Trade Union action is described as "guerrilla actions"; attempts to "discomfort" the public and to "get at" the government machine in its "most vulnerable areas".

Thus, the idea of what unions can do is defined by this classification as a true guerrilla strategy, which is a type of war that revolutionaries adopt when they are few and they have a regular army to face. The military semantic field thus activated is then confirmed by the use of the term 'ammunition'. The metaphor of the war of guerrillas is taken on. Indeed Callaghan refuses to say what his plans are to face the 'attack' because that would give the revolutionaries precious information, i.e "ammunition" to go on with their disruptive activity, it would signal even more "vulnerable areas" to hit.

Through those linguistic choices, an important distinction is

starting to be drawn between the part in the trade unions, usually represented by the officialdom of the TUC, which is considered a partner, and the more 'militant' part of it, which is deemed to be 'irresponsible'. The concept of 'responsibility' is defined throughout Callaghan's utterances in the text by the means of classification.

If it is the case that people believe that the only way that they can get anything is through strikes, it is important that the Government should make clear that they cannot be subjected to pressure in that way when *claims are irresponsible*. As I have said before, almost everyone in this country is central to the needs of the community. Almost any group can *upset the whole of the community* and bring things to a halt.

Therefore, I must make clear, as I do now, that we shall examine the claim—though none has been put in yet, because the evidence is still being evaluated [625]—on its merits, reach a conclusion on its merits and implement a settlement on its merits. That is the most important thing. We shall get into a *dangerous situation if any group thinks that it has the power to push the community around*. How many groups nowadays have that power? We have seen some signs of that attitude recently, and the community must stand up and say "Thus far and no farther".

(Lines 83-94) [emphasis added]

Indeed here the prime minister is answering to a provocation made by an MP (David Steel) according to which the unions which are going to go on strike know very well that this action is 'irresponsible' but think that acting 'irresponsibly' is the only way to deal with the government. On line 85 the feature of 'irresponsibility' is attached to the claims made by the unions. Thus, the refusal of the five per cent limit imposed by the government is irresponsible. But irresponsible towards whom?

The sentences that come after make it clear that trade unions acting in that way are irresponsible towards society, in that they abuse of the power to "upset the whole of the community" (line 87). And it is to the so called community that Callaghan makes his appeal to

“stand up and say thus far and no further”.

Thus another cleavage is created by the prime minister between society as a whole and workers who protest. But workers' organisations are statutorily bound and expected to have the interests of their members as their only aim. Thus, it is at least arguable that they should be called 'irresponsible' when they do not take into consideration the interests of the others¹⁷.

2.4 House of Commons Question Time

2.4.1 Context of the situation

The House of Commons debate under analysis here takes place on the day after the big demonstration by public servants in all the major cities of the country (22 January 1979). It takes the form of a question to the Prime Minister concerning his engagements, a strategy commonly used in parliament to have a debate on the hot topics of the day (Chilton 2004).

¹⁷ Callaghan's claims to this kind of responsibility towards the whole of society, that trade unions are supposedly betraying, goes against the definition of trade unions as accepted in international law. Indeed, to quote just one, convention number 87 of the International Labour Organisation states it clear in its article 10 that “the term organisation means any organisation of workers or of employers for furthering and defending the interests of workers or of employers”.

2.4.2 Market logic applied to public services: an ideological account

The general question which starts the debate gives the Prime Minister the possibility to talk about his meeting with the “working parties” in the electronics industry. It is with the “working parties” - the modern English version of the corporatist organisations made by trade unionist and managers of a same sector– that “progress” can be reviewed (line 5). Thus trade unions in working parties are legitimated to contribute to what is considered to be constructive work aimed at making the industry advance.

A question follows from this statement and it is again a sort of ballet move, done to introduce the principal character again, as the rules of the genre impose. In it Mike Thomas who has the right to retort to the Prime Minister's answer puts out two hot topics of the day: the approval of Callaghan's reaffirmation of the pay policy of the government, and the question of public servants on strike. Thomas makes it clear that the formula thought for the private sector (pay limits, productivity bargains and help for the low-paid) cannot work for the public one also because public sector workers see that other groups in the private sector get what they want. While he makes this statement Thomas takes the chance to make an accusation to the opposition, culpable of supporting firms that break the ceiling of five per cent. The reference is clearly to the failure of a disposition which prohibited Ford car industry to give its workers a 16 per cent increase in its wages, defeated by two votes in December 1978.

It is Callaghan's answer to the second part of the question that is more interesting for the present analysis.

On the last part of the question, of course the private sector is in a

different position from the public sector. There is at least some operation of market disciplines in the private sector and people can lose their jobs, as indeed they are losing them at present, especially in industries where they price themselves out of work. *The difference between that and the public sector is that nobody so far has lost his job as a result of wildly inflationary wage increases* over previous years. It is essential to be absolutely frank, and I must point out that there are limits to what the Government are prepared to ask Parliament to vote in the way of votes for public expenditure. Therefore, if more money is taken out in higher wages because of the comparisons to which my hon. Friend correctly draws attention, there is less money for the services which the public employees are there to provide. That is an inescapable truth.

(Lines 23-34) [emphasis added]

Here the prime minister starts by acknowledging that there is a difference between the two sectors. He then surprises us with an interpretation of the question that we would not expect from a labour leader and former trade unionist as he is. As stated before, the question seemed to point the finger on the responsibility of the opposition in backing some private firms which granted to workers increases around the 10 per cent. Such a measure would put workers in the public sector in the very difficult position of having their salaries increased of half the percentage of the rest of the working population. Instead Callaghan answers to the question by saying, roughly, that yes, there is a difference between private and public sector and it is that in the public sector the boss (the government) is not free to sack the workers as in the private one. He then grasps the opportunity to subtly threaten public sector workers with the possibility of unemployment. First of all we can give a look at the arguments that he uses.

Claim: PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS ARE SUBJECT TO
MARKET RULES, PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS ARE NOT
1 WORKERS WHO DON'T PLAY BY THOSE RULES IN THE
PRIVATE SECTOR ARE PUNISHED WITH UNEMPLOYMENT
2 WORKERS WHO DON'T PLAY BY THOSE RULES IN THE
PUBLIC SECTOR ARE NOT PUNISHED WITH
UNEMPLOYMENT

3 (WHAT IS RIGHT FOR ONE TYPE OF WORKER SHOULD BE RIGHT FOR THE OTHERS TOO)

4 (MARKET DISCIPLINE IS NEUTRAL AND NATURAL)

The *topos* working here is the very common one that the same rules should apply to all the players in the same game. But there is a problem with both the other missing premise (that market forces are natural and neutral) and with the fact that those rules should apply to public servants. Indeed it is highly questionable that a public service should respond to market rules. The services offered by the state in a Keynesian type of economy are there exactly because it is commonly agreed that market mechanisms produce problems and the state should correct those problems and protect the most vulnerable sectors of society by supplying services that respond to a logic of public good or utility and not to that of the market (Jessop 2002).

What is more, putting a state and the services it gives to the population in a relation of analogy with the market would mean that the state is also pointing to make an economic profit from its activities, a premise with which the same James Callaghan in another situation would not agree. In the development of the argument Callaghan uses a very strong and important expression when he says that workers in some industries “price themselves out of work”. The sentence starts on line 25 and it is part of a clause complex being linked to the previous by a relationship of additive parataxis as expressed by the conjunction “and”. We can treat it as an independent one because it is not subordinate to the one that precedes it. Here “people” are the actor of the material process of 'loosing' and the jobs are the goal, but it is the subordinate spatial clause which starts on line 26 which brings an element of novelty. Indeed there Callaghan says that in certain industries people, “they”, are responsible for the loss

because they 'price themselves out of the job'.

Thus workers are represented as actors of a self-hurting process. In order to show how ideological such an account is, it is necessary to refer to other possible accounts of the same reality. First of all, a Marxist account of the working of the labour market makes it clear that what is there to be priced is the 'labour-power' and not the worker, and secondly the price of the labour-power is not as that of a another good: that if it is too high it may discourage the buyer from taking it. Indeed labour-power is a 'fictitious commodity', in that its production, as well as that of land, knowledge and money, is not

created in a profit-oriented labour process subject to the typical competitive pressures of market forces to rationalise its production and reduce the turnover time of invested capital

(Jessop 2002:11).

Callaghan's representation of the process is ideological as well, being the conception of work-power as commodity fundamentally ideological. Indeed it only works if we conceive of the labour market as a commodity market and of market in general as a natural unchangeable reality, which is simply false if we adopt a Marxist account of how the capitalist system works.

2.4.3 The topos of the 'too short blanket'

Descending from the argument above is the threat that the Prime Minister makes to the civil servants on strike that they could start loosing their job if they go on asking for higher wages.

Claim CIVIL SERVANTS COULD START LOOSING THEIR JOB

1 THERE IS A LIMIT OF ACCEPTANCE FOR NEW EXPENDITURE IN PUBLIC SERVICE

2 THUS IF WE GIVE HIGH SALARIES WE WOULD HAVE TO CUT SERVICES

Here a very common *topos* in government discourse, mainly used by social-democratic governments, is at work and it is that of the 'limited resources', which I would like to call of the 'too short blanket', that roughly says 'as the resources are limited we cannot spend more on one side without cutting on another'. The *topos* in this case is based on a false analogy (Reisigl and Wodak 2001) in the sense that the resources of a government cannot be thought of as a too short blanket, indeed governments have the possibility to look for more resources if they are needed to give necessary services to the public. Through taxation governments can finance more expenditures. What is more, in this case the Prime Minister makes it clear that it is the government, his government, who is not willing to ask parliament for new expenditures (line 29).

2.4.4 Pickets and strikes as instruments against the “right to work”:

Callaghan against the ILO

Answering to the provocation of Margaret Thatcher on the possibility for workers who do not agree with the reasons of the strike “to carry on working without interference”, Callaghan talks about his conception of pickets.

I assert very clearly, as I always have done, that everyone has the right to work and everyone has the right to cross a picket line. It is not a sacred object. If, when people are stopped—if they choose to stop—they desire to go on, there is nothing in the criminal law or the civil law to stop them from carrying out their duties. I hope that they will so do.

(Lines 49-53)

Instead of challenging Thatcher's mistaken interpretation of the international rules which apply to pickets – considered by the ILO as legitimate instruments of protest with the only limit of the use of

violence¹⁸ – and saying that if pickets are there it is exactly because they want to interfere and have the right to do so, Callaghan states that there is instead a 'right to cross a picket line, which until Margaret Thatcher came to power had been stated nowhere else.

During the debate Callaghan was also facing protests from his own party. An Mp accused him and his government of trying to avoid workers and thinking 'themselves too good to rub shoulders with them'. To which Callaghan replies on lines from 72 to 76 by stating that he knew a great deal of workers as the following quotation shows.

I can assure my hon. Friend that I think that I have known as many workers in Britain as she has known, and for a long period, and I rub shoulders with them very often and will continue to do so. I think that I know what a great many of them are feeling at present. They are feeling that a great deal of what is going on is totally unnecessary and should be stopped.

Thus Callaghan attributes his own thinking, even his own words to “a great many” of workers (how great is that many?) who supposedly think that “a great deal” (how great, what in particular is the part of the deal in question?) of what is happening should be stopped. The rhetorical strategy of attributing ones thoughts to the group one is accused to be despising is a very common one in political discourse, normally used because the group in question is never there to argue the contrary.

18 “Restrictions on pickets and workplace occupations should be limited to cases where the action ceases to be peaceful” (ILO, 1994a, paras. 173 and 174 and 1996d, paras. 583 and 584)

2.4.5 Legislation on trade unions, a populist measure that people won't like

When provoked about the need of legislation on the issue of industrial disputes and trade union rights by Margaret Thatcher on lines 41 to 42, Callaghan did not answer satisfactorily according to a labour MP's judgement; thus Mr Fernyhough put the issue out again by stating that the results of the royal commission on the matter would convince the leader of the opposition of the uselessness of such measures in facing industrial unrest. In this way Callaghan is given the opportunity to state his position, and the position of his government, in a more complete manner. He indeed says :

As regards the impact of legislation on trade unions and on the behaviour of individuals, I have always expressed my scepticism about its efficacy. Indeed, we have had practical experience of it. There do come times when a nation's patience may run out, and then, despite the unwisdom of the legislation, it might be shackled upon the trade unions, to the overwhelming dislike of the country in the long run and, I believe, to a great disintegration of our society.

(Lines 163-168)

An argument which can be represented as follows:

Claim LEGISLATION ON TRADE UNIONS IS INEFFECTIVE
AND CAUSES DISINTEGRATION

1 WE HAVE HAD PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF IT

1.1 IN THE PAST IT HAS BEEN DONE TO RESPOND
TO NATION'S PATIENCE RUNNING OUT

2 THE COUNTRY OVERWHELMINGLY DISLIKES IT

The two premises used to support both aspects of the claim lay on two different *topoi* the first one being based on history, claiming its scarce effectiveness, and the second one on that of popular dislike of it. What is more, Callaghan makes it clear that when such legislation has been put in force it has been as a result of 'nation's patience' running out and explains that such popular discontent should not be

used as a reason to introduce legislation. Thus, popular feelings are used both to support and to counter legislation on trade union rights and industrial disputes, with the difference that it is the feeling of a moment that suggests to do it whereas in the long run citizens seem to get a more precise grasp of the situation. Reading Callaghan's argument at the light of what has happened in the years to come is like reading a prophecy. Indeed the forthcoming conservative government will draw on exactly those feelings to introduce its legislation and, as the table with the MORI poll reported in the appendix 2 (page 344) shows, the reaction of the public have followed the curve suggested by Callaghan. Still the argument used is to be considered, if not unsound, at least badly supported, indeed it is highly questionable whether public support, be it on the long or on the short run, is an appropriate reason for the introduction of legislation. Moreover the soundness of the comparison of what had happened in the past with the situation England was facing at that historic moment is not properly backed by the Prime Minister.

2.5 Margaret Thatcher interview for Itn tv 7th January 1979

2.5.1 The long electoral campaign of 1979

This document precedes the others by 15 days, but it has been put at the end of the chapter because it is a useful bridge towards the starting of Margaret Thatcher's career as prime minister. It is an interview given by the leader of the opposition before the loss of the motion of confidence by Callaghan's government, in March, but it seems nonetheless to be a pre-electoral interview. Margaret Thatcher appears after a first part of the broadcast during which an article about how the conservatives were approaching the general election has been shown

to the public.

2.5.2 *Setting the agenda: the problem of trade union power*

Thatcher answers to the interviewer's question on the possibility to go on with tripartite talks and income policies by trying to subvert the point stated by the journalist.

Can I just make one point first? I think you've got the debate on the wrong point. Why people are talking so much about incomes policies and having government impose incomes policies on the unions is because they fear the *power of the unions*. Every power implies responsibility, every liberty a duty. The unions have tremendous power over the years. Power enough to smash any incomes policy. They smashed ours, [Edward Heath] Ted's policy, it was statutory. So incomes policies as such will not work to keep inflation down. Monetary policy could keep it down, but not alone, without causing other problems. So people have gone to the debate on incomes policy, when what they really should be debating, and the great debate should be on, *how Unions use their power*.

(Lines 11-20) [emphasis added]

She manages to change the topic of the discussion by using the following argument:

claim THE DEBATE SHOULD BE ON HOW TRADE UNIONS
USE THEIR POWER AND NOT ON THE INCOMES POLICY
1 THE DEBATE IS ON THE WRONG ISSUE
2 THE DEBATE IS ON THE INCOMES POLICY
BECAUSE OF FEAR OF TRADE UNION POWER
2.1.1 (FEAR IS A BAD ADVISER)
3 INCOMES POLICY IS USELESS BECAUSE UNIONS CAN
SMASH IT
3.1 IT HAS HAPPENED IN THE PAST
4 (IF SOMETHING GOES AGAINST THE SOLUTION TO A
PROBLEM THAN THAT IS THE PROBLEM)

In this argument many *topoi* are at work. First of all premise 2 is a causality argument (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992), thus some doubt can be put on the truthfulness of what is stated. Thatcher does not give any proof of the fact that the debate is focussed on the wrong issue because of fear of trade union power. Reasons for the

debate being on the wrong issue could be because of scarce information or because of government discourse focussing on that, more than because of fear. Moreover the argument only works if we accept that fear should not be taken into consideration, but fear is one of the factors that allowed the conservation of the human species. Fear is a very good adviser when it suggests us not to jump from a very high place or in similar situations. To this Thatcher adds the fact that no income policy can work exactly because trade unions have the power to smash it and she tries to prove it by using the *topos of history*. But it is the missing premise (premise 4) that makes the whole structure work, thus if the incomes policy doesn't work because of trade union power the problem must necessarily be Trade Union power, or better, the way they use it.

In the argument above what starts as 'power of the unions' on line 13 thus represented as an immanent characteristic of trade unions, ends up being as 'how unions use their power' on line 20. Thus the problem seems to be not much the fact that unions have power, but in the fact that when unions become actors, and not a mere postmodifier of a goal as in line 13, they use that activated role in such a way that cannot be accepted. This is a very important linguistic choice from M. Thatcher, indeed first of all she manages to attribute to unions a power without the need to demonstrate it. Moreover she manages to introduce the issue of responsibility – the fact that when you have power you should use it responsibly – by allowing for a postmodification of the use of power by the unions. The linguistic transformation is made explicit by Thatcher:

There are two things, the existence of the power, and how it's used.

(Lines 20-21)

In the interview she will manage to challenge them both. The fact that trade unions have too much power is illustrated in the second slot of her intervention.

I hope it will get a public debate going on the right issues. After all, there's a tremendous amount of trade union law; the law consisted of exempting trade unions from certain legal provisions, which apply to other people. I just looked back the other day at some of the early history, you know they were put above the law in some respects in 1906, when there were only 1½ million members of trade unions, now there are 11 million members.

(Lines 23-28)

Here the most important discursive move is that of stating that trade union immunities are now anachronistic because they were introduced when trade unions were small and workers heavily exploited in factories. The argument goes like this:

claim THE DEBATE OUGHT TO BE ON HOW UNIONS USE
THEIR POWER
1 IMMUNITIES FOR UNION WERE PUT WHEN THEY WERE
FEW
2 THE CONDITIONS HAVE CHANGED TOTALLY
2.1 NOW THEY ARE 11 MILLION
2.1.1 (IF CONDITIONS HAVE CHANGED
RULES HAVE TO CHANGE)
3 (WHEN A RIGHT IS TOO WIDESPREAD IT SHOULD BE
TAKEN AWAY)

Thatcher's argument in this case is to be considered unsound. Indeed there are not enough premises to get to the claim, but there are enough premises to say that the rules should be changed because trade unions and the workers they represent are not as weak as they used to be. There is a more general *topos* at work here: subaltern categories should stop being protected when they are considered not to be subaltern any more. This *topos* is frequently used also when anti-discrimination measures are concerned (measures to improve women's

or ethnic minorities' conditions for example). What needs to be demonstrated, in that case, is the fact that a full equality has really been reached, which is not generally the case when such *topos* is used. Indeed it comes to the surface only in moments when the so-called 'normal people', i.e. white males middle-aged in good health and with a job, suddenly start to see the positive discrimination measures as a threat to their acquired status, which usually happens well before those policies start really working. Indeed it is highly questionable that the British working class in the seventies was really as powerful as it was thought to be (Coates 1994; Taylor 1993). It can be argued that for the very fact that someone is obliged to sell his/hers labour power in the labour market, automatically he/she is in a subaltern position.

What Thatcher is saying is that the workers, united in a group of 11 million, are not as weak as they used to be. By stating this Thatcher turns the very important concept of workers' unity, which is at the base of every trade union, against the unions. Indeed the very goal of trade unionism, representing and organising the entire working class in a country, is used as a point against them, against the maintenance of the rights they managed to win. The fact that they won those rights and that they use them in the name of a very big number of people seems to be a sufficient reason to talk about 'power' 'abuse' and 'privileges', and not about 'rights'.

2.5.3 Individual rights vs collective power

Every time a collective right is talked about it is called a power. "Right" is a very uncommon word in the text and it is only used with reference to rights of the individual against the group.

they removed the right of a person to have compensation for loss of his job because of a closed shop

(Line 370)

Or it is the goal of process (meaning harm or damage) with trade unions as actors.

they are damaging the rights of their fellow trade unionists just as much as they're damaging the rights of those of us who are not trade unionists.

(Line 310)

Thus we can hypothesize that in Thatcher's discourse when a right is enjoyed collectively it immediately becomes a power. And power is something that has to be enjoyed without being noticed because everyone is against power and its abuse.

What is more, those powers are represented as a gracious concession, something that has been given not as the acknowledgement of a changed relationship between social forces, where workers managed to get a bigger share thanks to their fights, but as an unjustified present to them, granted by someone who had the power to do it. As a matter of fact the majority of historical accounts interpret the new rights gained by workers as the result of both economic factors, high growth and periods of nearly full employment, and of the actions of the working class united in the trade unions (Taylor 1993). When Thatcher speaks, those economic factors have changed: unemployment is high and the western economies are facing a crisis. It is the moment for an employers' counter-offensive and the signs of it are evident in language. Indeed if we look in more detail to the transitivity structure of the pivotal sentence in this part of the interview we see this clearly.

they were put above the law not to have licence to inflict damage, harm or injury on other people. They were put above the law then because it was thought that they needed it to get decent wages.

(Lines 30-32)

Here unions are represented as passive participants of a material process of which we don't really know the active participant. The actor could be considered to be the parliament, but Thatcher doesn't specify it. From the reference to the act of 1906¹⁹ we can get to the real actor which is omitted by the text. Indeed the 1906 act was passed by a liberal government (in a parliament in which the Labour Representation Committee formed in 1900 had just 29 seats). What the account of Thatcher hides, with its transitive structure is that the act of 1906 was gained by trade unions with a wide sort of actions in defiance of the law, and that the battle was won by the unions because liberal politicians had to recognise their strength.

This far for what the attack on union's power. But the second, and more important in Thatcher's discourse here, is “how they use their power”. Thatcher makes it clear that TU use their power to inflict damage to others.

This is what the debate has got to be about—How unions use their power. I'm a Parliamentarian, I am not in Parliament to enable anyone to have a licence to inflict harm, damage and injury on others and be immune from the law, and if I see it happening, then I've got to take action.

(Lines 35-39)

In no other way could the use of an expanding paratactic clause (punctuation cannot be taken to be too significant because being this a transcript, punctuation has been added in a later moment) be interpreted. It is quite clear that with the sentence on line 35 the leader

19 The Trade Unions Dispute Act.

of the opposition is in some way stating the topic of the utterance and that the following clause complex has the function to expand it even if the two are separated by a full stop. How unions use their power is described by the use of a list. First of all they use it as a 'licence' (and we know that democracy allows for individual rights provided they do not become licence); an interesting lexical choice functional to the attack on what others would define rights. What is more, this licence has been graciously given to them by parliament, thus how unions use this unexpected present is something on which the giver has a right to put its word. As parents do with the toys they give to their children. The subordinate causal clause explains with a list what trade unions, now actors of the process, do with their 'toy': they "inflict arm damage and injury on others".

2.5.4 Responsibility is... 'going against one's interest'

The preceding representation opens the possibility for Thatcher to introduce her concept of 'responsibility' which characterises the conservative discourse in the eighties. A control of the occurrences of the concept in the text through a concordancer such as AntConc 3.2.0 gives back eleven hits. Of those 3 are referred to bosses, who in Margaret Thatcher's view should not ask for a law which obliges them not to give tax rebuttals to workers when they are on strike, but who should refuse to give it because no law obliges them to do it. The rest is referred to trade unions and workers. Both contexts, nonetheless, contribute to make clear that Thatcher's concept of responsibility has to be defined through its relationship with the law. In the case of the bosses the relationship is one of subsidiarity, if we may say so. On lines 238-239 Thatcher says:

he's a responsible person and should make his own choice

“He” refers to the hypothetical boss who would like to have legislation obliging him not to pay tax rebuttals to workers on strike, referred to by the interviewer. Thus, law cannot be used to prevent people, in this case bosses, from making a free choice. In this case it is not clear what the results could be. Indeed the hypothetical situation described by the interviewer is one where the boss fears that he could not 'get away with not giving them their rebates' unless the government legislates on the matter. Thatcher goes against this idea of the law as a shield for individual action. Indeed there is no law that obliges bosses to give tax rebuttals to workers on strike. Whereas law cannot be used to escape responsibility, for what bosses are concerned, in the case of trade unions, law has to be used to correct their lack of responsibility. The lack of responsibility is in a relation of analogy with the will to “smash the system”:

I don't believe there are 11 million irresponsible people. There might among that 11 million be a few tens of thousands wanting to smash the system.

(Lines from 51-54)

The second clause expands the meaning of irresponsibility as a will to smash the system. With this in mind, the argument described above can be further explained. When Thatcher says that trade unions have been given powers “provided they use them responsibly” (line 419) she is making the missing connection between the powers and their use, and by stating that, she is opening the road to a change in legislation on the matter. The line of reasoning is an easy one: if trade unions have been given the powers from parliament under the condition that they use it responsibly and then parliament sees that the use of such powers is irresponsible, i.e it is used to 'smash the system'

or to 'inflict damage to others', than it is in the right of parliament to take that power back.

2.5.5 *No fear; the Iron Lady is here*

The whole of the interview is pervaded by a sense of fear. Trade unions are feared by people, by other workers and by politicians on both sides. Such is the sentiment of fear that trade union power cannot even be discussed. Thatcher represents herself as the fearless heroine who decides to tackle the problem:

I [...] thought someone's got to grasp this nettle, dare I? And I did.
(Lines 70-71)

What is more, TU power is feared by trade union members too:

... and I expect many members of trade unions themselves to go to their union leaders and say "Hey, we're unionists too, we're trade unionists too, what are you doing about stopping those others inflicting damage on us and our wives"
(Lines 39-42)

Thatcher reports an hypothetical speech of a trade union member, an hypothetical utterance that makes clear that trade unionists on strike are damaging other trade union members, who are themselves victims of trade union power in their social role of consumers, disturbed by the strike actions of other sectors:

the fact is that *under trade union powers* at the moment, we've got to the stage when each and every trade union has more power to inflict damage on others than it has power to protect its own members from damage inflicted by other trade unions
(Lines 341-344)

The realisation “under trade union power” is a powerful one, indeed it places trade union power in the same position of an authority which has the possibility to impose its will on other social actors. The collocation is similar to “under the law”, or “under (whatever) government”. In the same turn, Thatcher offers an explanation for the

fact that Trade Unions seem to be more interested in inflicting damage to others than to protecting their members: they lost their ideals. Here a conservative would-be prime minister invites trade unions to go back to their original ideals .

why don't they look to their ideals again?

(line 345)

2.5.6 Back to the Victorian era, when poor people knew their place

'Why' is a good question for the analyst too in this case: why is Margaret Thatcher saying this? First of all we have to read this appeal to the past ideals against the background of one of Thatcher's *leit motifs* that is the return to Victorian values. For the working class that meant being aware of their subaltern position and relying on the compassion of the more well-off to make their lives a bit better. The ideals Thatcher is referring to are those of the friendly society-type of trade unionism. A trade unionism whose main aim was to build a protection net around the workers and not to fight for the advancement of their conditions. Indeed it was just in the last 30 years of Queen Victoria's reign that trade unions started to be a more assertive force in British society, and only in the last decade of the century that the wave of the 'new unionism' started to organise unskilled labourers and to face the use of 'free labour', which means non-unionised labour used against strikers (Ewing 2006:71). It is thanks to this new wave and to the struggles of those years that trade unions managed to have a liberal government to pass the Trades Dispute Act of 1906.

The role of legislation in this matter has than been established and the provisions of law which will be the centre of Thatcher's action in the eighties are introduced in this interview.

In 1974, we could introduce certain safeguards. The moment the Labour party got a majority, they introduced the closed shop, you could have sympathetic strikes, even if they were in sympathy with overseas things.

(Lines 379-382)

Thus, through legislation things such as sympathetic strikes and the closed shop were introduced, and this means that it is legitimate to intervene with legislation on such things. This intervention is seen as the establishment of 'safeguards' against someone who has got the “power to hold the nation at ransom” (line 441) and against those who use their power “against the sick, the elderly, the children”. By classifying in this way the categories of persons who suffer trade union action, the representation of unions as powerful is further reinforced. Thatcher tries to reinforce again this representation by stating on line 491 that:

They are confronting the public, the sick the elderly

The meaningfulness of Thatcher choices in the transitive structure can be made more explicit by looking at alternative ways to depict the same situation. Trade unionists and workers on strike would not say that they are confronting those categories; they would say that they are confronting the bosses of the firms or the government (in the case of the public sector) and that the problems for the weak categories are a result of the rigidity of their counterpart. Thus a different account of the situation, for example in a public service strike would be: 'By resisting to our claims, the government is causing problems to the weak parts of our society because it does not guarantee a good service to them'.

A totally new topic comes out towards the end of the interview. Indeed on line 511 Margaret Thatcher states that the perception of this

issue has changed a lot in the last years. The result of the general election later that year, an election which was played mostly on the issue of “trade union power” demonstrated that she was right.

CHAPTER THREE

Margaret Thatcher's first mandate

3.1 From the electoral battle against trade union power to the first round of anti-union legislation with the “salami tactic”

The electoral campaign which led to Margaret Thatcher's first victory in a general election since her appointment as leader of the Conservative party, in 1975, was officially a short one. Indeed it started when the opposition managed to have a motion of no confidence passed on the issue of devolution. The motion passed by one vote on March 28th 1979, when the Scottish National Party withdrew its support for the Scotland Act. Thus the official electoral campaign started unexpectedly with seven months of advance (indeed elections could have been called as late as in the month of October of the same year), but as pointed out in the previous chapter, it had unofficially started with the industrial unrest that had characterised the winter of 1978-79.

The campaign was mostly played around the issues of the industrial situation and the fight against inflation and Margaret Thatcher managed to make her cure for the British economy be perceived as the most effective one. In this process, and this is a true novelty in a European country, she was helped also by an advertising firm, Saatchi & Saatchi, which left its role of mere supporter and directed the entire electoral campaign for the Conservative Party. It is theirs the famous poster, used in 1979, with a long queue of men in front of an unemployment office bearing the slogan “Labour isn't Working” which remains one of the most famous and successful in the

history of British electoral campaigns²⁰. The election was finally held on May 3rd. With such an aggressive and well organised campaign the Conservative Party went to parliament with a majority 339 Mps, as opposed to Labour representatives which were 269.

The majority obtained meant that Margaret Thatcher could implement her monetarist revolution, but she did not push her limits too far in the first mandate which, from an industrial relations point of view was distinguished by the use of what Callinicos and Simmons (1985) called “salami tactic”²¹. The strategy at work in the context of anti-trade union law-making process - rightly called by Robert Taylor “The taming of trade unions” (Taylor 1993) - is well represented by the declarations of Thatcher's Employment Secretary, James Prior (May 1979 – September 1981):

It would have been easy for the Government to go too far in changing the law and to do so too fast; we would then find not only the unions but also businesses and most of the country would unite in saying that we had produced a scheme of law that was unworkable. *A more cautious step by step approach would also make it virtually impossible for the unions to whip up an effective campaign of opposition since the measures being introduced could scarcely be portrayed as draconian.*

(Prior 1986:158) [emphasis added]

Thus the idea was that of implementing various policy measures in order to erode trade union rights little by little. The texts analysed in this chapter are: the part of the conservative electoral manifesto of 1979 dedicated to trade union reform, and the Green Paper “Trade

20 More recently Saatchi&Saatchi has won contract for Gordon Brown's New Labour, with the slogan “Not flash, just Gordon”, which will be used when the current prime minister will decide to hold an election.

21 Originally used to describe the strategy by which ruling Communist parties in the eastern block in Europe managed to maintain the power by building alliances with their enemies, the salami tactic generally defines a strategy by which a powerful player presents problems or solutions in pieces in order to hide the general aim of its actions. The term is used to define the conservative government's strategy against trade unions, with which Margaret Thatcher managed to abolish trade union rights by the implementation of 6 bills, passed at a “security distance” one from the other.

Union Immunities”, published in 1981.

3.2 The electoral manifesto of 1979

3.2.1 The text and the characteristics of the genre

The chapter dedicated to trade unions in the manifesto is the second chapter, entitled “Trade Union Reform”, divided into six paragraphs. The first paragraph introduces the idea that a reform of trade union laws has to be made, then the following three paragraphs explain more what are the aspects that most urgently need a reform “at once” (line 58). Such areas are notably: picketing, the closed shop and measures to ensure a wider participation of workers in the life and decision of the unions. The two closing paragraphs deal with strikes and pay bargaining and their titles are significantly “Too many strikes” and “Responsible pay bargaining”.

As said before, the introductory paragraph puts forward the argument for the need of a reform. It has to be said that the text is a very complex one and instances of 'sub-arguments' can be found throughout it, inside the leading arguments. But to make a choice it is important to bear in mind the characteristic of the genre which the text under study belongs to. Indeed, an electoral manifesto is a form of political discourse that, through the representation of the political situation and the constant self-definition of the proposing party, aims at gaining the support of the electorate (Bondi Paganelli 1984). Nonetheless, the manifesto is nearly never read directly by Her Majesty's subjects; the majority of the voters get an idea of what the contents are through the descriptions and the commentaries made by the mass media during the electoral campaign. In a simple majority

electoral system as the British one, where Mps are deemed responsible towards their constituency of what they do in the assembly, the manifesto also keeps its original purpose of “programme for the government” of the country. Thus, much of the legislation implemented during the years of office of a government directly descends from it. Taking into consideration both the features of the genre and the scope of the analysis, I focussed on the analysis of the argumentations that have as a claim the need to reform the existing policies or introduce new ones.

3.2.2 The broken balance: legislating for the National Interest

The overall argument, which contains all the others unfolds in the whole of the text. To simplify the reading of the analysis I have decided to introduce the scheme that it follows first. The claim presented here will be the same throughout the analysis of the paragraph; that is the reason why it will be repeated, in a simplified form, on top of every argumentation scheme.

1 MANAGEMENT, WORKERS, GOVERNMENT AND THE
GENERAL PUBLIC ALL SHARE THE SAME INTEREST IN
ECONOMIC GROWTH;

2 THE LAST GOVERNMENT HAS MADE THE BALANCE OF
POWER BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND WORKERS SHIFT
TOWARDS THE WORKERS' SIDE

claim: THE CURRENT LAW MUST BE CHANGED IN ORDER
TO RESTORE THE BALANCE

The first premise can be accepted only from a liberal-democratic point of view. Indeed, according to Marxist thought, workers and management do not share the same interests²². According

²² Only when the feudal order is still persistent in a phase of industrial revolution in which the bourgeoisie has not yet succeeded in overthrowing the feudal order the communists (intended by Marx and Engels as the most advanced political expression of the interests of the working class) are called to ally with the bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels 1848).

to Marx's analysis of the capitalist economic system, the interest of the owner of the capital is that of maximizing her/his profit and the way he/she can achieve such aim is through a reduction in the cost of production (of which human labour-power is a part) and an increase in the output. To put it in a more direct way, workers as factor of production have to cost less and produce more. On the other hand, the interest of workers is that of earning more for each worked hour. Those two interests are in a clear contrast.

The validity of the first premise is thus very dubious, but it understandably works in that it is a commonsensical one. The reference to a general economic interest is moreover a very questionable one, imbued of ideology. It marginalises some interests not only of the weakest strata of society but also of some capitalist interests. As Bob Jessop puts it:

A conception of the general economic interest privileges some identities, interests and spatio-temporal horizons and marginalizes or sanctions others. It also refers to what is needed to secure an institutionalized class compromise appropriate to that accumulation strategy and to address wider problems of social cohesion.

(Jessop 2002:30)

The construal and use of the concept of a general economic interest is thus functional to the establishment of an hegemonic grasp of society which is always, instead, grounded on a particular interest. Indeed the successful imposition of one version or the other of the general economic interest depends on the outcome of political and ideological struggles around political projects and hegemonic visions (Jessop 2002).

The second premise has a central part both in the working of the argument and in the graphic organization of the text.

The crippling industrial disruption which hit Britain last winter had

several causes: years with no growth in production; rigid pay control; high marginal rates of taxation; and the extension of trade union power and privileges. Between 1974 and 1976, *Labour enacted a 'militants' charter' of trade union legislation*. It tilted the balance of power in bargaining throughout industry away from responsible management and towards unions, and sometimes towards unofficial groups of workers acting in defiance of their official union leadership.

(Lines 51-57) [emphasis added]

The paragraph starts by stating the causes of the economic difficulties of the country. The first one is considered to be the lack of growth in production (non-indefeasible economic policy goal for every liberal-democratic government, be it right or left-wing), followed by high taxes (which is more of a right wing kind of complaint) and the extension of trade union power and privileges. The fact that this cause of economic crisis is placed in the last position responds to two different needs. Considering the information structure of the text through the lens of Halliday's textual metafunction (Halliday 2004), trade union power and privileges are the newest piece of information inserted in the sentence, thus the western reader who has been looking for the new information at the end of the sentence is presented with trade unions' fault in the economic crisis. Such positioning, on the other hand, responds to the need for Thatcher to explicit the agency of the nominalised verb “to extend” in the following sentence, thus performing a cohesive function. Indeed it is the former Labour government that, by enacting “a militant’s charter of trade union legislation”, actually extended trade unions' privileges and power. In the following sentence the pronoun “it” performs again a cohesive function in the text; it indeed anaphorically refers (Halliday 2004: 533;536) to the former Labour Government that “tilted” the balance of power between trade unions and management. The lexical

choices are a striking example of right wing rhetoric at work. Indeed the economic problems of the country are defined “crippling industrial disruption”, and such moment of crisis is placed in the past with the exophoric reference to “last winter”; which in the British society of 1979 can only refer to the “Winter of Discontent”.

Going on in the text, another powerful definition strikes the attention: Labour legislation on the matter is indeed defined as the enactment of a “militants' charter”. In the English language a 'charter' is a document of great force, which generally establishes a body of rights or immunities and often has a binding force (indeed we have *Charter of Human Rights*, *Charter of Fundamental Rights*, *Charter of the United Nations* and so on). It cannot be said that Thatcher is actually presupposing the existence of such a binding document, but she is trying convey the idea that the previous Labour government has acted 'as if' responding or being bound to it. This would not be a problem *per se*. Indeed the problem is represented by the authorship of such a document and by the needs that it supposedly represents: i.e. militants' ones. 'Militant' is a word with strongly negative connotations in English, often linked to aggressive behaviour. The noun is quite clearly a conversion from the adjective. The program WordNet 2.1²³ can shed some light on its meanings. Indeed the list of synonyms for the three senses of the adjective is as follows:

3 senses of militant

Sense 1

militant, hawkish, warlike -- (disposed to warfare or hard-line policies; "militant nations"; "hawkish congressman"; "warlike policies")

²³ The programme is a browser for the on-line lexical database developed by Princeton University Cognitive Science Laboratory.

=> unpeaceful (vs. peaceful) -- (not peaceful; "unpeaceful times"; "an unpeaceful marriage")

Sense 2

competitive, militant -- (showing a fighting disposition; "highly competitive sales representative"; "militant in fighting for better wages for workers"; "his self-assertive and ubiquitous energy")

=> aggressive (vs. unaggressive) -- (having or showing determination and energetic pursuit of your ends; "an aggressive businessman"; "an aggressive basketball player"; "he was aggressive and imperious; positive in his convictions"; "aggressive drivers")

Sense 3

belligerent, fighting, militant, war-ridden, warring -- (engaged in war; "belligerent (or warring) nations"; "a fighting war")

=> unpeaceful (vs. peaceful) -- (not peaceful; "unpeaceful times"; "an unpeaceful marriage")

In this way the Labour party is depicted as responding to an uncontrollable and powerful organization (the 'militant' trade unions). The sentence, as the majority of the sentences that can be found in the text, is a non-modalised statement (neither modalised verbs nor modal adjuncts can be found) - a giving of information according to Halliday's four speech functions (Halliday 2004:108) – thus conveying a high commitment of the author to what is said (Fairclough 2003:166). The idea of a Labour party kept in hostage from the very worst part of the trade union movement is confirmed in the following sentence, where Labour is considered responsible of a shift in the balance of power from “responsible management” towards trade unions. The premodification of management can be considered to open the possibility to a “non-responsible” management. Those Labour policies are considered to have widened the gap with 'cooperative management' by favouring “unofficial groups of workers” which act against the “official union leadership”.

The *topos* that makes the claim acceptable can be said to relay on a

very peculiar form of *topos of abuse*. Such rhetorical strategy, pinpointed by Wodak and Reisigl (2001) in racist discourse, is frequently used by right-wing politicians against immigration. The *topos of abuse* makes reference to the abuse of asylum laws by immigrants in order to advocate for a change in the law. The general wording of the *topos* is “if a right or offer of help is abused, the right should be changed or the the help should be withdrawn or measures against the abuse should be taken” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001:80). The argument seems to be based on a second *topos*, that of the research of the medium position between two extreme ones, which could be synthesized by the Latin expression *in medio stat virtus*.

It is thanks to the working of those two *topoi*, that the conclusion “We propose three changes that must be made at once” is acceptable. The claim is stated very simply with a proposition made up of a main clause and a relative one. In the main clause there is a verbal process with the conservatives, “we” as sayer, and the “three changes” as verbiage, with no modalization, whereas the subordinate clause has as grammatical subject the changes, but the unexpressed actor is again the conservatives (or to be more precise, the would-be Conservative Government). In this way the claim manages to stay in balance between strong commitment of the author and also the ineluctability of the changes, expressed by the use in the second clause of a statement with a hidden agency, where the validity of the assertion is placed on the changes themselves (Halliday 2004:117).

3.2.3 *Picketing, blacking and blockading as violence, intimidation and obstruction*

The manifesto goes on by describing the areas of intervention that it considers to be a priority in order to re-establish the balance of power tilted by the precedent Labour government. Picketing is the first one. The paragraphs that follow are those where actual conservative policy proposals are made explicit. Here the future Prime Minister makes some intertextual references to the existing laws and makes a more extensive use of modality.

Workers involved in a dispute have a right to try *peacefully* to persuade others to support them by picketing, but we believe that right should be limited to those in dispute picketing at their own place of work. In the last few years some of the picketing we have witnessed has gone much too far. Violence, intimidation and obstruction cannot be tolerated. We shall ensure that the protection of the law is available to those not concerned in the dispute but who at present can suffer severely from secondary action (picketing, blacking and blockading).

(Lines 63-69)

The structure of the argument is:

claim: THE CURRENT LAW MUST BE CHANGED

1 THE RIGHT OF WORKERS TO SEEK SOLIDARITY HAS TO BE LIMITED TO THEIR PLACE OF WORK;

2 IN THE PAST SOME PICKETS HAVE BEEN VIOLENTLY TRYING TO REACH SUCH AIM

3 (VIOLENCE IS A BAD THING)

In the paragraph which expands the first premise the accent is, also visually, put on the possibility of pickets of being a challenge to peace in the country. Indeed, the adverb “peacefully” strikes the attention of the reader being written in italics. The adverb is strategically in a cluster of hypotactic clauses. Even if the starting point seems to be quite straightforward, being realized by the clear non-modalised statement that the “workers [...] have a right”, the

extent of such right is reduced step by step to the status of a simple attempt of persuasion. The proposal arrives at the end of the sentence and it is a further restriction of the right so powerfully stated at the beginning. The adversative conjunction “but” introduces first of all an interpersonal metaphor (Halliday 2004:634) “we believe”, instance of a median epistemic modality, followed by the material process “to limit” (in the passive form and without explicit agent) modulated by the deontic modal “should” which conveys strong obligation. This is the first step towards the prohibition of “secondary action”, which in trade unions' language would be instead referred to as 'action in solidarity'.

The justification to such a ban can be found, according to Thatcher, in the history of the recent years, “the last few years”, which is the second premise to her argument. From an interpersonal point of view, the clause is a statement without any instance of modulation (epistemic modality) that places the accountability of what is said in the grammatical subject “we” (Halliday 2004:117). This is an undoubtedly inclusive 'we' thanks to which the would-be prime minister manages to make her personal vision of the previous events as if it was everyone's.

As it is often the case in political discourse, this could also be, more than an intent to impose the author's vision on the public, the acquisition and appropriation of a commonsensical feeling spread among the population, which in those years thought that trade unions were too powerful. Indeed as a survey published by the “Market and Opinion Research Institute” (MORI) in 1992 shows, between September 1978 and September 1979 the perception of trade unions as too powerful was shared by 80 percent of the population (Taylor

1993:369). Thatcher hedges her statement even more by declaring that just “some” of the picketing has gone too far, thus leaving a door open to those voters who do not adverse the unions but just fear violence. The use of the first person plural pronoun also helps collocate the leader of the Conservative Party inside the general public as a simple “witness” of what had been going on.

The third, unexpressed, premise can be considered acceptable in that it draws on a shared value in contemporary society. The premise is indeed a very strong one; it is an imperative realized through a negative polarization with a passive verb which encrypts agency, a choice that must be interpreted as an attempt to make the statement “Violence, intimidation and obstruction cannot be tolerated” a universally valid one.

The unexpressed premise in this case is based on a historical/anecdotal example. The *topos* at work here, which allows to get to the claim, might be called 'violence is snowballing'. It is a sort of trivialisation of the *topos of history*, applied to violence. Thus, it means that if the recent history has shown that some pickets have been violent it may well be that we have to expect even worse. The need to act in order to avoid it happening again stems from such assumption.

3.2.4 A right-wing interpretation of the 'right to work'

After the idea of the violent nature of picketing has been set, the discursive space for the topic of the protection of the victims of such violence is created. The passage reported below represents the link from the previous argument to the next, being the wording of the claim:

We shall ensure that the protection of the law is available to those not concerned in the dispute but who at present can suffer severely from secondary action (picketing, blacking and blockading).

(Lines 67-69)

The main clause is a clear acceptance of responsibility for the would-be conservative government, which is both grammatical subject and actor of a material process, modalised through a modal operator which is generally considered median (Halliday 2003:116) but is widely used in legal language to introduce rights and duties. The goal in the transitivity structure is the protection of law, which is also the grammatical subject of the subordinate clause, where an instance of typical *lassaiz-faire* discourse can be uncovered in the fact that, first of all, the act of giving protection to non-striking workers is not placed with some political responsibility or agent, but with the law itself, and that this protection is only freely disposable by individuals thus no compulsion on the part of the government can be detected. The future executive represents itself as a mere bridge between the individual rights of the non-striking workers and the objectivity of the law.

Those non concerned in the dispute are then the non marked theme, grammatical and logical subject of the verb “to suffer”, modalised by means of the median modal operator 'can' (median possibility). The verb is then reinforced by the adverb “severely” and the cause of such suffering is secondary action. The worker who does not take part in the industrial action is then promoted to the highest role of “citizen” in the sentence that closes the paragraph. It is again an exclusive 'we', referring to the Conservative Government, which takes the responsibility to make

further changes that are necessary so that a citizen's *right to work* and go about his or her lawful business free from intimidation or obstruction is guaranteed.

(Lines 72-74) [emphasis added]

Here the idea of the right to work is turned in something totally different from what it was considered to be in previous political thought. It is seen as an individual right opposed to that of fellow workers on strike. But originally it was one of the points which could not be left out from a left-wing programme: the right to work for every citizen was meant to be an obligation for the government to take all the steps in order to get as near as possible to full employment, thus avoiding the formation of a reserve army of workers always ready for the bosses to substitute the striking ones. That of the 'right to work' is a misleading appropriation and change in meaning of a leftist aspiration, imbued with a new sense by a right wing party. In this case the right to work is merely a right for the individual opposed to the collective one of acting in unison, in order to obtain that right for everyone who sells her/his labour-power in the labour market.

Linked to this new concept of the right to work is the proposed reform of the institute of the 'closed shop': if a trade union reaches an agreement with the management in the place of work workers are compelled to be members of the union to get the job. This is a controversial institute. On one hand, it helps the management dealing with the workers, having just one counterpart to deal with. From the point of view of the workers it helps to make every action effective, because it is likely to involve each and every worker. The institute seems date back to medieval times, when the trade unions were 'guilds' which also controlled the access to the profession of the newcomers, in order to keep the prices of labour and the working

standards at an acceptable level.

The link between picketing and the closed shop is made explicit in the first sentence of the paragraph.

Labour's strengthening of the closed shop has made picketing a more objectionable weapon. In some disputes, pickets have threatened other workers with the withdrawal of their union cards if they refuse to co-operate. No union card can mean no job. So the law must be changed.

(Lines 76-79)

From which the following argumentation scheme can be extracted:

claim: THE LAW MUST BE CHANGED
1 LABOUR LEGISLATION ON CLOSED SHOP MAKES PICKETING EVEN MORE OBJECTIONABLE;
2:IN THE PAST WORKERS IN PICKETS HAVE THREATENED TO WITHDRAW CARDS
3 NO CARD CAN MEAN NO JOB

As in the preceding argument the second premise is a reference to recent episodes, when union cards have been withdrawn from members who refused to cooperate. Thus, the argument attributes the characteristic of some episodes to the entire category of pickets. Also, the third premise uses the same strategies as before and is realized through a short relational statement according to which “no union card can mean no job”. A modal verb conveying median probability is used and the claim is put in a very straightforward way: “So the law must be changed”. A strong deontic modality is conveyed by the modal auxiliary “must” ; the use of the passive and thus the fact that the law is the grammatical subject makes the reform seem inevitable and natural, probably because it is considered by the author to be descending from a strong argument.

3.2.5 Trade union democracy: representative democracy as opposed to participative democracy

The third aspect of the reforms suggested by the Conservative Party is quoted below:

Too often trade unions are dominated by a handful of extremists who do not reflect the common-sense views of most union members.

Wider use of secret ballots for decision-making throughout the trade union movement should be given every encouragement.

(Lines 91-94)

Here the argument can be represented as follows:

1 UNIONS ARE OFTEN DOMINATED BY AN EXTREMIST MINORITY

2 THE MINORITY DOESN'T REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE MEMBERS

3 (AS IT IS FOR POLITICS, IT IS THE MAJORITY THAT HAS THE RIGHT TO RULE)

Claim: SECRET BALLOTS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED

The third unexpressed premise draws on the common belief that representative democracy in the modern sense – substantiated in the slogan “one head one vote” - is the best instrument for decision-making, as well as the best guarantee against the rule of the “extremist” fraction in trade unions. My interpretation is backed later in the text where it is stated that:

Every trade unionist should be free to record his decisions as every voter has done for a hundred years in parliamentary elections, without others watching and taking note.

(Lines 95-97)

Here representative democracy is depicted as the only possible type of democracy, where by the selection system of an election where one head corresponds to one vote, and people delegate their power to an individual who represents them. But trade union democracy is considered more effective when it takes the shape of 'popular

democracy' with trade unionists as active citizens directly controlling events (McIlroy 1990:161). The type of democracy suggested in the manifesto is also important for the definition of the trade union itself. What Thatcher promotes is 'formal' trade union democracy, which typifies 'union-as-an-institution', while the dynamic of participative democracy expresses 'union-as-movement' through direct involvement and open debate based in workers' immediate, shared material concerns (Cohen 2006). The work-group, shopfloor and mass meetings of 1970s also expressed this dynamic of direct democracy, particularly in activities like strike ballots which saw collective decision making, based on open debate, and in an atmosphere of strong dynamic interaction. The results of such a decision making process are different from the ones which can be reached with a vote expressed in the solitude of one's home under the continuous *battage* of the mass media and without the possibility of a confrontation with one's fellow workers (A. Callinicos 2nd May 2007, personal communication).

To go back to the evaluation of the argument, a more thorough look has to be given at the realisation of the premises that are expressed through the use of a sentence with two clauses in an hypotactic relation .

Too often trade unions are dominated by a handful of extremists
who do not reflect the common-sense views of most union
members

(Lines 91-92)

From the ideational point of view the representation of reality is based on a relational process in which the agent is “a handful of extremists” which dominates trade unions, whereas the grammatical subject, “by reference to which the proposition can be affirmed or

denied” (Halliday 2004:117), is the trade unions. The choice makes it quite clear that an attempt to build a separation inside the trade union movement is at work, just as other instances throughout the text demonstrate (first the separation between workers on dispute and workers not on dispute; that between trade union and non-trade union members in the closed shop and now inside the unions themselves).

Here a strategy called *divide et impera*²⁴ is at work. The fact that instances of this domination happen not just often, but “too often” states the urgency for an action to be undertaken and it is the encouragement of secret ballots by means of a provision of public funds in order to promote balloting inside trade unions.

3.2.6 Responsibility is...'*responding to the law of one's actions*'

With the proposed changes in the law, in order to secure wider participation, the tripartite reform to trade union law is completed. But Thatcher goes on with two more sections which point to other two problems linked to the trade union movement. They can be both classified under the topic of *responsibility*. The first section deals with the lack of responsibility of trade unions when they decide to undertake a strike action. Indeed she states:

Many deficiencies of British industrial relations are without foreign parallel

(Line 105)

Thatcher is here assuming that the differences in British labour legislation compared to that of other countries put the country in 'deficient' position. In this respect The claim has certainly a great appeal, but she does not demonstrate it, indeed there is no reference to

²⁴ A political strategy for domination, historically used by colonial powers in their colonies, according to which the separation of possible reaction to a power is silenced or at list better controlled if all the possible counter-powers are instigated one against the other thus making it impossible for those counter-powers to unite against the ruling part.

other countries' legislation on the matter, and no tool for a circumstanced comparison is offered to the reader. The acceptance of the statement relies solely on her authority as professional politician.

The only practical result of that difference seems to be the fact that the country is, compared to other countries, a place where: “Strikes are too often a weapon of first rather than last resort.” (Line 106).

The assumption here is that workers, or the militant part of workers, or the handful of extremist among the workers, rely on such a weapon too often and that is due to the plethora of protections they have when striking .

One cause is the financial treatment of strikers and their families. In reviewing the position, therefore, we shall ensure that unions bear their fair share of the cost of supporting those of their members who are on strike.

(Lines 107-109)

The solution to the problem, put in the way she has, would be to “ensure that unions bear their fair share of the costs” of a strike. The statement presupposes that there are costs when a strike goes on and that striking workers are not paying their fair share in it. This is not true because striking workers lose their daily pay when on strike, whereas bosses lose the production that could have been made in those working hours, which seems to be a fair way of sharing responsibility.

The claim seems again to be based on the concept of the shared interest in maintaining a high level of production at a national level and thus makes it non-responsible towards the whole society to put such supreme value under threat, which is what non-responsible striking workers do. But there is at least another way of looking at

things: a counter-representation of the situation could be that because they refuse to rise pay or make working conditions better it is the bosses or managers who should be blamed for the endangerment of the social peace. But this again is linked with the common interest in high productivity. Indeed Thatcher and every politician convinced in the capacity of the market to self-regulate makes it clear from the very beginning of the text that a rise in real wages and thus living standards can only be achieved through an increase in productivity. No statement is made in order to attach an agency to that missing economic output, indeed Thatcher states that “We” (supposedly as a country),

have become less efficient, less productive less reliable and less competitive.

(Line 124)

She does not explicitly charge the workers for that situation but she still puts the statement in the section dedicated to “Responsible pay bargaining”. What is more, there is no chance that the 'man on the street' has the knowledge to put together all the economic factors which cooperate to an efficient, productive and competitive economy, the “fair share” of which is also to be attributed to poor innovation and entrepreneurship on the part of the owners.

The characteristics ascribed to the “bargaining under Labour” well describe the picture of the situation that Thatcher draws. Indeed, it is defined “unrealistic and irresponsible”.

That of responsibility is a very wide concept. The adjective responsible has five senses according to the Oxford dictionary²⁵: the first one is linked to the legal and moral obligation for something and the consequent liability when the action is not undertaken; the second

²⁵ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Fourth Edition, 1989.

one is that of having to account to a, generally superior, authority for one's actions; the third one is that of being answerable for someone's behaviour; the fourth sense of the adjective is more on the individual side and it means capable of being relied on or on being trustworthy, whereas the fifth and last sense is that of being the cause of something.

In this case the first sense seems to be the more suitable for the definition of the concept; indeed the idea of trade unions' liability is strictly related to that of the immunities that are attributed to the unions throughout the conservative text, and more in general in all conservative discourse on trade unions. In conservative discourse trade unions are considered not responsible because the previous legislation, namely the act of 1906, and the more recent (at the time) Labour legislation on the matter provided them with immunities for the action undertaken. But it is possible that even the more “day to day” sense of the adjective (sense 4) is activated by such use of the word. Indeed trade unions on one side have a body of norms that makes them not accountable, in legal terms, of their actions and, at the same time, they do not behave responsibly when they challenge the social peace of the country by undertaking such (violent) actions as strikes and pickets. The definition of workers rights as immunities has been found to be detrimental for the workers' cause and it has been suggested that a trade-union counter-discourse should attempt to subvert it and change it into rights in order to be successful (Syrett 1998).

The concept of responsibility is also linked, in the text, to the voluntarism enshrined in the common law.

Pay bargaining in the private sector should be left to the companies

and workers concerned. At the end of the day, no one should or can protect them from the results of the agreements they make.

(Lines 135-137)

She makes a reference to the voluntarist tradition - jealously defended also by some trade unionists against the Labour “social contract” that obliged the unions to tone down their wage requests in order to fight inflation during last Labour government years – that sees the relationship between workers and bosses as totally relegated to the private economic sphere. Thus there is again a sense of responsibility underlying the statement above and it is the third one, according to which the person or persons who undertake an action have to be able to tackle the results of such action.

3.3 The Green Paper *Trade Union Immunities* (1981)

3.3.1 Green Papers as policies in the making

The green paper *Trade Union Immunities* is a consultative document issued by Margaret Thatcher's government in January 1981. At that point in time the secretary of employment was still Mr Jim Prior and his style was still one which avoided direct confrontation with trade unions. Indeed Prior's appointment did not last long after this document and he was substituted by the more hostile Norman Tebbit in the month of September of the same year. The importance of green papers lays on the fact that they explicitly ask for comments and suggestions on the one side and that they normally inform the legislation that comes afterwards. Thus this document in particular has influenced the form and measures introduced by the Employment Act of 1982, which is generally considered to be the most significant piece of legislation among the six issued by the conservative governments of those years (Ewing 2006:184). The introduction to the suggested

measures of reform of trade union laws is the part of the document where the basis for the action of the government are set and thus is the more important for me to analyse.

As I am considering the text as the semiotic moment of a social event (Fairclough 2006), its development needs to be described. What we will be calling our text is in fact a sub-text: an introduction to a list of proposed changes in legislation. It has the function of justifying its own existence by stating that there is a problem (by pointing at the evidence of it), finding the causes of the problem and construing itself as a solution to the problem. In order to state that there is a problem, an ideal situation is presented as the background against which the actual situation stands as problematic.

At the end of the sub-text the ideal situation is presented as the goal of the remaining text. In the development of such circular movement, the topics on which I am focussing my analysis are dealt with: the idea of a common interest, the definition of strikes, the concept of TU immunities and the role of law in defining them, the concept of responsibility and the topic of internal democracy in trade unions.

3.3.2 Strikes as symptoms of poor industrial relations

The setting of the problem is actually built up by using the topic of the 'common interest', as it does from the very beginning of the document.

1. A nation's prosperity rests ultimately on the ability of its people to live and work in *harmony* with each other. If its industrial relations are marked by conflict rather than cooperation the nation as a whole pays the price of economic stagnation. For at least a generation now our industrial relations have failed us because they have inhibited improvements in productivity, acted as a disincentive to investment and discouraged innovation. The results are apparent in our poor industrial performance and lower standard

of living compared with our major competitors overseas.

2. The incidence of strikes and other forms of industrial action in this country is the most evident manifestation of the inadequacy of our industrial relations, but by no means the only one. The persistence of restrictive practices, of outdated working methods and of overmanning have contributed just as powerfully, if more insidiously, to our economic problems. Such practices and the attitudes they embody have stood on the way of the achievement of high productivity, high output and high real wages.

(Lines 1-14)

The common interest is construed as obvious and the ideal situation is one where everyone is aware of it and acts accordingly to such awareness. That is a situation of “harmony”, where people live and work together.

A sign of the maintenance of a non-conflictual style comes from the very beginning of the text, where an opposition between conflict and cooperation is made and where cooperation is explicitly represented as the only way out of the crisis. The system of industrial relations is represented as a part of the nation which influences the well-being of the whole of it, and the conflictual aspect is considered to be the cause of stagnation. Such interpretation is also confirmed by the construal of strike as a “manifestation” of a systemic fault. Here the author of the introduction, arguably James Prior himself, differentiates himself from the preceding electoral discourse, as exemplified by the electoral manifesto, by displacing the strike action from the role of 'causal factor' of bad industrial relations to that of a 'result' of them. This both demonstrates the possibility of multiple representations of the same phenomenon (even inside the same party), and the existence of a point of contact between Prior's and Callaghan's discourse (who also hides agency in this kind of contexts)²⁶.

Wanting to keep an equidistant stance between workers and

²⁶ See chapter two for the analysis of Callaghan's discourse.

employers it is useful not to attribute agency to the parties involved. This is exactly what is done in the text. In the sentences from the beginning of the introduction to the end of the second paragraph no human actor is represented as taking part to processes. In actor's position we only find abstract concepts such as “a nation's prosperity”, “industrial relations”, “the persistence of restrictive practices” and finally “practices and attitudes”.

When referring to strike action the document exploits the following paraphrase:

The freedom of employees to combine and to withdraw their labour is their ultimate safeguard against the inherent imbalance of power between the employer and the individual employee.

(Paragraph 3)

This choice is significant in that it first of all refers to it as a freedom and secondly, by using a transitive structure that gives rise to a relational process, it does not limit itself to define the strike, but it affirms its existence as a fact, by using a non-modalised statement. An interesting thing worth noticing is the use of the verb “to combine”, which recalls to the mind the laws that finally made strikes become legal during the 1820s²⁷. But as usual, in the still corporatist view of economy which prevailed in those years, the concept of “responsibility” is there to limit that right. Indeed the document, again in paragraph 3, states that implicit in the recognition of such freedom:

is the assumption that this freedom will be used responsibly, that industrial action will be taken only with proper regard for the interests of others and of the community as a whole.

(Lines 18-20)

²⁷ The Combination Act of 1824 finally made it legal for workers to assemble (combine) and withdraw together their work, after a series of laws during the Napoleonic wars in which they were prevented from doing so because they were suspected of undertaking Jacobite activities. The successive Combination Law of 1825 put some restraints to that right, but kept the legality of “combines” alive. (Reid 2005:73-79).

Thus the concept of responsibility in this case is still that prevalent in the ones concerning the last months of the labour government: a self-limitation of the action of trade unions with regard to the interests and needs of the rest of the British people. Another definition of strike action is given in paragraph 4:

the importance of the freedom to combine to withdraw labour in the face of serious grievances at work is not in question. What is questioned is the readiness to threaten and deploy the strike weapon with apparent disregard for the consequences, whether for the future of the enterprises affected for the jobs and livelihoods of their employees or for the rest of the community.

(Lines 23-27)

The definition of the decision to strike as a freedom is kept in the passage, but it is limited first of all from a circumstantial element of there being “serious grievances”. Strike is also called a “weapon” in the second clause, thus activating metaphorically the semantic field of war. By defining strike a weapon the author opens the door to the semantic field of hurt and again that of responsibility (in the sense that someone who has a weapon has to use it responsibly). The author makes it also clear that some doubts exist on the use of that weapon: he states that it is readily used “with apparent disregard of the consequences”. In this way the background is set for a challenge on the use of that instrument, but at the same time the statement is hedged by the use of adjectives such as “apparent” and by the fact that no actor is explicitly identified. Going on in the text the common accusation of strikes “used as a first instead of last resort” is made again, and again the agency is hidden behind the use of an immaterial entity as actor in the process.

Paragraphs 5 and 6 advocate for a public debate on the matter of industrial relations and they are important because first of all they

constitute the bridge towards the most important topic of the text (an evaluation of the policy of TU immunities and the possibility to substitute it with positive rights) and because finally the parties are named clearly.

All this has led to questioning of the scope which the law permits to industrial action and to a wider debate about the role of trade unions and management in our society.

(Lines 40-42)

The quotation above is on line 45. Here, for the first time, “Trade Unions and Management” are referred to explicitly in the text. And the aspect at issue is individuated as their role in society.

3.3.3 Immunities: rights or privileges?

Thus the most significant part of the document, stretching from paragraph 7 to 11, is the one dealing with the evaluation of the system of immunities. In it the system is depicted as the result of the scarce experience on the matter (being the first industrial country ever, Britain was also the first one to have to deal with the issue) and secondly to the tradition of the common law, which encouraged to act “in exemption” instead of positively granting a right to strike to the workers.

Active participants in the referred paragraphs are mostly “immunities” and “the method of giving immunities”.

These immunities mean that, in certain circumstances, employers who would otherwise have been able to secure redress against those organising industrial action are prevented from doing so. *This immunities* protect trade unions against having their officials imprisoned or penalised in the courts for organising trade union activities and their funds drained away in civil proceedings.

(Lines 78-81) [emphasis added]

Thus immunities are depicted as influencing both employers'

and trade unions' activities, on the one hand putting limits to it and on the other protecting it, respectively. This opens the road to a passage where a more “Thatcherite” argument is used.

This method of giving legality to collective industrial action through immunities has been criticised on two general grounds. First, it is argued that it leaves the boundaries of lawful industrial action unclear and consequently more subject to determination in the courts than is desirable. One result of this is that the “rights” of trade unions and their officials have been asserted without the development of corresponding obligations or protection for the individual worker against trade union power.

(Lines 82-88)

claim: THE EXISTENCE OF THOSE RIGHTS THROUGH IMMUNITIES LEAVES SECTORS OF THE POPULATION SUBJECT TO TU POWER
1 BECAUSE NO CORRESPONDING OBLIGATIONS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED

The *topos* at work here is the same one that we saw in Thatcher's interview as well as in the manifesto, and it is the one according to which to a right corresponds a duty.

Another argument which is compatible to the official line of the Conservative Party, as embodied in the discourse of its leader, is that according to which the system operating in those years put also workers in a weak position towards trade unions.

As in the cases found in the other texts, this question of trade union power in relation to its individual members is quite ideological and takes the shape of authentic populism in those genres with a much wider audience to address. Indeed, the reference to it is more common in interviews to the media and in the manifesto. It is unclear why group discipline, in the case of trade unions, should be seen as a negative factor, when it is not seen as such for example in party discipline. It is quite common for parties to expel their members when their actions and declarations are seen to put in danger the activities as

well as the image of the party. It is inexplicable that trade unions, which base their effectiveness exactly on the unity of their action, should not be allowed to do the same with their members.

The other side of those who are disadvantaged by the immunities, according to this account, is the employers. The fact is made clear in the same paragraph.

... many employers, particularly if they are not parties to a dispute, are reluctant to accept that they should be deprived of what they see as their normal rights in law to redress against damage to their business

(Lines 88-91)

Apart from the very complex hedging system used in the clause (“reluctant to accept”, “what they see as”), the clause sets quite clearly that employers are disadvantaged by the system. In this way the two real objectives of the proposed reform have been set: the idea is that of reforming the system in such a way that trade union power is limited both towards employers and towards their members.

The two issues are developed in paragraphs 12 and 13 for what the imbalance in bargaining power is concerned and in the following ones for what the relationship with the members is concerned.

Over the last 20 years the role of the law in industrial relations has been considerably extended. This extension has, in the main, taken the form of new statutory rights for the individual employee and corresponding obligations for his employer. The effect of this has been to create a dual framework of law in industrial relations. *The role of the law remains non interventionist as it affects trade unions, but it has clearly become more interventionist as it affects employers.*

(Lines 132-136)[emphasis added]

The document states clearly that the public has recently become aware of this imbalance between the two parties of British industrial relations “that trade unions have too few obligations and too much power” (paragraph 12). And that his feeling is shared also by trade

unionists (which, as the analysis of the manifesto above shows, is another very common expressive resource used in anti-union discourse). Thus a bridge with the second side of those who suffer because of trade union power is drawn. But first of all the document makes it clear that it is from trade union members that the power finally stems. Indeed, talking about how and why unions were formed (paragraph 14), it states that trade unions came into existence despite the law, and not under its protection.

They developed voluntarily as workers came together to use their *collective strength* to offset the power of the employer to hire and fire and to provide for their members in times of need that collective power has its expression in the threat of withdrawal of labour. Without it trade unions in Britain would have no effective sanction against the employers. It is ultimately that power – not any legally enforceable right to be informed, consulted or involved in decision making – which trade union leaders bring to the negotiation table. It is a power which, in the end, stems from the shopfloor, from the members.

(Lines 167-174)[emphasis added]

The first clause represents the history of the creation of trade unions. The transitive structure is such that trade unions are actors of the process of developing themselves, whereas workers are put in a subordinate position. Indeed they are the actor of the subordinate circumstantial clause which has the 'coming together' as its process. The peculiarity of the choice would be more evident if a plain representation of the phenomenon was given: indeed that precise part in the history of trade unions (the creation of the industrial trade union) would be more objectively described with a process in which workers are the actor, such as: 'Workers developed trade unions by coming together'. For what the rest of the sentence is concerned a more realist formulation would be: 'This gave them the collective strength to offset the power of the employer to hire and fire and to

provide for their members'. Indeed the collective strength exists only after workers come together. What the ideological implications of such a representation are is quite complicated to say. What can be said and proved is that in the logic of this text, and in this particular social event (promoting a change in legislation), such representation, which sets apart trade unions from workers and gives them a distinct personality from them, is functional to the introduction of a cleavage inside the movement and to new sense of the concept of responsibility linked to that of trade union democracy.

3.3.4 Officialdom vs Rank-and-File: creating 'managers of discontent'

As it has been stated that the true trade union power in place is that of acting collectively to withdraw labour, it is clear from the last years of industrial disputes that “a shift in power has been taking place in the trade union movement” (paragraph 15). Indeed it is not the trade union officials who decide the strikes, but the shopfloor representatives:

In Britain it is the more active union members who have increasingly taken the lead in collective bargaining. [...] its effect in the years since 1968 has been to weaken the authority of many large trade unions and to make the task of their leaders and of the TUC more difficult.

(Lines 182-187)

Thus, the problem is that the officialdom in the trade unions is not capable of controlling the exercise of the “collective power”. We can see what the result of this representation is by making the argument clearer.

1 TRADE UNION OFFICIALS HAVE LOST THEIR POWER
TOWARDS SHOPFLOOR REPRESENTATIVES

1.1 THE SHOPFLOOR REPS LEAD THE BARGAINING
PROCESS

1.1.1 THIS IS SHOWN BY STATISTICS ON UNOFFICIAL
STRIKES

2 SUCH DEVELOPMENTS HAVE CREATED CONFLICT
2.1(CONFLICT HAS TO BE RESOLVED)
2.2(IF THE STRUCTURE CREATES CONFLICT IT HAS TO BE REFORMED)
3 THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT HAS NOT CHANGED ITS STRUCTURE ACCORDING TO THOSE DEVELOPMENTS SO FAR
Claim:THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT HAS TO BUILD A MORE RATIONAL STRUCTURE TAKING CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE INTO ACCOUNT

In this way the author of the Green Paper manages to introduce the need of a change in trade union organisation as a 'Darwinian' adaptation to different environmental circumstances: as something natural and neutral rather than instrumental to the functioning of a capitalist society in which dissent is under control. The ideological character of this line of reasoning is to be proved, as usual by looking for the *topoi* that make it work. Indeed, reform is not the only action that can be undertaken when a structure shows its limits and is not able to manage the opposing forces inside it. A structure in that situation can be destroyed or completely replaced. A totally new structure, which in this case can also be intended as an institution, can be arguably a better solution to tackling totally new material conditions. Naturally, as ideology works in order to maintain and justify the existing power structure, it is worth asking why a government in a capitalist mode of production needs to worry about the loss of power of trade union officials in the trade union movement.

The answer can be found in paragraph 20, where it is stated that:

The internal *authority* of trade unions over their members will always be inadequate if their leaders are felt to be out of touch with those they represent and without proper democratic procedures there will inevitably be suspicions that trade unions sometimes pursue policies which the majority of their members do not support.

(Lines 240-244) [emphasis added]

Thus, the issue at stake is that of authority and control over the members. Officialdom, in those years, was starting to be criticised by the emergence of the rank-and-file movement, which denounced the running insertion of trade union officials in the ruling class, by denouncing, as the Webbs had already done before²⁸, the creation of a bureaucratic caste of trade unionist which shared more values and ways of living with the bourgeoisie than with the working class. The interest of a government which is the guardian of the capitalist mode of production is that of weakening the potentially disruptive power of the working class in favour of the trade union bureaucracies, which guaranteed an effective control of the “collective power” referred to above, thus becoming 'managers of discontent' (Cohen 2006).

“Democratic procedures” are clearly represented as the instrument that trade union officials have to get in order to take their authority back. Legislation on democracy inside trade unions will be one important part of the reform process undertaken by Thatcher. Unions will be obliged to take postal ballots on the decision to strike, but the rules for such ballots will be so complex that they will allow employers to block any possibility to use that “industrial sanction” when trade unions will need it.

3.3.5 Employers and employees: equal parties responsible towards society as a whole

The next six paragraphs of the document deal with the employers' share of responsibility in British bad industrial relations. Looking at the language used the first remarkable feature that strikes the eye is

²⁸The Webbs approached the problem both in their *History of Trade Unionism* (1894) and in *Industrial Democracy* (1897)

that employers are always in actors' position. Indeed paragraphs from 21 to 24 start as follows:

Employers share the responsibility for the present state of industrial relations.

(lines 253-254)

Employers have over the years paid too little attention to their industrial relations policies.

(lines 261-262)

Employers have also contributed to the growth in authority of shopfloor representatives.

(lines 267-268)

Above all, employers have shown too little willingness to involve employees and their representatives in policies and decisions which affect their working lives.

(Lines 273-274)

The two following paragraphs are dedicated to workers' involvement in the life of the firm which, according to the extensor of the document, should be participating in the important decisions of the management “at the point at which they wish to be involved” and “must not be limited to the minor issues and not seen as a substitute for collective bargaining”. The reason for this, is stated in paragraph 27:

We need effective management prepared to be firm and give a lead, but which is understanding and sensitive to the views, interests and aspirations of their employees.

We need trade unions who are able to defend their members' interest robustly but who recognise that job security and increased rewards can only come from an efficient industry competing in world markets.

(lines 302-307)

This paragraph introduces the topic of the common interest which, as anticipated above, is the one which closes the document. The use of the pronoun “we” in both clauses has to be interpreted as an inclusive 'we', meaning the British people, but more specifically I would argue that it is the British economy. There are no elements to choose between the two in the text, but the two expressions have

become more and more used as synonyms in political discourse about economic issues. The two clauses seem to have the function of bringing together the previous sections, each dedicated to one part in the industrial relations, the first one as I noted before, with blurred active participants and the second one with actors explicitly represented, and to build a bridge towards the end of the document. But before crossing this bridge it is worth looking back by following an interesting thread which departs from the first clause by attributing to the 'ideal management' the characteristic of being “understanding and sensitive”. The appeal to sensitivity had been made before, in paragraph 24 when it was stated that management should “show sufficient sensitivity towards the legitimate hopes and fears of their working force” (line 280). Thus, on the side of management the actual functioning of good industrial relations is passed on to the use of human feelings, in order to understand and in a way comply with the very human feelings attributed to the workforce: hope, fear, views, interests and aspirations. What is happening here? In a way, the substantial difference in power between management and workforce is recognised. To the workforce feelings of an underpowered actor are attached, whereas to the powerful part it is asked to voluntarily mitigate such power with sensitivity. Is this the Victorian zeitgeist coming out once again?

CHAPTER FOUR

The watershed of the Miners' strike (1984-85) and the second round of legislation

4.1 In the heart of the eighties: the effects of the first round of legislation and the defeat of the 'enemy within'

The success of the conservative discourse, which was translated into legislation during the first mandate, is demonstrated both by the outcome of some of the disputes started by Trade Unions in those years and the inculcation (Fairclough 2003) of parts of it in Trade Union discourse. One of the disputes that better shows how the legislation worked is the one at the *Stockport Messenger* in 1983. The owner of the newspaper, Eddie Shah, decided to open two new printing shops with non-unionised workers next to the unionised one. In his project, the three plants would have to work together, but the members of the trade unions working in the original plant refused to handle 'non-unionised work'. Following the protest, six printers from the National Graphical Association (NGA) were sacked and the non-unionised plant was enabled to deal with the work which was normally taken care of in the first plant. Thus the remaining unionised workers decided to picket the plants, which was considered 'secondary picketing' under the new laws of 1980 and 1982 and the owner managed to put through an injunction against the workers. The union was fined, on the basis of the new concept of responsibility towards the law, and also abandoned to its destiny by the TUC. Indeed when NGA asked for the support of the movement there was no answer from other unions. Solidarity had become dangerous.

Indeed the Trade Union Congress, which had finally gotten inside its new part as 'manager of discontent', abandoned even its

pretence of resistance, adopting a policy of 'new realism' which blamed the old fashioned philosophy of class warfare for its defeat (Cohen 2006:73). Still, Thatcher did not seem to keep in high account the purr of the tamed beast, on the contrary she went on with her crop. In January 1984 she decided the de-recognition of civil service unions at the Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ). The ban shocked the movement, but the TUC was capable of doing nothing more than proposing a deal to the government: if Thatcher withdrew the ban they promised a voluntary non-strike agreement. Not much of a militant strategy. What is more, it was totally useless, as the Prime minister was still living on the adrenaline she had stored up since the Falkland-Malvinas war, when, in 1982, the nation had been unified for a common goal. It is also thanks to the successful war that Thatcher managed to win the general election of 1983 (May) and to advance a lot in her fight against trade unions in the second term put at her disposal by the British electorate. Thus, she took advantage of the momentum in order to accomplish her mission to try and get rid of the most active parts of the trade union movement. The same part that had managed to send last Conservative Government (Edward Heath's government) home: the miners. The miners' strike comes as a reaction to the announcement of the closure of 'uneconomic' pits. Its official start is normally thought to be March 1984, but that is only the moment in which the strike becomes national. Indeed workers had been out of work for months before that in local strikes. The episode has been considered a watershed since it represents the effectivity of the legislative measures put in place by the government as well as the factual material moment of the discourse of law and order applied to industrial relations and trade union activities. The year-long strike is

also a watershed because, after that experience, no other trades dared to enter in such a direct confrontation with the government. But the heroic and defeated miners have also had a 'positive' effect on the climate of opinion around trade unions. It is indeed after their defeat that the perception of the public opinion on trade union power registers a reverse trend: indeed as the Gallup poll on page 345 shows, from that date on those who think that trade unions in GB are too powerful become less than half of the population (the figure had been above 50 per cent since at least 1972).

If the documents analysed in the previous chapter are a proof of the cautious attitude of the conservative government towards trade unions during the first mandate, the ones presented here are the more explicit attack that could be moved towards the workers' organisations. It must be said that the historical moment is one of tough confrontation. The two texts taken as the most representative of Thatcher discourse refer both to the central part of the confrontation between the state and the miners. They are the report of the speech given by the prime minister at a private meeting of the 1922 committee²⁹ on July the 19th of 1984 and the interview given to local newspapers in her visit in Yorkshire, one of the areas where the strike took place, (September the 26th 1984). The first one is famous because it is in that occasion that Thatcher defines the miners as “the enemy within” by building a comparison with the “enemy without” represented by the Argentinian government during the Falkland war in 1982.

Mrs Thatcher had done everything to give the impression that

²⁹ The committee takes its name from the episode of the group of conservative backbenchers who, in October 1922 met and decided to overthrow their leader Austen Chamberlain and withdraw from the David Lloyd George-led coalition government. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlton_Club, accessed 19.47, 27 august 2007

the confrontation did not involve the government and that she wanted the market to solve it. The normal question and the frequent accusation from the other side of the House was that she was not intervening to settle the dispute because she wanted the strikers to be consumed by it. Many historians make it clear that the 'non-interventionist' image did not at all reflect reality (Cohen 2006; Taylor 1993; Callinicos and Simmons 1985). Indeed Margaret Thatcher did everything to build the stocks of coal and provoke the miners; she was the one who, after the miners went out, decided the use of the police force, was in constant contact with the National Coal Board (NCB)³⁰ and made everything in her power to break any attempt of negotiation. Only a young labour MP from Sedgefield dared to disclose the hypocrisy of Margaret Thatcher's behaviour by stating:

How can the prime minister credibly maintain that she has not intervened in the coal dispute when British rail is instructed to settle its wage claim to gain tactical advantage over the miners, and talks in terms of no surrender as if it was a military campaign in the south Atlantic?

The criticism is not that she has no intervened, but that her intervention has been to prolong and not to settle the dispute.³¹

The reference to the south Atlantic is clearly to the Falkland war. It is interesting to see it in a speech in June, when the famous analogy with the Falkland war had not been officially proposed by Margaret Thatcher. The fact opens the road to two different possibilities: either Thatcher had already done reference to it without leaving records, or she elaborated on this after the Labour MP made his intervention at the House. Thus, if the second possibility is the case, we could say that Anthony Blair MP, who was lately to become

30 The public body in charge of the management of the coal pits, put by Margaret Thatcher in the hands of Ian MacGregor.

31 *The Times*, Friday June 15th 1984, p.4

Prime Minister, gave Margaret Thatcher the hint to come out with one of her most famous discursive successes. The discursive strategies used during the miners' strike are also complemented with the analysis of a series of advertisements appeared on the newspapers during the strike and issued, (and naturally paid for), by the NCB. The document that closes the chapter is one of the last acts of Margaret Thatcher's government before she was defeated by an internal *fronde* which forced her to leave both the leadership of the party and the government of the country.

4.2 Margaret Thatcher's 'enemy within' speech to 1922 committee

4.2.1 Two social events intertwined: from the author's written notes to the newspaper report

The first text under analysis is divided in two parts. The first part consists of 17 pages of Margaret Thatcher's handwritten notes for the speech and the second part is the report of Julian Haviland for *The Times*, published on the 20th of July 1984.

It is difficult to make a discursive analysis of handwritten notes, but they can be used as a canvass to individuate topics and, interestingly, they can be compared with the report to show how topics are picked up and packed again in a different shape. In the quotation of the excerpts that will be used for the analysis the original paragraphs are kept. Handwritten notes are quite probably written by the author for him/herself, but if we take into consideration that they are going to become a speech its audience rapidly changes to a wider one. In this case Margaret Thatcher wrote them thinking of a friendly audience, the purpose of such a genre is that of giving some information and at the same time creating party internal consent for

the action of the government, thus the speech has been put in the slot of “party internal development of informed opinion” (figure 1 page 40). Those notes have then been transformed into a speech by their original author, but, as it will be clear from the analysis, they will be re-contextualised by the journalist in a very different way, responding to the logic of newsworthiness which, arguably, guides people in that profession. Thus, the journalist places the topics and the words spoken by Thatcher in a different field of action, that of the 'formation of the public opinion'. It is amazing to discover how, from a speech which was thought for a restricted group of privileged people, the famous definition of miners as “the enemy within”, that shaped so much this part of British history, eventually became one of the most known expressions spoken by Margaret Thatcher.

4.2.2 The strike: the damaging act of a militant minority

Margaret Thatcher starts her speech by touching very general topics, such as elections, but she comes quite rapidly to the hot issue of the day, the miners' strike.

When the prime minister starts to speak about the miners' strike she immediately points out that (apart from the fact that it is at its 19th week) it has not been decided with a ballot, and that it is made up of violence and intimidation. Apparently, it is also important for her to build a transitive structure in which she is put in the same position as the general public as witness of such violence. Indeed, she writes down on line 9 “violence and intimidation we have witnessed”. But Margaret Thatcher is not only a witness in this account, she is also a kind of bastion, attacked from that violence:

Violence & intimidation we have witnessed.

Best pay, highest investment
redundancy payment far greater than that of most taxpayers who
have

to finance

p2

Stand firm.

Militancy must not win.

(Lines 9-15)

There is no transitive structure to demonstrate it, but the lexical choice of line 14 makes it clear that that is the kind of representation. Indeed what has to be done is to “stand firm”; an idiomatic expression which according to WordNet has two main senses:

The verb stand firm has 2 senses (no senses from tagged texts)

1. resist, hold out, withstand, stand firm -- (stand up or offer resistance to somebody or something)
2. stand pat, stand firm, hold firm, stand fast -- (refuse to abandon one's opinion or belief)

Both senses can apply in our text and the immediate context does not help in the choice of one. Indeed what they have to stand firm against is “militancy”, which “must not win” (line 15). Militancy can be seen as both the ideological extremist position and as a material enemy, i.e. the group of people who maintain that position. Nonetheless, it can be said that the lexical choice made by Thatcher activates semantic fields such as that of 'fight' in which she puts herself (and those who are with her) as a participant trying to resist to some force, someone who is defending a position. Who is attacking then? It is the “militant Trade Unionism” (line 26) which is attacking “democracy and the rule of law”. This is a very recurrent topic during the strike: those who are on strike are attacking democracy and the rule of law, thus Thatcher, and those who are against the strike, are the ramparts of democracy and the rule of law.

Another recurrent topic is used in the same lines of Margaret

Thatcher's notes. It is the topic of strikes as counter-productive means to obtain something.

Strikes — lose business

— lose custom

— lose jobs.

Shows that militant Trade Unionism can always hit out at others — cannot protect its own from that attack — let alone other unions

(Lines 23-27)

Claim: (TRADE UNIONS ON STRIKE GO AGAINST THEIR MEMBERS)

1 because STRIKES LOSE BUSINESS

1.1 THEY LOSE CUSTOMS

1.2 thus THEY LOSE JOBS

2(TRADE UNIONS SHOULD TRY TOO KEEP THEIR MEMBERS' JOB)

Even if Thatcher does not say it explicitly, it can be argued that the use of “trade unions on strike” in the claim of the argument is correct because strike is always depicted in Thatcher's discourse as the result of militants' influence inside the trade unions. Indeed, in many speeches she has been continuously pointing out to the fact that many members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) wanted to go back to work but they were prevented from doing so by the militants inside the union. The specific *topos* at work here is: 'if you withdraw your labour you are hurting yourself because the market will punish you'.

4.2.3 *The enemy within: politically motivated militants*

The analogy with the Falkland war, and thus to the 'enemy within' comes only further on in the text:

“Since Office

Enemy without — beaten him

& strong in defence

Enemy within —[fo 6] p8

Miners' leaders
Liverpool & some local authorities
— just as dangerous in a way more difficult to fight
But just as dangerous to liberty
Scar across the face of our country
ill motivated
ill intentioned
politically inspired

(Lines 55-66)

It is quite clear that, as she will point out in her autobiography, Margaret Thatcher did not intend to say that the miners were the enemies within, but that their leaders were, as well as some left-wing local authorities (which she will attack after the strike will be defeated). The important strategic move which is done here by means of classification is that the miners' leaders and the local authorities are construed again as enemies of democracy *tout court* and not as representatives of opposed economic interests or ideas of democracy. In Margaret Thatcher's mind the classification is quite clear: it is done by means of a list which expands the nominal group “enemy within” by calling by name the leaders of this internal army which is trying to subvert democracy from inside the nation.

In the interpretation of the newspaper article, the emphasis is not surprisingly put on the comparison, as the title “Attack on 'enemy within'” as well as the beginning of the text (from line 148) show:

“The prime minister last night drew a parallel between the Falklands war and the dispute in the mining industry.[...] Mrs Thatcher said that at the time of the conflict they had to fight the enemy without; but the enemy within, much more difficult to fight, was just as dangerous to liberty.

What is strange here is the exclusive interpretation of the pronoun “we”, probably uttered by Margaret Thatcher, turned by the journalist into a they. Indeed when Margaret Thatcher supposedly said “at the time of the conflict we had to fight the enemy without”, the

journalist thought that her “we” only referred to the conservatives or the government.

The newspaper article reports also on the comparison of the strike to a scar across the face of the country, which is not on the notes. It has to be underlined that this is one of Thatcher's recurrent topics during the strike, thus it is highly probable that she has uttered the sentence. The idea that Great Britain would be a perfect nation if it was not for the bad industrial relations is a very recurrent pattern in her discourse, as the interview for the *Yorkshire Post* will demonstrate further on.

What has also to be noted is the transformation of the plural, “miners' leaders” in Thatcher's notes, into a singular in the article:

Of the tactics of the *miners' leader*, she said that the country was witnessing an attempt to circumvent democracy.

(lines 153-154) [emphasis added]

Here the newspaper depicts the strike as a personal enterprise thought and led by Arthur Scargill, the representative of the NUM, as an attempt to subvert democracy, which is quite different from what the notes made me think at a first reading. From the notes there seemed to be an entire army of people “ill motivated, ill intentioned, politically motivated” who were bringing an attack to democracy as an organised body. The need to have a person to blame for what was happening, a real person, might be one of the press, but as soon as they saw it worked both Margaret Thatcher and Ian McGregor started to use it in order to isolate the leadership of the strike from its base.

The following parts of the report help shed light on the use of “stand firm” as intended by the prime minister. Indeed the verb used is an antonym of 'bend', as the following quotation suggests:

On the miners, Mrs Thatcher was *unbending*. She said that the message she was receiving from all quarters was that militancy must not win.

(Lines 164-165) [emphasis added]

But the use of the idiom is illuminated also by the use of a contrasting analogy with the Labour Government's behaviour during the Winter of Discontent':

She compared the industrial scene with the winter of discontent in 1978-79, the last year of the Government led by Mr James Callaghan, but said that the difference then was that Labour had *given in* and had become the puppet of the unions

(Lines 166-168)[emphasis added]

Thus to 'stand firm' is also used as an antonym of 'give in'. Thatcher knows too well that unity is the most important thing for trade union action. After attempting to divide the grass-roots from the leadership she also draws a line to divide working miners from striking ones and praising them for it.

... daily courage by miners who were going to work, and suggested that the spectacle of miners going to work to secure their rights represented an astonishing advance brought about by five years of Conservative government

(Lines 170-172)

By praising the submissive miners she hoped to convince others to behave at the same time.

4.3 Declaration to Yorkshire post

4.3.1 *Margaret Thatcher's declarations against the background of the 'Orgreave Battle'*

Margaret Thatcher declarations to the Yorkshire post on September 27th 1984 are an inventory of all the most repeated phrases during the strike. At the starting of the article Margaret Thatcher makes a list of all the episodes of violence on the picket lines. It has to be bore in mind that the Prime Minister's declaration comes after the British audience has been frightened by the images of tough confrontation on the picket lines and especially after the most famous 'Battle of Orgreave' (June 18 1984), when a sagacious use of cameras had represented what had in fact been a charge by the police on its horses against the strikers, as more accurate successive accounts an tribunal sentences have made clear, as a tumult initiated by enraged miners. Those were the images in the public's eyes at the moment.

4.3.2 *Strike as an attack to Britishness: the blot on the immaculate thread of an imaginary society*

Being the context of the situation the one described above, and the British public completely horrified with the images of the battle, Thatcher finds it comfortable to refresh people's memory by setting the scene as a violent:

It is no earthly good coming out with ritual condemnations of violence and then trying to say the police are violent. People don't believe it. Stop looking at the words. We saw words, words at the TUC. We saw the violence stopped there which indicates that the NUM leaders can stop it. Don't look at the words. Look at what has happened on the picket lines since.

(Lines 5-9)

Different accounts trying to put an accent on the violence

perpetrated by the police forces are dismissed as simply false. The prime minister has a simple task to accomplish, as no one in the country could ever imagine that those images were false, as more recent historical reconstructions, also shown by the BBC, have definitively demonstrated. She knows exactly what images she recalls to people's minds when she talks about “ball bearings catapulted at the police” (line 10) and “upstanding nails, with the sharp end of the nail to get under the horses' feet” (line 13). No one is able to dismiss her account of the facts, which seems totally credible. What is more, talking about the horses she awakes the love of the British people for animals and she depicts the miners on the picket line as violent prevaricators who don't even share that common feeling in the British public. A different point of view on the matter could place the blame on those who decided to use them against the strikers, instead than on the strikers themselves, which is a lack of responsibility towards innocent beings used as weapons against 'the enemy'. It could also be pointed out that a horse used against a person standing on the picket line might be very frightening and might severely hurt the person. The exploitation of issues of Britishness is a very powerful tool in the whole text and it does not end with the lack of such a sign of Britishness as the love for animals on the part of the miners.

Her aim is to get to the leadership of the miners and blame them for the violence, as the title of the article suggests: “I blame leaders for pit violence”. Thus, referring to the quoted episodes, Thatcher says: “That's what the NUM leadership is doing. That is what is happening on the picket line”(line 15). As it has been pointed out before the issue of the miners' strike had been already transformed into a “law and order” issue, and in the following extract it is taken up once again:

At the moment the main striking union is causing violence against its own members, against the police, against people whose only crime is they want to work to keep their wives and children.

The mob violence we are seeing is a blot on Britain's reputation. It is doing immense harm. You think that what we see on television shocks us, but they are seeing it the world over. The fantastic reputation of Britain which has been built up over the years as fair, honourable and law-abiding, is suffering badly.

The [Nicholas Edwards] Secretary for Wales now is going to Japan to try to get investment. They are seeing these things on the television screen and it is not going to help either investment in Britain or orders for Britain.

It is doing immense harm to jobs, and the idea of mob violence and the bullyboy strong arm tactics in Britain is not what one expects of Britain. It is horrifying us.

(Lines 26-37)

The “main striking union” is represented in the first clause as causing violence, and what makes this fact the more terrible is the apparent goal of that violence: other trade union members. The goal of the first clause is then expanded and defined, in order to attribute to it the viewpoint which is supposedly shared by the entire population, the people “who want to work to keep their wives and children”. Thatcher's appeal is again to an 'old style society' where men are responsible for the feeding of the entire family. It can be argued that that was in fact the situation in the mining villages, and this is true, but here it is not the gender issue that has to be underlined, but the fact that by attributing the worry for their families only to the non-striking miners, an image of the ones on the picket lines as an inferior, quasi-inhuman category of men is transmitted. What kind of man is one who does not care about his family and 'plays the war' or follows the modern magic flautist, Arthur Scargill?

The idea that pickets are nothing but “mob violence” found its place in the shared knowledge of those days. This is clearly shown by the fact that Thatcher puts it in thematic position in her second

statement in the paragraph quoted above. Looking at the clause as an information unit (Halliday 2004:89), it can be said that mob violence, as a representation of what happens in the pickets, is a given data for Margaret Thatcher. What is new is to be found in the theme and it is “a blot in Britain's reputation”. This goes along well with the “scar” in the previous text. As said before, the blot is such if it is put on an immaculate background, as the scar is noticeable on unharmed skin.

Thus, what is this immaculate background according to Thatcher? The answer is found when the instances of classification (Fairclough 2003) are singled out in the text. By means of a list of what “the reputation of Britain” is made of, Thatcher Manages to create an image of what 'pure Britishness' is: “fair, honourable, and law abiding”. The blot is made up of characteristic which are contrary to those values, and this blot has been put on immaculate Britain by the strikers, or better by the mob violence represented by the strikes. The strategy is as simple as common: here an in-group of low abiding, honourable and fair citizens is built and the striking miners are clearly put in the out-group. Naturally the in-group can be entered by espousing the aforesaid qualities in the same interpretation that Thatcher gives of them. The topic of the 'bolt' is then linked to the argument about job losses which we have seen before. Indeed, in the fourth clause complex quoted, the reputation of Britain is used as a way to get new business. The fact that Japan has doubts on investing in the country is attributed to the images shown on tv.

The mob violence we are seeing is a blot on Britain's reputation. It is doing immense harm. You think that what we see on television shocks us, but they are seeing it the world over. The fantastic reputation of Britain which has been built up over the years as fair,

honourable and law-abiding, is suffering badly.

The [Nicholas Edwards] Secretary for Wales now is going to Japan to try to get investment. They are seeing these things on the television screen and it is not going to help either investment in Britain or orders for Britain.

It is doing immense harm to jobs, and the idea of mob violence and the bullyboy strong arm tactics in Britain is not what one expects of Britain. It is horrifying us.

(Lines 29-37)

An argumentation scheme will facilitate the analysis.

Claim: MOB VIOLENCE IS HARMING JOBS

1 FOREIGN INVESTORS ARE SEEING VIOLENCE ON TV

1.1 WHAT THEY SEE IS NOT WHAT THEY EXPECT FROM BRITAIN

2 BECAUSE OF THAT THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO INVEST

3 (WITHOUT FOREIGN INVESTMENT NEW JOBS CANNOT BE CREATED)

The economic threat of job loss because of industrial action is so common that can be put in an unexpressed premise (premise 3). It is a very common *topos* in anti-union discourse:

It's not for them to turn round to me and say you do something about unemployment. What they are doing is destroying jobs faster than anything else.

(Lines 62-63)

They attempted to close down steelworks. Is it the function of a trade union to say: 'All right, we are going to support mob violence, close down the steelworks and lose all our jobs in steel?'

(Lines 70-72)

Who is, in fact, responsible for cutting down growth and cutting down jobs and cutting down prospects and cutting down orders and cutting down investment in this country?

Those who are prepared to sacrifice everyone else's job and who know full well they will be actively sacrificing far more of their own as well.

(Lines 84-88)

The idea is quite clear, trade unions, striking trade unions and in this specific case the striking part of the NUM are acting against the interests of their own members. Thus, a question is facilitated to arise in the entire nation's minds: whose interest is the strike in? We do not have instances of the kind of answers that have been given to this

question in the present text, but if we couple it with the previous one, where the leadership of the NUM is accused of trying to subvert the democratic order of Great Britain, we do get an answer. What is more, the previous hypothesis is also in line with accounts of the miners' strike given by the media which make it clear that the leadership of NUM is in contact with the Soviet Russia and with Gheddafi's regime. Thus also the issue of endangered Britishness can be seen under this light. The same questions, we can be sure, arises also in the striking miners' minds.

4.4 NCB ads on the national press

4.4.1 The propaganda campaign: winning frightened miners' hearts and minds

I have placed the ads in two different slots of figure 1 on page 40, because I believe they respond to two different communicative purposes. Indeed, for a more or less neutral readership the campaign by the NCB can work as an instrument for the creation of public opinion. But for a miner on strike, who is not earning any money and to whom money is being offered to go back to work³², the ads work as real propaganda during a war: it lowers their moral. Thus it is to help the confused miners that NCB had issued a series of ads published on the national press in which the headline was:

How the miners on strike have been misled...

And the following lines were four different clauses, the third and fourth being respectively:

about their future
about the plan for coal

³² Miners were being offered conspicuous deals in order to get them back to work (Thatcher 1993).

The ads occupy an entire newspaper page. The headline is written in white on a black background. The subtitle is written in black on the white background but with the same character as the title. In what is usually considered to be the position of the real (the lowest part of the text) (Kress-Van Leeuwen 1996) the subtitles are expanded. But both ads end with the same clauses. Before going on with those we might give a closer look to the headline. It is easy to notice that there is a presupposition working there, and it is that the miners have been misled. Indeed focussing on “how” the misleading has happened takes for granted that it has. The final clauses for both ads are the following:

This strike – not the Coal Board – could butcher the industry.
That is why it is so important that the strike ends soon.
It was called by the miners' leaders. It now needs to be called off by
the miners themselves.

In the first two sentences the responsibilities for the crisis of the industry are put on the strike, which is in actor's position in the first clause and its end is the “important” goal in the second clause. In both clauses, thus, the strike is construed as a participant in the processes described, but the NCB does not want to hide the true human actors in the dispute. It indeed keeps the disclosure of them for the final sentence. It is the miners' leaders, who bear the responsibility for that. And the appeal of the board is to the “miners themselves” to put an end to it. The strategy of the Coal Board can thus be put in total adherence with that of the government as represented by Margaret Thatcher's declarations in many different occasions. It is what we have called the “divide et impera” strategy: a strategy to divide the field of the enemy.

The episode of the miners' strike marks a discursive change in the way government talks about trade unions, the most visible being a frontal attack. In all the texts we have seen concerning the strike, the use of inanimate actors has been substituted by direct attacks to a part of the trade unions. The fact should not surprise, as during her interview to ITN tv, Margaret Thatcher had made it clear that she was not going to confront the 11 million trade union members in the country. Indeed her attack has been moved to what she has called the most militant part of it. Such attack has been based on the national sentiments of the country, fomented by the victory in the Falkland war, and in the parallel anti-socialist discourse. The impression given by the texts is that she successfully managed to construe the trade unions as an external enemy acting from within. The expression enemy within has been mostly translated in Italian as “internal enemy”. I have been asking myself why Margaret Thatcher did not use that expression instead of “enemy within”. The analysis, in my opinion, has made it clear. The fact that an enemy is within does not mean that it is a product of the British society. It might as well come from the outside and then act in the community, from within, in order to destroy it. This is exactly the image of militant trade unionism that is built throughout the texts. The militant part of the trade unions is like the Greek army inside the Trojan horse. An important result of such a construal is that class war is denied, indeed the unrest is not caused by internal conflicts, but comes from the outside: it is a scar on Britain's face, a bolt in its immaculate social fabric. Thatcher wants also people from the working class on her side, so she cannot speak clearly in terms of class struggle. But her quasi colonial strategy of the *divide et impera* betrays the military vision of the confrontation and

thus gives the sign of a class struggle going on.

4.5 Industrial relations in the nineties: the green paper *Removing Barriers to Employment*

4.5.1 The second round of legislation: scrapping the bottom of the barrel

After the election victory of 1987 a new secretary of state for employment was appointed, Norman Fowler, who started to “scrap the bottom of the barrel” (Taylor 1993:303) in order to catch the Prime Minister's eye, by looking for other possible restrictions to trade union rights. There was not much left to take away from trade unions at the time, but the closed shop had not been completely outlawed as well as the solidarity action (or secondary action as they would call it). In the years that had followed the miner's strike, a kind of legislative truce had been established and the working of the legislation, with judges applying it in the strictest sense, went on in impoverishing and marginalising the unions (Taylor 1993), but no new laws were passed in those years.

The “Removing Barriers to Employment” green paper, presented in parliament in march 1989, is one of the documents which can be ascribed to the second wave of anti-union legislation of Margaret Thatcher's governments.

Ten years have passed from the green paper “Trade Union Immunities”, but the difference is massive. The government is taking full responsibility of the reform; the role of law in regulating industrial relations is not tentatively suggested, it is bravely affirmed as a success. The analysis is focussed on the introduction to the green paper. In it the secretary of state for employment starts by making a

reference to the successful action of the government in the 10 years before (stretching from paragraphs 1.1 to 1.6). In paragraph 1.7 it states that further changes are needed and finally paragraphs 1.8 to 1.10 present the three areas which need change (namely the closed shop, secondary action and the commission for the rights of trade union members). Paragraph 1.11 is dedicated to the conventional request of comments usually present in green papers.

4.5.2 Rights as barriers to employment: the 'flexibility flood'

In the first 10 paragraphs, trade unions are absent as participants in the clauses. They are only used as modifiers of “law” in paragraph 1.1:

Since 1979 the government has given high priority to a programme of step-by-step reform of industrial relations and trade union law, a major purpose of which has been to remove unnecessary barriers to jobs.

And as “members” in the same paragraph:

Trade union members have been given the freedom to decide for themselves.

These two instances also give birth to the two lines of reasoning of the document, which will be that of legislation as a means to “remove barriers to employment”, as the title suggests, and that of individual rights, as opposed to collective power. Those two lines will be further developed also by the action of the New Labour government in the following years. In its assessment of the results of legislation during the eighties, the green paper puts some economic data on unemployment and in the second page of the introduction it makes a list of the rights, freedoms and protections granted to some parts of society by the laws on the subject. It is interesting to note that the beneficiaries of those three categories of help are individuals and

employers. Employers are mostly depicted as enjoying rights and freedoms, whereas individuals are mostly granted protection and sometimes rights.

The document is important because it marks the appearance of the word flexibility. Collective rights have been definitively barred from the discourse; there is no need for the document to argue on that. What is needed, now that the individual worker has finally been freed from the dictatorial power of his or her trade union, is that he/she can adapt to the rapid changes in the labour market by being flexible. A quota of the flexibility needed has indeed been already obtained according to the text, which in paragraph 1.2 states:

A combination of strong and steadily increasing output, improved industrial relations and a more *flexible labour force* has provided the framework within which enterprise and job and training opportunities can flourish.

[emphasis added]

The second instance of the concept of flexibility is found in paragraph 1.7, the paragraph dedicated to the pivotal passage from what has been done so far to what has to be done in order to remove barriers to employment, which is the new name given to trade union immunities at the eve of the 1990s:

...but it is essential to continue the search for greater *flexibility* and to examine obstacles to the growth of jobs that still remain. In this context we must assure that the legal framework for industrial relations is adapted to the needs of the 1990s

[emphasis added]

It is amazing to see how the need for flexibility is represented in the clause. It is nearly an epic quest, like the search for the holy grail. The use is striking because a non-marked representation of the necessity of flexibility for the economic system, ideological as it may be, would in fact use the concept of 'need' - something that the

legislator can easily impose on workers by parliamentary acts which allow flexible contracts - but if flexibility is represented as something that can be searched for, the author of the utterance is assuming that it is already there. The idea of the obstacles to the free interaction of market rules which the author refers to after can give a hint in the interpretation.

As it has been stated before, the idea is that to adapt the labour market to the needs of the 1990s. Thus it is an issue linked to the historic development of it. This is made clear also by the clause which starts paragraph 1.8:

The government consider that it is now time to take action against the pre-entry closed shop

As I have noticed before, the government has become more and more assertive on industrial relations over the years. Indeed here the executive (in its collegiality as signalled by the use of the second person plural form of the verb) is a source of authority both in the evaluation of the situation, “consider”, and in the active role it has in taking action. The evil against which action has to be taken is the pre-entry closed shop, one of the obstacles to an increased flexibility. The expression of the goal is direct and no attempt to hedge the declaration is made. The pre-entry closed shop is assumed to be an evil in itself and it is taken for granted that no-one is going to make any problem on that. The government wants to take action against pre-entry closed shop as it does against HIV or some widely recognised evil.

The other obstacle, secondary action, is introduced on paragraph 1.9 but here the formulation is more complex and tentative. Indeed there is a long introduction before the obstacle is clearly stated. There, the problem is presented as a necessary “review of the limits

within which industrial action can be lawful”. The statement that much has been achieved is repeated with a concrete example: “not least with the right which both employers and trade union members now have to insist on a properly-conducted secret ballot before industrial action”, which construes employers and trade union members in the same position against trade unions themselves. And finally the need to tackle the problem is expressed as follows:

But the government consider that it is time to examine afresh whether the immunities for secondary action established in 1980 are still appropriate. The government's view is that, in general, employers who are not parties to a dispute should no longer be exposed to the threat of industrial action – a threat which can deter new enterprises from setting up in this country.

Thus the declaration of the executive's intention to get on the secondary action is hedged, especially if compared with the parallel expression on pre-entry closed shop. What the government considers it time to do is “examine whether” those measures are still appropriate. The solution is represented as “the government's view” and not as an absolute truth, even if the use of the modal 'should' in this quasi-legal field expresses a strong obligation. Secondary action is expanded in the second clause by means of a re-wording as an action against “employers who are not parties to a dispute”.

The expansion of secondary action undertaken in the extract above would always be regarded as clarifying. As discourse analysts we are always maximally diffident towards grammatical metaphors in the text. But grammatical metaphors (Halliday 2004:592-93) can also be disclosed to make them seem a proper representation, but be on the contrary an ideological one. First of all, as I had the occasion to say before, in other contexts secondary action is called 'solidarity action'; if we were to disclose this metaphorical representation to transform it

in a process it could be: 'industrial action taken by workers to show solidarity to fellow workers, against the dominant class'. Indeed if industrial disputes are considered as battles in the class struggle, bosses as such immediately become enemies, because they belong to the opposed field, the ruling class towards which the war is directed. The fact that each battle has to be fought against just one part of the entire army does not change the reality of a class struggle in which each and every boss is in the position of the oppressor. Thus the concept of a boss not involved in a dispute suddenly becomes questionable when a different logic is put a at work in the creation of discourse.

CHAPTER FIVE

New Labour in power

5.1 Globalization, partnership and the Schumpeterian Competition State

The Schumpeterian Competition State (SCS) is, according to Jessop (2002), the new form that the capitalist state is taking in order to answer to the difficulties of Atlantic Fordism as a mode of accumulation in the capitalist system. SCS is also the type of capitalist state that better responds to a Post-Fordist accumulation regime, that has been taking shape since the seventies, when Atlantic Fordism was hit by various critical events (to name just one, the oil crisis of 1973). All along with the Keynesian Welfare National State (KWNS) of Labour Governments of the seventies, Atlantic Fordism has been gradually replaced by the SCS through the development of neo-liberal policies, mostly based on monetarist measures and other Ricardian policies, during the Conservative Governments. The following New Labour Governments have worked in substantial continuity with the conservative ones, giving birth to what has been recently called neo-liberalism with a Christian socialist face (Jessop 2002, 2003).

New Labour Governments, despite their continuous reference to a 'Third way' in the guidance of the economy, as opposed to socialist as well as neo-liberal ones, "administered the Thatcher-Major legacy" (Jessop, 27 June 2007, personal communication,) while conducting the country in the transition from neo-liberalism to the so called Knowledge-based economy. This is a movement based on the rhetoric of globalisation and of public-private partnership as a means to guide the economy, but which does nothing more than hide the true

partnership at work, which is the one that exists between the Labour government and the global financial capital (which has to be looked at as opposed to both labour, and to productive, national capital) which has its base in the City of London (Jessop 2002, 2003).

The following chapter tries to give an account of such macro-economic passage through the study of New Labour discourse in different moments of its governments over the past 10 years. The account starts with the analysis of the victorious election manifesto of 1997. One of the few legislative interventions of Blair's government on the issue of workers' rights, the white paper *Fairness at Work* of 1998 will be described and commented. The second New Labour government, still guided by Tony Blair, is discursively represented by the press conference held by the Prime Minister during the fire-fighters' strike in 2002, while the last document taken into consideration is a speech by the current (2007) prime minister, Gordon Brown, addressed to the disillusioned TUC during its recent annual conference in Brighton.

5.2 Election manifesto 1997

The manifesto for the 1997 general election is the demonstration of the historical account given above. Its analysis through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis by different authors (Donadio 2005, Fairclough 2000, to name just two) has extensively shown how the document tries to appeal to the financial capital, and to reassure the economic powers that a New Labour government would not be a risky bet on the table of economic profits. New Labour victory at the 1997 general elections has rightly been attributed to “its organizational reforms [that] enabled the leadership to distance New Labour from its

past and to assert control over its future; and its resort to soundbites and malleable 'big ideas' [that] enabled it to leave its strategic line and detailed political programme undefined as far as the electorate was concerned” (Jessop 2003:5). Thus the importance to deal with the document as a first step in the realm of New Labour.

The manifesto deals with the trade unions both in the introduction, which is the part where the authorship of the leader of the party (Tony Blair) is more evident, and in the part where the actual description of the policies is drawn. The paragraph “We will help create successful and profitable businesses” (lines 205-6) involves trade unions directly.

5.2.1 The Representation of trade unions as social actor : a ruling minority inside the Labour Party

As it had to be expected, being the text a political manifesto for elections, the most represented participants are the proposing party and its leader. The use of the personal pronoun 'we' and the possessive pronoun 'us' are sometimes used to refer to the party and sometimes to include the whole country. Such choices are justified both by the characteristics of political discourse and by the commonalities that can be found in the genre under study.

Here the focus has to be put, instead, on the representation of trade unions. The working people's organizations are not completely excluded, indeed they appear nine times, of which two as pronouns. Unions are represented three times as activated participants and twice as affected participants. In the other four cases they are represented as circumstances surrounding the action. One particular paragraph strikes the attention and needs a more in-depth analysis, and it is the one

where Blair makes it very explicit what the new relationship of the party with the unions will be .

We have rewritten our constitution, the new Clause IV, to put a commitment to enterprise alongside the commitment to justice. We have changed the way we make policy, and *put our relations with the trade unions on a modern footing where they accept they can get fairness but no favours from a Labour government*. Our MPs are all now selected by ordinary party members, not small committees or pressure groups. The membership itself has doubled, to over 400,000, with half the members having joined since the last election.

(lines 71-78)[emphasis added]

The overall perception of the unions as mostly non-actors is made very explicit when the processes represented in the passage above are taken into account. Importantly, Blair starts with the statement that informs all the subsequent paragraph, by making it clear that the re-writing of Clause IV from Labour constitution is a sign of a new commitment to enterprise, determining a change in policy that cannot go without a new relationship with trade unions. The grammatical choices here are very significant in that trade unions are construed as: 1) a mere circumstance of accompaniment in Labour's action of putting its relationships with them on a 'modern footing', 2) actors of the mental process of 'accepting' and 3) actors of the material process 'to get'. These choices seem to signal that the Labour party does not want to be seen as a 'slave' to the unions anymore, as it was represented in conservative discourse, and probably perceived by the public opinion which had not voted for it for 18 years. The real pragmatic scope of the sentence is thus the construal of New Labour in relation to trade unions and not the contrary.

In this way Blair construes the unions by putting them in a

corner, in passive acceptance of what the future Labour government decides they can or cannot get. The analysis is supported also by what comes after: in the last sentence, Blair makes a reference to how the MPs are chosen “now”, where the use of the temporal marker makes it clear that this is different from 'before', and draws an opposition between “ordinary members” on the one hand and “small committees” and “pressure groups” on the other. Who can committees and groups be in the 'Old Labour' if not Trade Unions? Thus, a backgrounded presence of the unions is construed; at the same time they are depicted as a sort of dictatorial minority that in the past had kept the party in hostage.

As opposed to trade union scarce representation, the text makes a lot of reference to “employees”, and some reference to “workers”, that is the categories which should be represented by the unions. “Employees” and “workers” nearly always occur with their supposed counterpart, that is “bosses” and “employers” on the same level as part of the economic system which Blair and his New Labour want to help for the welfare of Britain. Indeed “bosses versus workers” is found in the first paragraph as an example of those divisions in the British society that no longer have sense. Then, what is needed for the economy to flourish is described and it is stated that “innovative entrepreneurs and skilled employees” are needed, whereas the flexibility in the Labour market “serves employers and employees alike”. The same is true for the aim of the party which is “partnership not conflict between employers and employees”. Earlier in the text employers and employees are put together under the category of “industry” which comprises them as partners of the government in the “enhancement” of the market. In consideration of such shared

interests, the two categories will be also physically put together on an equal representation in the commission which will have to decide the amount of the minimum wage “whose membership will include representatives of employers, including small business, and employees”. When the two terms are separated they are both represented as actors of mental processes (sensors) and their counterpart as phenomenon of the same process as in “The best companies recognise their employees as partners in the enterprise”, which is also inverted in “Employees whose conditions are good are more committed to their companies and are more productive”.

In the text analysed trade unions are represented as passive recipients of New Labour actions. Such an image is construed through the representation of the Labour party itself as an active participant in the processes as opposed to the one of mere implementer of a “Militants' Chart”, as Margaret Thatcher accused it to be in her 1979 manifesto.

Union activity is always related to the past (the 70s) and to violent confrontation, but overall they are scarcely represented as social actors. Trade unions as organised collectivities are replaced by individual and atomised employees, who are the only actors entitled to exercise rights at work.

5.2.2 Individual vs collective rights: trade unions as relics of a sad past

As for semantic relations I could find at least two lines of meaning construction that end with the trade unions. One is a line of opposition between trade unions and individual rights, not quite in the same way as the Thatcherite one, but in a more subtle way.

...there will be no return to flying pickets, secondary action, strikes with no ballots or the trade union law of the 1970s. There will *instead* be basic minimum rights for the individual at the workplace, where our aim is partnership not conflict between employers and employees.

(Lines 120-123) [emphasis added]

Blair announces that there will be no return to the trade union laws of the 70s and opposes to them the basic rights of the individual at work, introduced by the adversative preposition “instead” that creates the semantic relation of antonymity. This is an important factor in the dynamics of the industrial relations in the Country. Here a collective right, as represented by the laws of the 1970s and by the trade union act of 1906, is opposed to individual rights. In the dialectic relationship with the other aspects of society, this opens the path to a parcelling out of action. If rights are recognised to individual workers and not to their organisations (i.e. trade unions), those rights are less easy to be asserted and every collective action is seen as an undue interference in the life of the individual.

The other line is more difficult to detect, and it links union's requests to their supposed will to go back in time. As underlined before, in the sentence where Blair describes the relationship with trade unions he construes the Party as the one which has put such relationship on a “modern footing” (line 74) and the unions as passive acceptors of the choice. In this way a first dichotomy with unions and 'modernity' is drawn. The second step in the process is that of relegating flying pickets and secondary action to a point in the distant and grey past of trade union laws of the 70s. The aim here is achieved through the interpersonal metaphor “we make it clear” (line 120) (that there will be no going back to the past). Indeed if someone feels the need to make something clear it can be inferred that in the past there

were misunderstandings or that the counterpart (the unions) is expecting the contrary to happen. The opposition between the past relation and the present one is reinforced by the creation of a relationship of antonymity between the words “fairness” (line 75)- what unions can expect from a New Labour government - and “favours” (line 75) – what can be inferred they have had from Old Labour ones.

Another important feature has to be noticed: the choice of talking about “secondary action” (line 121) instead of 'solidarity action', as it would be called by trade unionists and trade union members. The adjective “secondary” brings with itself a sense of superfluity, whereas the word 'solidarity' used as a premodifier gives it an enhanced moral value.

At the level of classification a difference is drawn between workers and unions and rights that can be claimed by the individual in isolation and not in her/his group action. This is one of the characteristics of anti-union discourse. Thus the construal of workers becomes relevant here. In New Labour discourse they are represented as being one of the organs that make the economy work at the same level of employers. The representation of the two social actors as equals is highly questionable but serves the aim of the promotion of partnership in the workplace so important for New Labour political discourse and policy. The representation of employers and employees as equals is a highly ideological issue and it has no basis in the reality of things. The same kind of representation can be found in Thatcherite discourse on labour relations, so that it can be considered as a characteristic of anti-union discourse. Being employees and employers equal, with equal rights, power and equal protection by the law, there

is no need for employees to be represented and protected by trade unions and, automatically, trade union rights are transformed in “privileges” in conservative discourse, and “favours” in New Labour discourse.

5.2.3 *The 'topos of modernity' at work*

There are some interesting uses of arguments and missing premises in the text, but they are mostly found in the foreword signed by Mr Blair himself, the part which has the most propagandistic flavour.

We aim to put behind us the bitter political struggles of left and right that have torn our country apart for too many decades. Many of these conflicts have no relevance whatsoever to the modern world - public versus private, bosses versus workers, middle class versus working class. It is time for this country to move on and move forward. We are proud of our history, proud of what we have achieved - but we must learn from our history, not be chained to it.

(lines 61-66)

The first argument can be synthesized as follows:

1 STRUGGLES BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT HAVE TORN THE COUNTRY APART

2 MANY OF THESE CONFLICTS HAVE NO RELEVANCE IN THE MODERN WORLD

Claim: WE SHOULD PUT THOSE STRUGGLES BEHIND

If there is anything as a 'topos of modernity', then Blair is surely culpable of using it. Indeed this argument only works if one sticks to the commonsensical belief that things that have no relevance in the modern world should be left behind. What is even more striking is that there is no sign of proofs accounting for the correctness of the second premise used in the argument. Indeed there are many organizations and individuals that would object to the idea that conflicts between left and right as well as public and private, workers and bosses and middle class vs working class are a useless relic of the past, and who would look at class struggle as something profoundly rooted in the

present day world (Callinicos and Harman 1987, Jessop 2002).

The second argument is even more interesting as it deals directly with the relationship of the party with the trade unions. The argument's structure refers to the first quotation in this chapter (lines 71-78).

Claim: NEW LABOUR HAS NOW A MODERN
RELATIONSHIP WITH TRADE UNIONS
1 NEW LABOUR HAS NOW A COMMITMENT TO
ENTERPRISE
2 NEW LABOUR MPS ARE NOT CHOSEN BUY SMALL
COMMITTEES ANYMORE
3 (A RELATIONSHIP WHERE THERE IS SPACE ONLY FOR
TRADE UNIONS AND NOT FOR ENTERPRISE AND THAT
GIVES THE POWER OF CHOOSING MPS TO UNIONS IS AN
OLD ONE)

The missing premise, number 3, is the one which makes the argument work. A premise that also draws on the supposedly shared knowledge inside the British public opinion that trade unions were too powerful with the Labour Governments of the 1970s, in the better tradition of the “victim-victimizer reversal” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001). The topos of modernity is at work here too, indeed it is just according to the consideration that the former relationship is not modern that the party is entitled to change it.

The second part of the text relies less on argumentation, nonetheless powerful and significant assumptions (Fairclough 2003) can be found in the vocabulary and metaphors used throughout the text. Starting from the title “We will help create successful and profitable businesses”, an assumption can be inferred by the choice of using the verb 'help'. Indeed what is presupposed here is the concept of *governance* (Jessop 2002), according to which a government can only act as a facilitator, and sometimes a partial redeemer, of the

market. All that a government can do is just helping the forces of the market to build “successful” and “profitable” businesses, which are, again, presupposed as good and desirable things without any questioning.

Nonetheless those are concepts that can be questioned when a different approach to the issue is taken. “Profitable businesses” had never been an objective of the Labour party before. Indeed sticking to a Marxian definition of profit as deriving from a “profound injustice” (Callinicos 2003:36), and the theory of capitalist exploitation that explains how the capitalists as a class can only increase their profits by reducing the real wages of the workers, profits could only be seen as a negative thing by a party which claimed to be defending workers' rights.

A tribute to such a concept seems to be paid when the manifesto states that Labour sees “healthy profits” as the driving force of a dynamic market economy. The presupposition lies in the fact that premodifying “profits” with the adjective “healthy” means that there can also be 'unhealthy' ones. But the use of the metaphor of the body to refer to the economic system, signalled by the reference to 'health', is operating a more complex function in the text. The 'diseased' profits are not only those obtained by acting against the law, but also by acting against the balance of this living body through the over-exploitation of one of its organs, the workforce. By using such a metaphor New Labour seems to embrace an 'organicist' view of society, according to which all parts of society are organs of a same body and that all contribute to the well-being of the entire body³³.

³³ The analogy of the state with the human body has been widely used in political thought from the Greek times to, at least, the seventeenth century, when it was substituted by that of the 'social contract'. In general such analogy is used to legitimate hierarchical and authoritarian regimes and to sponsor conservative ideas, stressing social order and obedience. Hale D.

Moreover, from the point of view of Aristotle the whole is prior to the parts (*Politics*, I.2. 1253, 920), thus everything that goes against the whole, every conflict inside society, is perceived as 'self-injurist' in some way. Being the idea of organicism mostly grounded in the natural sciences, a look on how pathologists approach the question might be useful. Indeed organicist pathologists maintain that all diseases are associated to structural alterations of organs. In the field of industrial relations this means that at least one among the actors involved – government, employers and trade unions - is affected by such malformation, that has to be, arguably, surgically corrected. The metaphor of the body is taken on with the definition of the basis of the economy as “weak” and by the use of the verb “to suffer” (lines 221 to 224) when talking about unemployment and skills shortage further in the text.

The characteristics highlighted during the analysis of the semantic relations are confirmed by the analysis of presuppositions where the vision of an organicist society is drawn. With such a view normalised in the text every attempt to start a fight between the different organs would be seen as at least insane. The same organicist logic is found to be at work when an analysis of the metaphors used is carried out. The use of the metaphor of the body to refer to the market and to society in general has not been found in the corresponding document by the Conservative Party in 1979 (indeed what is at work there is an attempt of legitimation of classic economics representing the market as able to deliver the goods for everyone if left undisturbed, with the presupposition that workers' struggle would

G., “Analogy of the Body Politic”, in Dictionary of the History of ideas,
<http://etext.virginia.edu/DicHist/dict.html>, accessed June 2007

prevent this to happen thus creating poverty for everyone), but the ideological effect obtained by two different strategies is the same: the stigmatization of class struggle.

5.3 The White Paper *Fairness at work* (1998)

5.3.1 The first disillusion from the New Labour government

The white paper “Fairness at Work” was presented to Parliament in May 1998 by the New Labour government in its first mandate. It answers to the demands of trade unions that had a hope to see the anti-union legislation of the conservative governments reversed, but it has been widely criticised both by academics in the field and trade union representatives for its timid approach to the matter (Taylor 1998; Novitz 1999). Trade unionists and experts in industrial relations thought that the white paper would finally put the legislation of Great Britain on the matter at pace with international standards, of which most of the measures still in force continue to be in breach. But when the document was issued and approved it became clear that not much had been achieved. It is interesting to note that the document is foreworded by the prime minister himself and not by the appointed minister or by the secretary of state for employment.

To the foreword is followed by six chapters and two annexes, which bear the following titles: *Building Prosperity*, *Modern Business at Work*, *New Rights for Individuals*, *Collective Rights*, *Family friendly Policies* and finally *The Way Ahead*. The two annexes deal with a synthesis of the proposed changes in the procedures for trade union recognition and an inventory of the proposed changes on the whole of the matter. What is interesting is the return on the scene of “collective rights” as well as the quasi-religious references to

“prosperity”, which could be replaced by a more technical term as 'strong economy'. As for the other command papers I have focussed my analysis on the foreword which becomes even more important because it is signed by Tony Blair.

5.3.2 Partnership in the workplace: the immaterial wor(l)ds of the new economy

The text is divided in 11 paragraphs. The first one sets the aim of the command paper:

This White Paper is part of the Government's programme to replace the notion of conflict between employers and employees with the promotion of partnership.

(lines 1-2)

Thus, the White Paper is just a step towards the implementation of the government's programme. This does not surprise after the analysis made of the electoral manifesto of 1997. But even if it is construed as a long term programme, it cannot be denied that its realisation is mostly done through legislation on industrial relations. As I have underlined before the assertiveness of governments on the matter has been increasing in the years and this document is no exception to the rule. The role of actor in the process of replacing is given to the “programme”, of which an attribute is that of being “the government's” programme. The force is attributed to an inanimate object, but it is an object that has been created by the human actors grouped in the government. The secretaries in the government act through the application of the programme: what they intend to do is “replace” the “notion of conflict”. Not conflict, but the notion of it, with “partnership”. The text assumes that partnership is already at work in the workplace, since it only needs to be promoted. It can thus

be argued that the first paragraph sets the scene for the white paper and the legislation to operate by presupposing that conflict is not a reality but a perception of what goes on in the workplace and that such perception could be changed if the reality of partnership were rightly promoted, as a good product needs only to be made known to the public. Such a view is furthered in paragraph 6, where Blair states:

My ambition for this white paper goes far wider than the legal changes we propose. It is nothing less than to change the culture of relations at work

(lines 27-28)

Thus the cultural aspect is the focus. The clause is interesting also because it chooses not to use “industrial relations” but “relations in and at work”. The traditional premodification “industrial” is replaced with a postmodification. The result of the lexicogrammatical choice is complex: first of all, the collocation “industrial relations” has had such a long history that the meanings of the two distinct lexical items have been put aside and the collocation has taken an altogether new meaning. “Industrial relations” has taken to mean now, on the one hand, the academic discipline that studies the issue of the relationship between the workforce and the owners, both intended as groups, mediated by the government; on the other, the expression denotes such relationship in itself. What is important here is that the collocation “industrial relations” takes with it the idea of the confrontation between two groups. The breaking of the collocation as operated by Blair works exactly towards the weakening of such group dimension.

The substitution of “industrial” with “in and at work” deletes something which is thought to be belonging to the past (the industrial economy) and replaces it by the word workplace. The workplace has different semiotic components from the industry. Indeed while

industry is an economic term, it represents one of the productive realities of a national economy and, most importantly it is highly impersonal if compared to the “workplace”, which is part of each one's personal experience: a common word that everyone could use by premodifying it with a personal pronoun. By referring to the “workplace”, the materiality of the place where people use the labour power they have sold to the owner magically disappears, or at least it becomes highly fragmented depending on the experiences of those who read the document. Journalists will think of a workplace in a very different way from the cleaners who clean their offices at night, even if the place is exactly the same one. The same holds true for a teacher in a public school as opposed to one doing the same job in a state school in some problematic periphery. Not to talk about a worker in a car plant and a white collar working in the same firm.

The passage from industrial to workplace relations is from an impersonal environment to the environment that each individual experiences in everyday life in a different way. It is thus easy to see that also the word “relations” takes a different meaning in this context: it is used in a more general sense, of the different relations that every individual entertains with other individuals and society as a whole. Blair is declaring to be dealing with just one part of this complex reality: the relations that the individual entertains in the workplace. What is more, Blair refers to relations “in and at” work. We could dismiss the use of the double preposition as a rhetorical reference to the title, or as a simple aesthetic choice. But I suspect that this is not so. Indeed Blair seems to be saying that among the relationships in the workplace he wants to change the ones at work now. Linked to this is the admission, in the same paragraph, that law

cannot change directly the culture in the workplaces, but what he really wants to do by legislation is “to reflect a new culture” - Take a trend which has been found in some parts of the productive system and make it a rule for everyone. Indeed in paragraph 7 he writes:

Already modern and successful companies draw their success from the existence and development of partnership at work.

(lines 33-34)

The inspiration of the rules that will be proposed will be taken from firms in which the management chose to change its relationship with the workforce without any external influence, but just because it recognised that production and innovation had to gain from such a choice. Thus, as it is stated in the 8th paragraph (lines 37-39), that is an example of “voluntary understanding”. “Voluntary” seems to be a reference to the old style industrial relations. In that concept it meant the system of free bargaining developed by the bosses and the representatives of the workforce (the trade unions) from the years of the industrial revolution on. It indicated a system which was born from the conflict between two opposed wills (*voluntas*) as the balance which was born by the free confrontation between the two. In this case, voluntary is used as a contrary of forced. Apart from that, it is again taken from the collective sphere of meaning to be brought to the individual one. Indeed it premodifies “understanding and cooperation” which are needed from individuals “because it has been recognised that the prosperity for each is bound up in the prosperity for all”.

5.3.3 Workers' rights as a light infrastructure: capital must not be disturbed

Going back to the central part of the document, we find many issues in

common with the manifesto and a new important one. I'll start with the new one, which has been quoted and misquoted by the British press and trade unionists.

In paragraph 3 Blair declares:

Even after the changes we propose, Britain will have the most lightly regulated labour market of any leading economy in the world

(lines 12-14)

Before reading the declaration in this context, I had read it on the declarations of trade unionists, as a quotation from the Prime Minister. In those contexts, the sentence seemed to be a way of spurring Blair to action, according to his acknowledgment of the deficit of rights for British workers. On the contrary, both in this quotation and in the newspaper article in which the sentence appears for the first time in Blair's words (*Toronto Star*, 7th of April 1997) the sense of the sentence is very different: an act reassuring capital that investing in Great Britain would remain still profitable. The sentence was uttered for the first time by Tony Blair during an interview before the 1997 election. The interviewer was Naomi Klein. The Prime minister goes on speaking to the enterprise by building a relation of opposition:

But it cannot be just to deny British citizens basic canons of fairness

Blair elaborates on the basic nature of the rights in lines 18-21:

These proposals, together with the introduction of the minimum wage – set sensibly, implemented sensibly – put a very minimum infrastructure of decency and fairness around people in the workplace.

As it can be seen all this central part is dedicated to reassuring the entrepreneurial part. First of all the proposals will be “set sensibly”

and “implemented sensibly”, as if to say 'trying not to hurt'. Secondly the rights which should be granted to the workers are called here “an infrastructure”, something that influences the way people move (if it is for example a new road), but that people are free to use or not. Such infrastructure is postmodified by a prepositional phrase that defines that it will be made of elements of such a volatile material as “decency and fairness”. Not content with this, Blair also premodifies the “infrastructure” by stating that it will be not only minimum, but “very minimum. The passage above could thus be reworded in the following way: 'We will give the workers a tool made of decency and fairness, this tool will be as small as possible because we don't want to hurt you (enterprise) and we will try to limit its use the more that we can'.

5.4 The fire-fighters' strike: Tony Blair's press conference at Downing Street

5.4.1 The awkward squad

The official declarations of the prime minister with reference to the 8-day-long fire-fighter's strike in November 2002 were given during the press conference held on the 3rd day of strike, on the 25th of the same month. The press conference is divided into two parts the first one being a statement by the Prime Minister, and the second his answers to the journalists present at Downing Street on that day. An important background information to understand the text is that during the strike the minimum fire safety services were guaranteed by the army which worked with its own equipment.

Among those the so called “Green Goddesses” which in most of the newspaper articles were opposed with the traditionally red fire-

fighters engines. The strike also came in an unfortunate moment as winds of war were blowing. Indeed those were the months in which the war against Iraq was being decided. It has to be said, also, that the Fbu (the Fire Brigades Union) had started talks with the employers as soon as the month of October of the previous year, but the impossibility to reach an agreement postponed the strike until the end of November³⁴. The industrial unrest went on into the following year, indeed a partial settlement was only reached in July. When the war against Iraq was already on. Of course, this did not help the fire-fighters' cause.

On January 28th 2003, the Deputy prime minister John Prescott announced a bill that gave the government the powers to impose a settlement of the dispute, thus undermining free collective bargaining (Seifert and Sibley:173). Such a bill was in breach both of ILO standards and of the European Social Charter, and the government knew it.

The strike was also preceded by a wave of mounting preoccupation in the establishment (and in Tony Blair's mind) for the rise of a new breed of trade unionists, dubbed by the press “The awkward squad”. Those were trade union leaders elected around the second term of the New Labour government who, with different nuances, criticised the policy of the government and were reported to have a “militant” approach to industrial disputes, as well as “far left” sympathies³⁵. Andy Gilchrist, the leader of the Fire Brigades Union,

34 As it is made clear in John McDonnell's intervention in the House of Lords, the dispute had begun well before the announcement of the strike and it was because of government intervention that the first round of talks went to a standstill. (Seifert and Sibley, 2005:190)

35 The first ones to take notice of the new phenomenon were the journalists of *The Guardian* which, as soon as September 11th 2001, titled: “The return of the awkward squad. As the TUC gathers in Brighton, a new generation of union leaders fiercely independent and unrepentantly leftwing is making its mark”.

was reported to be one in of those new unionists strongly adversed by Tony Blair and the “Blairites” inside New Labour. As a proof of the mounting attention on the issue and the form it took I will quote just one of the articles that gives the idea of how the field was being prepared for a tough confrontation. Indeed on July 18th 2002 *The Independent* came out with an article with the following title: “Summer of Discontent? Not yet. But the unions do want a fight”.

The article went on by stating:

“Tony Blair is facing the biggest challenge to his authority since he became Prime Minister in 1997. Increasingly fierce opposition is coming from outside Parliament, from the unions that helped to put Labour in power and which still form the biggest single source of Labour Party funds.”

The authors then try to tone the title down but still kept the comparison:

“Comparisons with 1979 are overblown - by some estimates about a quarter of the working population either took industrial action that year or were laid off as a consequence of strikes. But that has not stopped the unions raising the spectre of the so-called Winter of Discontent, when council workers were last involved in a serious dispute, as part of their propaganda campaign”.

Among the categories which were demonstrating some discontent over government policies, mostly over the plans for privatisation masked as public-private partnerships, the newspaper quote council workers, civil servants and, not surprisingly, fire-fighters. On the forthcoming dispute the newspaper writes:

“Another industrial conflict, involving the Fire Brigades Union, looks set to loom large over the annual conference of the Trades Union Congress in September, often a dress rehearsal for the Labour Party assembly two weeks later. Ministers will find it hard to enlist public support against the fire-fighters, even though they are demanding a 40 per cent pay rise. Such an increase would put them on pounds 30,000 a year - a figure the public might believe is reasonable for people who risk their lives saving others. They are

also demanding a new automatic pay system to replace a mechanism won in 1977-78 after a seven-week stoppage – the only time fire-fighters have staged a national strike. The FBU argues that the present formula has not enabled its members, who have an increasingly technical job, to keep pace with earnings of workers with comparable skills. Talks aimed at settling the dispute proved fruitless yesterday and the union now plans to convene a national conference in early September to trigger a ballot on a national stoppage”.

The same article in *The Independent* confirms the report on the attention that the election of trade union leaders considered to be left-wingers was gathering in those days. Indeed when talking about the election of the new secretary of the union Amicus-AEEU, which was taking place in those days, they make it clear that the Blairite candidate, Sir Ken Jackson, was in danger of being defeated by Derek Simpson:

“If Mr Simpson is declared the winner today he will join a growing cadre of left-wingers in senior union positions, all of whom are challenging the Government in one way or another. They include Billy Hayes, recently elected general secretary of the Communication Workers' Union, Mark Serwotka, who won the election to lead the PCS Civil Service union, Bob Crow, of the RMT rail union, and Andy Gilchrist of the Fire Brigades Union.”

To complete the grim portrait of the relationship between trade unions with New Labour, the article also reminds that many unions had decided during their conferences to reduce their economic contribution to the party, underlining that the most courageous move had been that of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMT), not to support 13 Labour candidates who had not backed their policy demands during the previous campaign.

5.4.2 *Argumentation and topoi: “too short blanket” and “setting the precedent”*

In his speech before the questions by the journalists, Blair starts by defining the situation by means of classification indeed he says:

I want to explain to you really why we are in the situation we are in, why the Government has to stand firm in the face of this action
(lines 4-5)

The classification is achieved by means of repetition of the interrogative pronoun “why”. By such realisation “the situation we are in” is put in a relationship of analogy with the fact that the government must stand firm. Thus from the representation of the situation the fire-fighters and their union are excluded, and the very fact that fire-fighters are out on strike (which should be the true “situation we are in”) is ignored in the account of the prime minister.

The quoted passage precedes the most powerful and repeated argument of the Prime minister during the dispute, which can be summarised as follows:

claim: WE CANNOT GIVE FIRE-FIGHTERS WHAT THEY ASK FOR
1 (BECAUSE IT WOULD REPRESENT A PRECEDENT)
1.1 THAT PRECEDENT WOULD GIVE OTHER CATEGORIES THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR MORE MONEY
2 WE DON'T HAVE THE MONEY FOR THOSE CATEGORIES
3 IF WE SPEND MORE MONEY THAN WHAT WE HAVE THE ECONOMY IS PUT IN DANGER

That is the complete form that the argument takes with information being added to it throughout the text, but in its first realisation it misses all the central premises and goes straight from the claim to the third one :

The Government has to stand firm in the face of this action in order

that we protect our economy, jobs and living standards

(lines 5-7)

Here another missing premise can be individuated, that according to which the action is a threat to the “economy jobs and living standards” which thus need to be protected. The argument is realised in other parts of the text, mostly during the answer to the question of journalists and it becomes a sort of repetitive mantra.

If we were to concede this pay claim, the economic consequences would be dire, and this is really what I want to stress to you today. This Government has worked very hard in our first term to lay the platform for economic stability, for full employment, for rising living standards, and it has required some difficult decisions.[...] As a result of that economic stability we have been able to invest in our public services, but it is only on the basis that we keep managing the economy in a sensible and prudent way. We cannot therefore allow the good work to be undone now with pay settlements that risk driving up inflation, interest rates and unemployment, and we are not going to allow the record investment in public services to be swallowed up simply in extra pay.

(Lines 62-76)

The argument as it is realised in the abstract above expands on what Blair considers to be the “economy jobs and living standards” of the people of Great Britain. Indeed those enhanced living standards etc. are construed as a result of Government action. The government is in actor's position in the first clause of the second sentence and the process that it realises is that of working for a goal which is realised by the hypotactic causal (purpose) clause “to lay the platform for economic stability”.

There is here at work an assumption that betrays the common approach to policy making as management. Indeed what the government has done is contributing to the “platform for economic stability”.

The platform is not the building, it might be a very important

part of it, but still it is not the entire structure, it is not economic stability which is set by the government, but the platform for it. I point this out because, as I have underlined in previous analyses, the conception of the role of government in the economy of the country is a very important question from which its role in industrial disputes derives. If the only possibility for a government is that of setting the scene for economic stability, the rest is left for the market forces to solve. This is part of the neo-liberal ideology at work. In this case the important result of the working of such ideological account is that the government is not going to intervene in industrial disputes unless the very basis of the economy is put at risk by it. And Blair's argument is exactly that the dispute of the fire-fighters goes straight to endanger that platform.

The introduction of the *topos* of setting the precedent: 'if I give something to you I will have to give it to everyone who asks for it so I cannot give it to you', is made in lines 81 to 85:

The fire-fighters do, of course, a very important job. We have never disputed that throughout. But I hope that they understand - that you understand - that they are not the only public sector workers who do important jobs. Nurses do a great job, so do teachers, so do the police, so, as we are seeing once again, do the Armed Forces and many of these are paid far less than fire-fighters.

By stating that the fire-fighters are not the only ones who make an important job, Blair is introducing the idea that after them everyone is going to feel free to ask for more money. He also anticipates a possible objection by stating:

Now of course people will say well the fire-fighters are a special case. But I think *you and I know* that most public sector workers will argue that they are special case, and in a way they are all special cases - the nurses, the teachers, the Armed Forces, the police.

(lines 93-96)[emphasis added]

Blair attributes the knowledge (that all public sector workers think of themselves as special) to the audience first, and then to himself. In this way the possibility of an objection to the statement is strongly limited and the public is brought to accept it uncritically.

In the last passages of his speech Blair comes back to the economic aspect of the matter:

If we were to yield to this claim, made in this way, at this time, we would do fundamental and lasting economic damage to the economic stability - the low inflation, low unemployment, low mortgage rate - we have fought so long and hard to achieve as a country. That is *the simple and blunt truth* that we in government have to take on board.

(Lines 118-122) [emphasis added]

“The truth is rarely pure and never simple”³⁶, would answer Oscar Wilde to the prime minister. Tony Blair's point is that the requests of the fire-fighters have to be rejected because otherwise other categories would ask for more money and the economy “of low inflation, low unemployment and low mortgage rates” would suffer. Obviously, no technical explanation is given about it, the audience has to trust him. A simple and commonsensical 'reason why' is given in what follows the previous declaration:

If we were to provide the necessary for the type of deal the fire-fighters are claiming, their pay rise today would simply become their rising mortgage bill, rising prices, the country's unemployment tomorrow.

(Lines 122-124)

This strategy recalls the miners' strike: workers do not know what is good for them And when they strike, in the long term they are doing it against their own interest. This is a *topos* which is common throughout the history that has been traced so far. It is the paternalistic

36 “*The Importance of Being Earnest*”, 1895, Act I (p. 6 Dover Thrift editions, 1990, New York)

attitude of Politics (mostly government) towards the workers. The same that has been found in Callaghan's discourse, the same found in Thatcher's: the parental *topos* 'I say it for you own good'.

A representation of the second premise to the main argument in Blair's speech is the following:

There are limits to the money that can be made available, there are limits to the extent that outdated working practice can be allowed to go on, so pay linked to modernisation is the only way that this can be resolved.

(Lines 128-131)

Here Blair makes the *topos* of the 'too short blanket' explicit. The *topos* works only if the audience accepts that the blanket cannot be changed, and this effect is granted by the use of an existential clause (Halliday 2004:256), which needs no actor in order to work, thus representing a phenomenon as natural and unchangeable. The pattern is used twice, thus construing both the limits in the expense and the limits in how long what he calls "outdated practices" can go on as plain existents (Halliday 2004:258). The attempt to hide agency is also repeated in the expanding relative clause which represents the process of making money available, whereas no grammatical nor logical rule prevented Blair from saying at least 'There are limits on the money that we can make available', but he did not use this representation of the event. Thus, in this way the scarcity of available money is represented as being outside government's control and will.

Other realisations of part of this first argument are found throughout the text::

But I think most people, when they get into the detail of this, realise that if we were to yield to this claim, what could I say to the nurses, what could I say to the soldiers who after all are doing the fire cover at the moment and are paid substantially less than fire-fighters? *We have got difficulty frankly in recruiting nurses,*

teachers or soldiers, but we have about 40 applicants for every fire-fighter's job.

(lines 272-277) [emphasis added]

The prime minister is answering to a statement in which the journalist questioned the government's strategy, and accused it of scarce preparation to the confrontation - that according to her/him had announced itself well before the autumn. What is striking here is that Blair also adds a not-too-veiled threat to the fire-fighters by stating that they have a lot of requests for jobs in the fire service, whereas they had difficulty in recruiting those categories such as nurses and teachers exploited in the argument right from the beginning. Blair's statistics have been contested by the FBU, according to which of those 40 only 25 were fit for the job.

To go on with different realisations of the same argument, we find another one in the answer to a question which provoked Blair on the quasi-agreement that had been reached late on the Thursday night before the strike and blocked by the government the following morning, thus known as 'the Friday agreement':

If the fire-fighters were to get this type of pay claim, without it being paid for by efficiency or modernisation, tell me what I say to the nurses, or indeed to local government workers who settled for less than 4% and who are being paid far less than fire-fighters? In the end, we are all familiar with this. Everybody who makes a pay claim will always say mine's a special case. You could tell me it wouldn't have on knock-on consequences for the rest. But it would. It plainly would and I think most people, as I say as they get into this, understand that.

(lines 316-322)

By “normalising” the fire-fighters' case saying that everyone thinks her/his case is special, Blair uses a new *topos*: the same claim is made by different groups, so it cannot be considered as true (because not everyone can be special). The possible opposition to the *topos* here

is not to deny that everybody makes the claim but to point out that, in this case, the attribute of being special is not a finite resource and everyone can well claim that he/she is special without taking away the same possibility from others. A striking element in this specific turn of question-answer is Blair's starting sentence. As said before the question was plainly: "why didn't you use this (the Friday agreement) as the basis for talk?" And the answer:

"The basis of the talks is the basis I have set out

This is a very unexpected answer from someone who is professing democracy and reasonableness.

Further on, the concept of 'precedent' is finally used.

The point is this, we aren't the employers and *we have got to be careful of setting a precedent* whereby we come into every negotiation and effectively negotiate direct.

(lines 453-454) [emphasis added]

The argument is expanded again, with the difference that the dichotomy 'success vs defeat' is introduced:

But I do hope the fire-fighters realise that this is a strike that they simply cannot succeed in because the consequences of succeeding is - it's not the defeat of the government, that's not the point - it would be a defeat for the country because the country would end up, after winning this economic stability, after doing so well as an economy. Heaven's above we are probably better placed as an economy than any major industrialised country in the world at the moment in terms of unemployment and issues like that. We would be saying, after doing all that, we are just going to throw it all away.

(lines 492-499)

Through means of classification, the success of the strike is construed as a defeat for the country. In the first clause it is stated that fire-fighters cannot succeed, thus success is not possible for the fire-fighters. The reason for success being impossible are introduced by the preposition "because" put before in the expansion of the main

clause. The subordinate clause thus expands the meaning of success for the fire-fighters as a “defeat of the country” and not of the government.

Another realisation of the main argument in the text is:

But you can't look at the dispute in isolation, that is the point that I am making. If I could get any point across to the fire-fighters today it is to say to them no government could ever be in a situation where they say we are going to settle this public sector dispute without any reference to the consequences and knock-on effects of other public sector pay. We have got a negotiation that is on its way at the moment with the nurses, now the nurses are paid less than fire-fighters, significantly less than fire-fighters, nurses do a great job, they work extremely hard, they save people's lives, they are under a lot of pressure. Now how do I say to the fire-fighters you can have this pay settlement, and then say to the nurses, am I going to stand up and say the nurses aren't a special case, there is nothing special about nurses? What am I going to say the Army? The guys who are out there actually doing the work at the moment, the people who, heaven forbid it won't come to conflict, but supposing there is a conflict are going to go out and actually risk their lives fighting for this country and are paid less.

(Lines 574-587)

This is the last example in which the reference to the other categories of public workers is done by means of rhetorical questions. Blair has used the strategy many times in the texts as if he really did not know what to say to these people, while it is evident from historical evidence and the general layout of his government's policy that he knew the answer very well, at least since the general election 2001: the answer would be privatisation and managerial approach to the public sector, with cuts in jobs and salaries linked to production.

Finally Blair uses the word “risk” within the last occurrence of the argument:

That is why I say there are risks, if we give into this type of claim mounted in this way, there are risks right across the public sector and that is really what we are all trying to stress. We are not saying to the fire-fighters look we don't understand you. We are simply saying that *if you go back to these types of claims being pursued in this way and it starts to spread right across the public or private*

sector. Well you will end up with an economic disaster frankly and we can't afford that as a country and we are not going to do that. We as a country can take enormous pride in the fact that our inflation, our mortgage rates, our unemployment is the lowest, all of them, the lowest they have been for decades and decades.

(lines 633-641) [emphasis added]

The risk is quite clearly that of economic disaster. It seems that in the course of the event, things have got worse: indeed what at the beginning was “dire economic consequences” or “damage to economic stability” has now become an “economic disaster”. This particular passage gives the possibility to get to next topic which characterises this long press conference: the nature of the protest.

5.4.3 The nature of the protest: strike as an outdated practice

The “way” used by the fire-fighters to which Blair refers is the strike: hardly uttered as a word, the concept is nonetheless present as an issue, and it is one of the topics I said I would be dealing with in my research.

In the passage above Blair refers to the strike as the way chosen by the workers to pursue their claim and he attaches to it the characteristic of being something which had sense only in the past: “if you go back to this type of claims being pursued in this way”etc. A perception of strike action as outdated is thus promoted in the text. Going on in the text to a question on whether the strike was a political one and had to be seen in the broader context of an attack to his government, Blair answers:

I think it would be extremely unfortunate if it was seen by any part of the Union movement in a broader context because they have got to realise that in the year 2002 - it's not 1978/79, it's not 1984 - it's different. Life has changed and this is not the way to resolve these things nowadays.

(lines 370-374)

The historical moments to which Blair refers are the ones of toughest confrontation between governments and trade unions. What Blair is trying to make clear is that if there is anyone looking at the present strike in such a way it is the union, which is convinced that it can keep the government at ransom as it was depicted to be doing during the seventies. The spectre of those years had been evoked both by the references to the 'awkward squad' and to militant trade unionism made in the newspapers quoted above, and by the reports on Blair's comments to the strike. Indeed nearly all the media had reported about Blair's definition of the strikers as "Scargillites", that had supposedly been uttered during a private meeting. The Prime Minister never confirmed to have uttered the word but, more significantly, he also never denied the fact. Naturally, it has not been possible to retrieve any document or registration of that meeting. But the declarations of important members of the executive who went on tv during the week-end before the strike began had clearly manifested this type of attitude by calling the strikers "criminals" or the like. Blair does not deny having uttered the word during the press conference even if he is given the possibility to do it twice. Indeed on lines 394 he is asked:

Is the Scargillite word ...

and his answer is the following:

Well, all I say about that is that I hope people realise that the days of unreasonable strike action as the way to pursue your claim, those days are over.

And again on line 551 he is asked quite bluntly:

For the sake of clarity when talking about the unions have you ever uttered the word Scargillite?

And his answer on lines 554 to 559 was:

What I have said - and I am not going into details of conversations - but what I have said is this, industrial militancy to pursue political ends which I guess what people would think of as Scargillism is not on. Now I hope and believe that the fire-fighters are not trying to do that, but we have got to be very, very clear about that indeed. Those days are over in the country. Not under any government and certainly not under this one.

Here a definition of Scargillism is offered, but it is attributed to people: “what people would think of”. The definition is that of political strike, to say it in a short way, a definition totally in line with that of “enemy within” which was developed in those years by Margaret Thatcher. In the second sentence Blair uses the verb “hope” before “believe”, naturally an evaluation of the stress used could be needed to understand whether he is putting more emphasis on the first one or on the second. Depending on that we could affirm whether he was trying to inoculate the doubt that in fact that is what fire-fighters are doing – by putting a stress on “hope” - or to deny that he had ever done the parallel between the two – by putting the accent on “believe”. An element that helps in this interpretation is the adversative clause which follows that one, starting with “but”. The usual pattern in those cases is actually with “hope”: “I hope they are not doing it, but if they are doing it I have to warn them of the consequences”. The pattern makes a lot less meaning if it is the verb “believe” which prevails. If someone really believes that the unwanted behaviour is not taking place, there is no need for him to expand its proposition by using an adversative clause which warns of the results of such behaviour. Thus it can be said that the focus of the prime minister is on the hope, which entails and assumes that the negative behaviour is actually taking place.

In a question to Blair a few lines before, the issue is put explicitly. The exchange is the following:

Is this a political strike?

Prime Minister:

Well, again I think I answered this earlier. I hope very much that people do not think they can pursue political ends by industrial means. I was saying this to somebody the other day that the big change that has come about for the Labour Party as the governing party is this. We went through the 1970's. We went through 18 years of Opposition with people saying we could use industrial action to gain political ends. I'm not accusing the fire-fighters of that. I'm not actually. But you have got to realise that the Labour Party has been through all that. We are in government. This is a different Labour Government from any previous Labour Government and as I say not for reasons of machismo, but for reasons of common sense and moderation. We are never going back to those days, and I will simply not tolerate a return to them.

(lines 529-540)

Another threat is advanced by Blair at this point, and it is a threat that is typical of so-called reformist parties in Europe when they are challenged by more radical views. The threat of the return of a right-wing government. Thus, if radical fringes of society protest in a way that is going to create a crisis in the reformist government, they are seen as favouring the other side of the political spectrum. Naturally nobody can be seen doing this and there is a social stigma for those who are depicted as operating in such a way. Indeed the stereotyped account of the history of the failure of Callaghan's government is repeated

We went through 18 years of Opposition with people saying we could use industrial action to gain political ends.

But that government did not fall because of the strikes, it fell because of a motion of no confidence on devolution (see par. 2.1).

5.4.4 Refuse and reject: the favourite pastimes of trade unions

Another issue that has to be looked at in this dispute is how the Prime Minister represents the union in dispute. This will be done both by looking at the role played by the union in the transitive structures, and through the study of the way in which Blair reports the speech of its representatives. The trade union is referred to as “the union” throughout the text. The union is called by its name in seven instances; of them four are uttered by Blair and the others by the journalists. Twice the Prime Minister uses the name to refer in some way to the leadership of the union. Indeed the first time Blair says:

It is worth just pointing out the roots of this dispute. Earlier this year, following the election of Mr Gilchrist as the FBU General Secretary, the Union declared its intention to set aside the long-standing indexed-linked pay formula and instead table a pay claim for rises of around 40%.

(Lines 8-11)

Here the union leadership is construed as responsible of the sudden confrontational style of the organisation. Indeed it is just after the election of Gilchrist that the pay claim seems to have arisen. But general secretaries are elected by the members on the basis of a determinate programme and on the basis of their declarations on the policy they intend to adopt. What is more, Gilchrist alone was not in the position to decide for a strike. Thus both the decision of the type of leadership and the actions to take are to be attributed to the whole of the members of the union (which is nearly 80 per cent of the whole fire-fighters). The second occurrence of FBU is found when Blair

attributes to its leadership the interpretation of the dispute as engineered by the government:

It is said, and has been said throughout this, as you know, by the FBU leadership, that the government somehow wanted this dispute and somehow engineered the strike.

(lines 35-37)

The FBU leadership is here construed as the agent of a verbal process the content of which is expressed in the relative secondary clause.

The other instance of the use of FBU is in carrier's function in an attributive relational process.

Now, the FBU are perfectly able to put different types of modernisation on the table, and they have done that, but they have got to agree to the basic changes in Bain, because they are the things that yield the benefit.

(Lines 200-202)

The role of the union can be considered as active, the attribute attached to the union is that of having the capacity of doing something. From the quotation it is amazing to see how Blair feels confident in front of the press. So confident that he does not even try to explain why, if the union is able to create and propose a plan as he says, it is the Bain report that has to be uncritically accepted. His only explanation is that "they are the things that yield benefit". And that should be enough.

When Blair refers to the FBU as "the union" he construes it as an active participant. But the processes of which it is the actor are always negative ones. The first instance is in the example used before on the changing of attitude since Mr Gilchrist election. There the main clause in the clause complex states that "the Union declared its intention to set aside the long-standing indexed-linked pay formula"

and to table a pay claim. The union is sayer of a verbal process and the clauses that expand the first one are “setting aside” and “tabling” in this same order. The use of the two processes in rapid succession gives the idea of someone who enters a house, gets to the table, gets rid of what is on it without even looking and then roughly substitutes it with something he/she has brought from the outside. The construal of the union is arguably one of an actor that lacks care and tact. Going on with the other occurrences that we report in succession, the impression is confirmed:

This was refused by the Union
The employers agreed. The Union refused
The employers co-operated. The Union refused.
The Union rejected those changes
the Union has not agreed to any of them at all.

It is quite clear that the union is represented as undertaking mostly negative reactions. This is all the more evident when we compare it with what the attitude of the employers seems to be. What is more, the fact that no circumstances are used to modify the propositions and that neither expansion nor enhancement of the clauses is given, where the bases for the refusal are explained, as you would expect from a mediator between two parties. The idea of a union which only wants to impose its own will is exemplified in the following imaginary report of how the talks had gone on until then:

They came along earlier this year saying that they don't want that formula anymore. They want a different formula. So what did we do? We said OK well let's sit down and discuss a different formula with you, but they then said no, we want a 40% wage claim, then we want the new formula on the basis of the 40% wage claim.
(Lines 267-271)

The personal pronoun “they” refers to the fire-fighters, which are quoted before. They are represented as an actor which “wants” for

three times, and all three of them they are reported as wanting something and not arguing to get it. On the contrary the government is represented as being calm and articulate in inviting them to discuss a new formula. This representation is, apart from being negative, a false one. Indeed the insistence of the fire-fighters on the 40 per cent and their non-acceptance of the Bain report have their basis on the fact that as many as eight proposals for reform of the fire service (Seifert and Sibley 2005: 112) had been issued in the previous years and that the setting up of the Bain commission was seen as instrumental to gain some time, when the strike started to seem inevitable, during the first days of September (Seifert and Sibley 2005:103;110). The Union, nonetheless, did not dismiss the report without giving reasons for its refusal to cooperate in it: in the month of September it issued a ten-point statement entitled “Why not trust the government inquiry?”(Seifert and Sibley 2005: 110). Thus Blair's representation of how the union behaved is quite misleading. The fire-fighters are represented as being not capable of reasoning, of having reasons to guide their behaviour, whereas the government is.

5.4.5 From 'responsibility' to 'reasonableness'

'Reason' and 'reasonableness' are key topics in this speech. 'Reasonableness' is the concept that in New Labour discourse seems to substitute that of 'responsibility', that prevailed in the seventies and eighties. There are sixteen occurrences of the root differently affixed in the text.

And all these changes, which I think when people hear them listed in that way will think are pretty basic changes to working practices, all of those would of course save money and produce efficiency gains. And frankly I defy anyone to say that they are *unreasonable*,

but at present the Union has not agreed to any of them at all.
(Lines 59-61) [emphasis added]

Blair introduces the concept of 'reasonableness' by stating that the behaviour of the government cannot be said to be unreasonable. What is more he defies anyone to say it is. Thus assuming that no one would think so.

We've said OK, we accept the fire-fighters do a good job, if you can save the money on efficiency then get it back to the fire-fighters and I think most people think that is a *reasonable* position.
(Lines 213-216)[emphasis added]

Here the strategy is the same as before: no one can say that he and his government are not reasonable, it is an evaluation that most people share.

Well, the answer is because we have been met I am afraid by a claim that is *unreasonable*
(Line 259)[emphasis added]

On the contrary, the claims of the fire-fighters are defined "unreasonable": the relational attributive clause in which this is realised is non modalised and no circumstances are added in order to limit in some way the weight of the proposition. Indeed, it is not even said that the claim is seen by most people as unreasonable, in a sort of specular way to the way in which the reasonableness is attributed to Blair and his government.

When people say to us, couldn't you just go and settle the thing - just get the thing settled - it would be wonderful if life were like that but you have got to have people being prepared to be *reasonable*. At the present time we have been faced with a claim that is not *reasonable*, and I simply ask you again if you go through the changes I have been listing [...] I think that is not an *unreasonable* position.
(Lines 276-289) [emphasis added]

The three examples above are still on the line of attributing reasonableness to the government and unreasonableness to the fire-

fighters or the union which represents them.

Well, all I say about that is that I hope people realise that the days of *unreasonable* strike action as the way to pursue your claim, those days are over.

(Lines 395-396)[emphasis added]

The sentence above attributes unreasonableness to the type of strike action of the past against which Blair has been conducting his battle. By linking unreasonableness to that kind of confrontation in industrial disputes and then to the strikers among the fire-fighters, Blair is actually drawing a parallel between them, notwithstanding his claim that he is not doing so.

I try to operate in a consensual and *reasonable* way, but if somebody makes an entirely *unreasonable* demand, I'm afraid you have simply got to stand firm on it. It's as simple as that.

(Lines 500-502) [emphasis added]

Not because we are not *reasonable* people or because we've got something against the fire-fighters but for the reasons that I have already given.

(513-515) [emphasis added]

In the end I think I will do it my own way, thank you very much. But my own way is to be perfectly *reasonable* with people

(523-525) [emphasis added]

...you can't resolve it unless people are prepared to be *reasonable*.

(Line 562) [emphasis added]

I am not, I hope, being anything other than completely straight and *reasonable* with people.

(Lines 571-572) [emphasis added]

The three sentences above go on in the positive representation of the action of the government and negative representation of the strikers.

That is why we set up Bain to look at what would be *reasonable* as a new formula for pay. I do commend people to read his report because it is the work, as you would expect from him, of a completely *reasonable* person who has been long associated with the Trade Union Movement.

(Lines 742-745) [emphasis added]

In the two sentences above Blair attributes the positive character

of reasonableness to the Bain report- the report on which he believes that the negotiations should be based – and to the author of the report himself. The idea is that the report is reasonable because it was written by a reasonable person and no reference to the measures themselves is made.

Another feature attributed to the Bain report is that of being a modernising proposal. 'Modernisation' is a key concept in Blair's discourse and in this specific event it is the *conditio sine qua non* for an agreement. But the government's view is not that any kind of modernisation will do, but that it has to be the one thought by Bain. In this case, as in most of the plans for the public sector, modernisation means job cuts and reduction of the service. Indeed the Bain report makes it clear that the reform, the modernisation, cannot be done without the cut of 10,000 jobs. As in most of the cases a cut in full time jobs in the public services is accompanied by the increase in part-time jobs and flexible jobs.

In his speech, Blair construes the refusal of full time fire-fighters to work in teams with part-timers as a kind of aristocratic refusal. What he does not take into consideration is that in an area as the fire-service, working with groups of poorly trained and poorly experienced people means that the risks for the lives of the operators grow. In a sector where the life of each and every operator depends on the efficiency of the team this cannot be undervalued. The need of a radical reform of the working practices as the one suggested by Bain is questioned not only by the fire-fighters, but also by academics who study the way in which organisations work. As a letter sent to the Guardian by an academic shows:

“As I prepare my lectures for a course on crisis management next

semester, I will be obliged to comment on the proficiency and efficiency of the British fire service. As always, I expect to demonstrate that the fire service has a flexible approach to handling emergencies that is a model of excellence. I will go on to suggest that other businesses should follow the lead of the fire service in preparing for crisis situations. I will back this up with evidence.

It is now clear that I will have to explain that the Bain report is clearly not independent. The analysis of the results of the army's role is premature and based upon faulty argument. The attempt at "modernisation" is nothing more than a policy to reduce the effectiveness of the fire service in order to save money. All this will be necessary to maintain my proposition that the fire service is an effective and modern organisation. I will have to confront the substance with the government spin".

Edwin Thwaites Lancashire Business School³⁷

In the better tradition of tough confrontation between government and trade unions the "government spin" did not limit itself to the content of the dispute, but as it had happened for the miner's strike the attack to the leadership has soon been transformed in a personal attack to the general secretary. Once it was Scargill, in 2002 it was Gilchrist. Indeed tabloids such as The Sun and the Daily Mail started talking about a supposed "fat cat" salary for Andrew Gilchrist, who managed to rectify with documents the accusation and the fact that he had supposedly paid an Indian dinner for four people eight hundred pounds.

5.5 Speech by prime minister Gordon Brown to TUC Congress, 10th September 2007

5.5.1 Rhetoric and reality

The final document which is studied in depth in this work is a very recent one. Indeed it is a speech given in the last month of September to the annual congress of the TUC by the Labour (New Labour) Prime

³⁷ Lessons of the fire crisis, Dec 5, 2002,
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/letters/story/0,,853920,00.html>

Minister in charge: Gordon Brown. The choice to include it has been driven by the will of investigating possible changes in the leadership of the Labour Party and seeing how the threat, advanced by many newspapers, of a new season of discontent (it had to be a summer of such kind according to *The Guardian*, but summer has passed and the unions representing the workers in the public sector seem to have decided to give Gordon Brown some manoeuvring space before confronting him) has been tackled by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, thus responsible for the economic policies of all New Labour governments since 1997. Another reason, which might seem purely aesthetic, but is not, is that of closing the circle drawn so far with a document belonging to the same genre as the one which opens it.

Reporting on the event, Seumas Milne, once industrial correspondent for *The Guardian* and now leader writer, refers to the judgement on the speech given by Paul Kenny, general secretary of the GMB (General Municipal and Boilermakers' Union³⁸), in the very title of his article: "Rhetoric and Reality". Indeed the trade unionist is reported as pointing out that there is a discrepancy between what the Prime Minister has said during the speech and the reality of the "pay squeeze" in the public sector, not to talk about the continuity of the government in charge in refusing to adhere totally to European Social Charter, which commits continental executives to the respect of some basic trade union rights³⁹.

Milne points out that the Prime Minister has "pressed every labour movement button he could lay his hands on" but "despite the

³⁸ Naturally, boilermakers don't exist anymore, but the name of the union still keeps a flavour of the history of the trade unions which has its roots in the medieval guilds.

³⁹ http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/seumas_milne/2007/09/for_anyone_who_witnessed_a.html

warm words, the reaction of the floor was at best muted” and he reports that while Brown was speaking some delegates were showing placards asking for fair pay for the public servants and for an end to the tube privatisation⁴⁰. Besides the distance between what Brown said and what he is planning to do there is also, according to Milne, the fact that he is trying to have a motion passed which would ban critical motions during the party's conference. A measure which would silence trade union criticism inside the party once and forever.

In his speech Brown starts by trying to build a friendly contact with the audience both by addressing trade unionist in the General Council directly and remembering his past in the field generally known in Europe as life-long learning. Through this personal reference he manages to introduce the most important part of his speech that is devoted to the attribution of a new role of the trade unions: that of bodies providing training for unskilled or under-skilled workers. He then moves on to introduce international issues by referring to Nelson Mandela and the role of trade unions in the fight against the apartheid regime in South Africa, and then he manages to connect the issue to the more prosaic one of globalisation and the rise of new economic powers in the Asian continent.

5.5.2 Trade unions' new role: enhancing the dignity of labour through education

After greeting the members of the General Council who were going to give up their posts and calling them by name, as to display familiarity with them and the movement in general, Brown makes a reference to

⁴⁰ The topic has been a hot one since the private dealer carrying the restructuring of London Underground declared bankruptcy after making large sums of public money fall into a black hole (July 2007).

the history of the trade union movement

I will never forget that the trade union movement of this country was built over two centuries by hard work and by the struggles and sacrifices of men and women who had a vision of a better and fairer future, free of poverty and free of injustice.

(lines 9-11)

The interpersonal metaphor which opens the statement gives to the proposition that the trade union movement is the fruit of struggles and sacrifices of men and women the strength of an assumption. Brown states that he will never forget the fact and this should be also read as an assurance that his government will act according to such assumption. From the ideational point of view, the clause following the interpersonal metaphor is a material clause where the trade union movement is the goal of the material process described, whereas the men and women are the actors of the process. Such representation is in accordance with the view that trade unions are not independent actors with a will of their own, but simply the sum of the individual wills of their members. By construing trade unions in this way, Brown confirms that the parallel drawn by Thatcher between democratic procedures in the public sphere and in the trade unions, and implemented in her anti-union legislation, has finally been inculcated in public speech. There is not such thing as collective will or power, just 'the sum of individual wills and powers'. Such a view is confirmed from the clause complex that follows:

Today the work of the trades unions of this country is possible only because of men and women who year in, year out, give their *energy, devotion* and *commitment* to sustain and in every generation to revitalise the trade union Movement.

(Lines 6-9) [emphasis added]

Here the positive characteristics of “energy, devotion and commitment” are attributed to the individuals who operate inside the

trade union movement. The passage also puts forward the idea of a constant renewal, linked to the very human category of generations, thus again reinforcing the idea of trade unions as an empty container where individuals put their energies.

In his reference to his professional past, as a Workers Education Association tutor, and tutor in trade union learning before he was elected to parliament, Brown marks an important turn with respect to Blair's position towards the policy measures of the Thatcher governments.

When I and others taught trades union education at Loader College in Scotland and when, as a result of numbers signing up, the Department of Employment under Norman Tebbit cut back the trade union learning budget, I do not think he had any idea of the unstoppable momentum of trade union learning in Britain which has grown from strength to strength.

(Lines 21-26)

Milne is right when he writes that Brown managed to touch all the right chords, indeed by referring to Norman Tebbit (see par. 4.1), the Employment secretary most hated by trade unionists, he manages to take them on his side. Quite evidently the reference to the Thatcher years sheds a negative light on what happened, indeed the main clause makes the department of employment (with the specification that it was under Norman Tebbit) the actor of a process as negative as that of cutting back trade union learning funds. What is more, the evaluation of the policy measure is attributed to ignorance in the clause following the main one, where Brown states that the secretary did not have any idea. But, what did he not have an idea of? Not of how important learning was for the economy, or how good tutors and teachers were, or of the demand for such kind of education: he was not aware of the 'unstoppable momentum of trade union learning'. This is a very

important passage in Brown's speech. In short it can be said that he is trying to put trade union education in an aura of anti-Tory, nearly revolutionary light. The use of the noun “momentum” activates meanings such as 'force', 'impulse' 'energy' and the like, as the search in WordNet shows.

Sense 1

momentum, impulse -- (an impelling force or strength; "the car's momentum carried it off the road")

-> force, forcefulness, strength -- (physical energy or intensity; "he hit with all the force he could muster"; "it was destroyed by the strength of the gale"; "a government has not the vitality and forcefulness of a living man")

=> brunt -- (main force of a blow etc; "bore the brunt of the attack")

=> momentum, impulse -- (an impelling force or strength; "the car's momentum carried it off the road")

=> energy, vigor, vigour, zip -- (forceful exertion; "he plays tennis with great energy"; "he's full of zip")

Thus a positive dynamic concept, made all the more resounding by its clearly Latin root and by the premodification of it by the adjective “unstoppable”. The choices made by the Prime Minister here cannot be considered to be neutral. He wants to give to the “new” role he is proposing for the unions the same high profile of more traditional aims and functions. This parallel is taken forth and made clear later on:

For all its two centuries, the trade union movement of this country has been about enhancing the dignity and the work of labour. Today we are finding a new role which makes the task we undertake more relevant, more urgent and more demanding than ever. To enhance the dignity and value of labour in the 21st Century it is undeniable that we need to enhance the skills of every worker in this country.

(Lines 33- 37)

Brown is aware of the fact that he is in front of an hostile audience, ready to check his words at a microscope but he needs his concept of the new role of trade unionism to pass. Thus he uses an

argumentation that can be represented in the following way:

claim: TRADE UNIONS HAVE TO ENHANCE THE SKILLS OF WORKERS

1 TRADE UNIONS' AIM HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT OF ENHANCING THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR

2 ENHANCING THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR MEANS ENHANCING WORKERS' SKILLS

2.1(IF TU WANT TO GO ON IN THE PURSUANCE OF THEIR AIM THE WAY TO DO IT IS BY ENHANCING WORKERS' SKILLS)

As it happens quite frequently, the missing premise is the focal point of the argument. Indeed here Brown represents reality in a way that puts the unions in the impossibility to counter his argument by maybe saying that the furtherance of the rights of workers, the fight to get a more conspicuous share of their bosses' earnings and to have working conditions which do not put their health at risk, are the very reason for the existence of trade unions, not education according to the needs of capital. But Brown goes on with his mission to convince the trade union movement that their new focus should be placed on training and education through the use of a classification that is intertextual, as it is showed from lines 38 to 42.

So the new role for trade unions is to *bargain* for skills, to *campaign* for skills, to invest for skills and for the *fair rewards* of skills. It is this challenge how all of us in Britain raise our game, to meet and master the new forces of globalisation in the interests of working people in this country, and that is what I want to speak about this morning: the task of the future.

(Lines 38-42)

I called the strategy used an 'intertextual classification' because here Brown is not using an internal structure to give new meanings to words through the creation of relations of equivalence or difference between them. He is in fact importing words and their meanings from a discourse to another, in order to give them new nuances of meaning.

The words “bargaining”, “campaigning” and “fair reward” are taken by the most traditional trade union discourse, and implanted in his discourse on skills. “Bargaining”, “campaigning” and asking for “fair rewards” normally called 'fair pay' is part of the traditional activity of trade unions in their day-to-day job. They are so important as to be quite frequently accompanied by concepts such as freedom, or attributed to the collective strength of workers (“free collective bargaining” is one of the rights stated in ILO treaties), which also recognises to unions the right to campaign and of the workers to get a fair pay for their work.

In Brown's discourse, bargaining is not for working conditions or new contracts but for skills. Campaigning is not for social justice or to keep public services, but for skills, and finally the traditional workers' slogan “a fair day's pay for a fair day's work” seems to be substituted by 'a fair reward for fairly useful skills'. By using those concepts as attributes of his skills mantra he openly tries to tie the two discourses – Brown's discourse on skills and trade union's traditional discourse - and the action of the unions thereof.

The second sentence in the abstract also marks a change in the Prime Minister discourse on globalisation. Indeed while Tony Blair discourse was one in which the measures such as flexibility and the loss of workers rights were nothing but a inevitable Darwinian adaptation to the globalised economic environment, and globalisation was seen as an unchangeable monolithic reality, Brown gives a different representation of that reality. Looking at the transitivity structure activated here it becomes evident. The people of Britain, 'us in Britain', is the actor of the material process of 'rising the game'. The coordinate causal clause has as its goal 'the forces of globalisation'

which are to be mastered by the same actor according to its own interests. What is fundamental is that globalisation becomes a mere circumstantial element and it is used as a participant in the clause only with reference to its forces. Thus globalisation is not conceived of as immanent reality, but the fact that it exists has its roots in the forces that make it possible. Thus if we are confronted by forces we may well turn them on our advantage. This particular construal of globalisation, it must be underlined, does not take away from it the idea of the process as a natural event, but its fragmentation into forces makes a great deal of discursive choices, and thus actions, possible. At this point an internal classification takes place: indeed those forces, need to be defined. Are they positive or negative, where are they pushing us?

This is my central message today. All of us must prepare and equip ourselves for this global era. We must *maximise its opportunities* for working people and seek to *minimise its insecurities*. Nothing should stand in the way of us building jobs and prosperity not just for some but for all British working people. If we do so and *mobilise the talents* of all our people, then I believe that Great Britain can be the great success story of this new global age.

(lines 46-51) [emphasis added]

The global era is represented as being made of opportunities as well as insecurities and it can be affirmed that in Brown speech these are the forces of globalisation. Such a concept of globalisation, as a reality made of opportunities and insecurities, opens the path for a discourse based on the need to make the most of the situation and avoid the detrimental factors in it. The attitude towards globalisation suggested: “maximising the opportunities” and “minimising the insecurities” is then summarised in the need to “mobilise the talents” of the working people of the country. In this way Brown manages to get back to his main topic, that of the promotion of training inside the

unions.

The topic is set and left for a while to give space to a digression on international matters. Brown brings to the congress the greetings of Nelson Mandela, who has been to England to participate to the inauguration of his statue in Parliament Square. He acknowledges the importance of trade union action in the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, a great deal of difference with respect to Margaret Thatcher's dismissive evaluation of trade union action in relation to “overseas things”⁴¹. But in the end of his digression he goes back to the issue of education by making reference to the “education for all Campaign” which then gives him the possibility to go back to the skills and talents topic. The international slot is closed by referring to the competition of the new economic powers such as India and China with their cheap work and their consequent boom in exports, and in again comes the time to talk about skills again. Brown makes it clear that there is no possibility to compete with those powers on the same grounds, but it is necessary for Britain to compete on “ever higher skills” (line 126) in order to obtain “secure”, “well paid”, and “high quality jobs” (lines 128).

5.5.3 If education is a mission, then skills are talents

The high issues of international fights for democracy seem to transfer their aura of importance to the skills' topic. Indeed after giving to the educational role of trade unions the quasi-epic flavour of the battles of the past, Brown manages to construe it as a mission for the movement. After reminding that in order not to succumb to change it is necessary to “embrace it as a force for progress” (line 134), the Prime Minister

⁴¹ See page 86.

states:

That means to achieve it we must embrace a new *mission* for this generation: to *unlock all the talent* of all the people of this country of Britain.

(Lines 152-153) [emphasis added]

Thus, what was before “the new role” of enhancing the dignity of labour through skills is now the even more resounding “mission” of “unlocking talents”. Taken out of the context and put under the microscope, the definition may sound rather too resounding, but its positioning after the reference to the battles of Nelson Mandela makes it be perceived as nearly a natural continuation on the same mood.

Nonetheless what Brown calls “talents” is still a more resounding name for what he really means: skills. As I have said before the reference to talents comes after the fights for freedom in South Africa, thus a construal of training as a freeing mission is coherent with what comes before. What trade unions are called to do, in Brown's construal, is not “transferring skills” but freeing something which is kept in captivity: unlocking talents. In this way the importance of the task is set; and after another digression on the policy measures to be adopted by Brown's executive, the Prime Minister gets to the point of what he believes is the very measure which should convince trade unionists that it is worth backing the government in charge, as well as a possible New Labour government in the case of early general elections: the increase of the money for the Trade Union Learning Fund.

To expand union learning in the workplace and to meet our ambition, which is one million adults in learning, we are going to raise the money available from the Union Learning Fund from £12.5 million this year to £15.5 million next

(Lines 297-299)

Thus, three million pounds more to teach people the skills that the employers are willing to put at work and take advantage of in the near future.

During what sociologists would call field-work, a part of the research that cannot find place in the present account of it, I have been talking about this with trade unionists in London, and they gave me a rather different view on the subject. Namely, they are astonished by the fact that the funds of trade unions (indeed not all trade union learning is paid for by the state, but also by money belonging directly to trade unions) should be used to train people to respond to the requests of capital instead of being spent in teaching trade unionists how to handle and promote more useful activities as bargaining, organising, striking.

The idea that the state has to supply capital with 'ready-to-use' workers and that it is the trade union movement that has to manage the supply of training is a curious blend of modern and ancient concepts. Indeed the idea that the contemporary economic order needs flexibility also for what the skills at work are concerned is a contemporary one, linked to the discourse on globalisation, whereas the role of trade unions as suppliers of such skills is a recovery of the role of medieval guilds, from which modern trade unions derive. Brown's construal of training and the fact that it has to be oriented towards the need of entrepreneurs is a demonstration of the still monetarist tradition prevailing in British government policies. Indeed it signals that Brown believes that "the state cannot reduce the rate of unemployment by stimulating effective demand [but only with] action on the 'supply side' by improving employers' incentives to employ workers" (A. Callinicos, 08 October 2007, personal communication).

Linked to this is a fact that can only be made manifest by taking a Marxist perspective on the matter: the fact that the supplying of the needed skills is demanded to public bodies and not to the firms themselves, means that the employers “will gain extra surplus value if they are able to prevent an increase in productivity from simply raising real wages” (A. Callinicos, 08 October 2007, personal communication).

5.5.4 Pressing the button of history: full employment and welfare

As Milne pointed out in his article, all the buttons of the topics cherished by the trade union movement are touched by Brown. Indeed history is not only used in order to give to the new tasks of trade unions a higher stand, by means of making a parallel with the long gone battles. It is also used in the explicit recovery of the more traditional aims of the Labour Party and trade unions together, by stating that there is no contradiction between those aims and the adaptation to the new economic order which he defends. The mediating effort is discursively undertaken by Brown:

Some people argue that in this fast moving world of change we have to sacrifice our enduring values and give up on full employment and universal public services. But when people ask me about this world of fast moving change, of greater opportunity and yet greater insecurity, and they ask: can we, the British people, in this generation, meet and master the new challenges and still achieve *our goals of full employment, defending and strengthening public services*, ensuring hard working people in Britain are better off in living standards, in *pensions and in services*, my answer is that if we work together and raise our game, if we do not resist change but embrace it as a force for progress and if we equip ourselves with investment, science, enterprise and flexibility, and most of all if we upgrade our education and skills, then we can not only meet and master these realities of global change but also ensure more British jobs, higher standards of living, and *better public services*, including an *NHS that improves every year, free at the point of need*. (lines 139-151) [emphasis added]

The very presence of “full employment” construed as a goal as well as the strengthening of public services is a great difference if compared to the past, since Margaret Thatcher. But the attempt by the Prime Minister to conjugate those goals coming from the past with the demands of the new capitalism is a hard task and he needs to use an argument to convince his audience.

Claim: WE CAN MASTER THE GLOBAL CHANGE AND TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF IT
1 IF WE WORK TOGETHER TO RAISE OUR GAME
2 IF WE DON'T RESIST CHANGE BUT EMBRACE IT
3 IF WE EQUIP OURSELVES WITH INVESTMENT, SCIENCE,
ENTERPRISE AND FLEXIBILITY
4 IF WE UPGRADE OUR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The missing premise that makes the argument work here is that global change is an unchangeable reality. Linked to this the *topos* that “if you cannot resist a force you have to use it in your favour”. Thus Brown's argument will only work if the delegates to the Congress all share the same vision of what the present and the future are, and his appeal to the past is only a rhetoric device that many of the trade unionists in the audience are not prepared to let themselves be enchanted by. Indeed, Brown's reference to “some people” on line 139 is not directed outside the assembly, but inside it. Indeed people who think of globalisation as a damage to the values quoted are a conspicuous part of the trade union movement. Brown resorts to history again, after a detailed list of governmental policies that he has in mind, in order to create new job opportunities in the country. He does it to shed again a negative light on the past conservative governments but also to introduce an old topic cheered by the Labour Governments of the sixties and seventies: 'wage discipline'.

The reference to the past is to 1992, in the days of the so called

“Black Wednesday”, when a devaluation of the pound was necessary in order to prevent an unbearable high inflation rate.

This week will see the 15th anniversary of the most humiliating day for British economic policy in modern history, the Black Wednesday, of 15% interest rates, the exit from the ERM, the mortgage misery, the record repossessions, the negative equity, the 3 million unemployed, all the disasters that befell us 15 years ago.

(Lines 236-239)

The prime minister at the time was the conservative John Major, and here, as in other parts of the text analysed before, Brown refers to Tory handling of the British economy in a negative way. The first aim of the Prime Minister with this reference to the past is that of criticising his opponent David Cameron (who according to Brown was economic advisor of the government at the time of the crisis), and making it understood that he would do the same mistakes as 15 years ago. Further on Brown manages to build the link between that past mistake and the present economic policy of his government by stating that:

If we were again to allow, as they did, inflation to get out of control by repeating as some would the same mistakes of 15 years ago, we would be back to Britain’s same old familiar Conservative pattern of spiralling prices, high unemployment, a mortgage crisis, and public spending cuts.

(Lines 243-246)

In the passage it is clear that it is Tory economic policy which determined that crisis, as it is also clear that David Cameron would do the same mistake as before. But Brown is also introducing the topic of inflation and, as it will be clear in the passages that follow, he deals with the issue in a way which is not very different from all the governments taken into consideration in the present work. Indeed the responsibility for inflation is still put on the uncontrolled, or in words more familiar to Brown 'undisciplined', raise of salaries. The canvass,

in which 'discipline' is the *fil rouge* which guides through this part of the speech is found on in the following passage:

It is because we must never return again to *those days when reckless promises* that you could simultaneously cut taxes, raise spending, cut borrowing, were made and then *inflation was allowed* to get out of control causing 3 million unemployed, £16 billion public spending cuts, half a million repossessions, that we the Labour Government will always put *stability* first; no loss of *discipline, no resort to the easy_options, no unaffordable promises, no taking risks with inflation.*

So let me be straightforward with you, *pay discipline* is essential to prevent inflation, to maintain growth and to create more jobs, so that we never return to the Conservative pattern of boom and bust ever again, and because this Government will take *no risk* with the economy we will only *make promises we can afford.*

(Lines 247-256) [emphasis added]

Brown construes the economic choices of the past Tory government as characterised by “reckless promises”. It is worth to note how different his use of the 'no return to' phrase (here used to criticise the conservative governments of the past) from that of his predecessor (who used it to criticise trade union action in the same years) is. To go on with the classificatory effort undertaken it is necessary to cut a bit through the preposition, to make the link clear. Indeed the proposition can be synthesised in a less complicated clause complex: “It is because we must never return to those days when [...] inflation was allowed to get out of control [...] that the Labour Government will always put stability first”. Stability is thus the antonym of the days of inflation, and as the days of inflation were characterised by “reckless promises”, stability on the contrary is made of discipline, careful options, affordable promises and no risks with inflation. Especially in this last facet of stability Brown is totally in line with what Blair kept saying during the fire-fighters' strike, with the only difference that the occurring of the contrary is to be attributed

to militant trade unions and not to the adversed government. All the characteristics of stability presented above are then enshrined in just one policy measure: “pay discipline”, as Brown makes clear in the second paragraph of the passage above. Thus with this paragraph Brown seems to invite for a new round of nearly corporatist measures as the ones used by Labour Governments of the sixties and seventies, but with no guarantees of the like of the *social contract*. The message is quite clear and in total accordance to Blair's during the 2002 dispute, and it is meant for those in the public sector who are thinking to go on strike: “we will only make promises we can afford”, and it is clear that increased salaries for public sector workers are not going to be affordable.

5.5.5 Final disappearance of trade unions as actors. The long term mission accomplished

The occurrences of the word “trade union” in the text are 14. Most of the times the word is a mere premodification of “movement” thus configuring what Van Leeuwen calls a “categorisation” of the social actor through “relational identification” (Van Leeuwen 1996:56). Indeed the true actor in the clause is the “movement” of which trade unions are the constituents as the short examples reported below show:

thank you, Alison, as President of the Congress, and Brendan and the General Council for your leadership week in and week out of the *trade union movement* of this country.

I will never forget that the *trade union* movement of this country... men and women who year in, year out, give their energy, devotion and commitment to sustain and in every generation to revitalise the *trade union Movement*.

Thank you for the work you have done not just for the *trade union movement* but for our country

(Lines 1-14) [emphasis added]

All these quotes come from the first lines of the speech, but they can also be found the same realisation forward in the text:

For all its two centuries, the *trade union movement* of this country has been about enhancing the dignity and the work of labour.
(line 33) [emphasis added]

Through *relational identification*, trade unions are represented in the text, but they are not explicitly participants in processes, be it activated or passivated. This means that, again, what is an important aspect of the identity of trade unions, i.e. the possession of a will distinguished by that of the sum of individual wills of their members, is thus eliminated as a possibility from discourse, thus showing how the discourse of the past have been finally enacted in the social practice which in turn serves to perpetuate it.

The second more numerous group of the representation of trade unions through relational identification is in total accordance to the main topic of the whole text, which I have identified before as training for skills, education or learning. This last concept is the true actor in the following examples :

...as a tutor in trade *union learning*.

When I and others taught *trades union education* at Loader College in

...the Department of Employment under Norman Tebbit cut back the *trade union learning* budget,

...unstoppable momentum of *trade union learning* in Britain which has grown from strength to strength.

So you will understand why I am pleased to offer my personal congratulations to all those TUC award winners today for their work in *trade union learning*...

(lines 21-28) [emphasis added]

Another instance is found further on in the text:

This is why your work in *trade union learning* becomes central.
(line 288) [emphasis added]

Here the work of trade unionists in the audience is the carrier of the attribute of “centrality” and it is both pre- and post-modified by the possessive pronoun, behind which the true actors (that is trade unionists) are hidden, as well as by the circumstantial element in which trade unions are referred to.

Overall, the result of the representation is that of putting learning and education in focus, while trade unions are there just as a kind of trademark attached to it. The only exception to this pattern is that in the third example where the participant is the “budget” and trade union learning is simply the characteristic attached to it.

Finally while trade unions as such are kept in their quasi-adjectival status, trade unionists have at last a moment of activity in Brown's speech. Indeed Brown affirms that:

We all must rise to the challenges of global change: businesses, teachers, politicians, *trade unionists*, all of us.
(Lines 131-132) [emphasis added]

Here trade unionists are construed as a part of the “we”, actor in the material process of “rising to the challenges of global change”. The last instance analysed does not change the general conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis of the representation of the social actor trade union. The organisations for the advancement of workers' interests and rights are treated as a brand that can be attached to things in order to make them more agreeable, more left-wing, if I may say so. The substance, though, does not change: trade unions' role as it is established in UN documents is totally ignored and demoted by the current prime minister as by any prime minister in this short, incomplete history.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented in the foregoing chapters has highlighted some discursive features which can be considered as characteristic of governmental anti-union discourse. Going through the chapters bearing in mind the macro-topics identified in the methodological chapter, a summarising picture can be drawn.

The values on which trade unions ground their action – solidarity, unity, workers' rights – have been put under attack and misrepresented by each and every government since 1978. Interestingly, the attack on the value of unity is bipartisan and seemingly a-historical. Governments have invariably tried to separate the officialdom from the rank-and-file element in trade unions throughout the time-span taken into consideration in the research. Most of the times the attack was on the 'militant' rank-and-file, especially in the seventies and the early eighties, who went on strike without the *placet* of trade union officials. Officialdom, on the other side, had its share of reprimands when, during the Thatcher years, the attempts to block trade union initiative had to be hidden behind the smoke screen of 'trade union democracy'. As the analysis of the Green Paper *Trade Union Immunities* has shown, this latter problem is addressed quite explicitly, and the difficulties of trade union officials to govern their own members is clearly attributed to their lack of representativeness, as opposed to the grasp of the rank-and-file movement on the membership. This separation is linguistically achieved through argumentation as well as through instances of classification throughout the texts, where language creates an

opposition among the different sectors of the trade union movement.

Linked to the attack on unity is the attempt, on the part of governments, to undermine trade union solidarity – an effect mainly reached by the creation of the *ad hoc* opposition between 'individual' and 'collective' rights. Language marks of such a strategy are first noticed in Thatcherite discourse, but the following New Labour Governments show that they wish to build on that, rather than subvert it and substitute it with a different vision. Linguistically, this aim is achieved both through a classification which construes the rights of the individual as opposed to that of the group, and through the progressive disappearance of trade unions as actors in the processes, where they are substituted by any of the actors 'workers', 'individuals' 'employees' or 'citizens'.

The opposition betwixt 'individual' and 'collective' rights is instrumental also to the undermining of the third fundamental value for trade unions, that of 'workers' rights'. Indeed, the division thus created makes it possible for governments to attach the rights to the individual worker, while the rights of workers in their collective action are dismissed as privileges. Again it is Margaret Thatcher who starts the linguistic deed, by first of all giving a new interpretation of the 'right to work', conceived of as an individual right that is jeopardised by collective actions and instruments such as strikes, pickets and the institution of the closed shop.

Union action is the second macro-topic referred to in the methodology. Strike, as an instrument in the hands of the workers used to defend their salaries, is never viewed in a neutral way but, through assumptions and the representation of social actors, features of violence and egotism are attributed to it, as well as to picketing and to

the practice of blocking the production process. The negative construal of trade unions' actions is mainly achieved through the 'rhetoric of responsibility'.

It is interesting to see how the concept develops in the different governmental discourses over the years. For James Callaghan, the concept of responsibility is mainly linked to the negative effect that trade unions' actions have on the community as a whole. In this respect the idea of responsibility rests more on the sphere of the evaluation, on the part of trade unions, of all the fall-outs of their action before undertaking it. Thus, acting responsibly means taking into consideration the needs and rights of others. It follows that if trade unions go on strike they are automatically underestimating other people's rights, as Callaghan's construal of the public sector's strike demonstrates quite clearly.

On the other hand, during Thatcher's governments the concept witnessed an evolution in governmental discourse. Indeed, from being a mere 'humanistic' concept, responsibility progressively enters the domain of law. The concept sails through the Atlantic Ocean to come back in the interpretation that North America has given it: that of 'responsible unionism'. Here, being responsible does not mean being compassionate or empathic with other sectors of the community, on the contrary it means 'being responsible towards the law of one's actions'. For the British system of industrial relations, this results in the withdrawal of all the hard-won norms which exempted trade unions from paying the economic damages caused to the employers in the course of their protests.

The success of Thatcher's linguistic effort is shown both in the legislation which descends from such an evaluation, and by the fact

that, when in need to revamp the 'old' concept of responsibility, Tony Blair has to resort to a new word: 'reasonableness', which he uses during the bitter confrontation with the fire-fighters in 2002.

The construal of trade unions' values and actions is always made with reference to a given 'economic landscape'. In other words, how trade unions and their actions are perceived depends on the ideas that those who construe them have of the general 'laws' of economy. Concession to the pay claims is, among those highlighted in the analysis, one aspect in which the influence of this general idea results in different attitudes towards trade unions.

Callaghan's confrontation with the unions in the public sector has been dealt with presupposing, by means of argumentation, that state finances are like a blanket, 'too short a blanket', and that covering one part would mean leaving the other in the cold. The same idea of public finances as a limited stock which has to respond to free-market laws can be found in Tony Blair's stance on the fire-fighters' demands. Here, though, it is realised through the topos of 'setting the precedent'. Margaret Thatcher, differently from the two Labour leaders referred to above, does not need to justify or mediate her free-market stance. Indeed she confronts the miners by simply stating that all which does not respond to free-market rules needs to be smashed, and that complying with market rules is the only way through, both for individuals and for the government.

Class struggle is the most notable absentee in the texts studied. The confrontation between opposed interests in the capitalist system is never referred to openly⁴²; on the contrary its existence is always hidden by other interpretations of the relationship among different

⁴² Exception made for the Labour Manifesto of 1997, where it is referred to as a relic of the past.

fractions of society. In Labour discourse, although with some different nuances, it is the organicist conception of society that prevails – a conception according to which all conflict has to be seen as a disease and must be avoided. Linguistically this is done through the use of metaphors of the body applied to the state, but also by putting the opposed parts of society at the same level in the transitive structures of the sentences, as well as by trying to promote the culture of partnership.

On the other hand, during the Thatcher years the existence of class struggle was concealed through the appeal to the national interest which, not surprisingly, was identified as the economic interest of employers.

One of the aims of the present work was pointing out how construal can become construction through the interaction of the different forces in society. The issue of responsibility referred to above, is a good example of this 'phenomenon'. Indeed, from that type of construal in the manifesto and in the interviews that Margaret Thatcher gave before the elections, a sort of popular approval descended, through the victory at the polls. The attribution of executive power derived from that result has made it possible for the Conservatives to legislate in such a way that their concept of 'responsibility' materialises in the law. From this materialisation derive the practices, both discursive and 'material', of social actors like trade unionists, lawyers and judges.

The CDA approach developed specifically to address the question of trade union representation and weakening in Great Britain has proved fruitful as well as challenging for the researcher. Carrying out the research in a post-disciplinary way opens a plethora of

possibilities and paths and, despite – or perhaps thanks to – its intrinsic complexity, it grants results that are highly explanatory.

The weakening of trade unions and the draining off of their role ON the British political and economic scene cannot be the result of the governmental discourse alone or of the other forces taken into account in this research. Indeed, trade unions structures, the attitude of their leaders and their discourse also have a great impact in shaping the events (both discursive and material) described so far. The above-mentioned *divide et impera* strategy, just to give one example, would never have worked if the division between rank-and-file and bureaucracies had not been there in the first place. Thus, a study in trade union response to governmental discourse would certainly shed more light on the development of the present situation and allow for the use of the resulting explanations as a tool for the emancipation of the working class.

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APPENDIX ONE

Documents used for the analysis

Address by the Prime Minister James Callaghan to the TUC Annual Conference, 5 September 1978

The President: The Prime Minister is here this afternoon by the invitation of the General Council. Jim Callaghan has of course attended Congress many times. He has attended it as a union delegate. He is the only Prime Minister of this country who has been a trade Union official. He has attended as a fraternal delegate from the Labour Party, and he now attends it as the Labour Prime Minister. It is in that capacity that we confidently look forward to seeing him and hearing him at many future Congresses, and certainly we welcome him here today. I ask the Prime Minister to address you.

1 **The Rt. Hon. James Callaghan, MP, Prime Minister ;** I am very glad to have
2 the opportunity of coming once again here and to express once more in the
3 presence of a very distinguished cohort of reporters my profound belief that the
4 British trade union Movement strong and free, is an essential bulwark to protect
5 the interests of every man and woman working in industry in our country. It
6 ought not to be necessary for me to say this. But I do so because day by day a
7 distorted image is being presented to the public of the work that is done by trade
8 unionists in this country. British industry as a whole is not a battleground. The
9 overwhelming majority of firms in this country do not suffer strikes. Problems
10 are resolved by negotiation. New practices and methods are introduced by
11 agreement. That is the standard form. That is the usual pattern. But it is the
12 abnormal problems of one particular industry that catch the headlines and are
13 then used to damn the whole. And they ignore the constructive work of thousands
14 of union officials, many of YOU here today, who keep the production processes
15 flowing smoothly but who are paid far less than some of those who write their
16 lofty editorials from the comfort of their editorial chairs. So I repeat my plea — I
17 understand that some of them have their problems. Some of them have brought
18 their problems on their own heads. But I repeat my plea that the people of this
19 country should be presented with a less distorted and more balanced description
20 of the constructive daily work of the trade union Movement in this country. Their
21 virtues as well as their vices. It is through an organised, self-disciplined
22 workforce of trade union members that any enterprise will best secure co-
23 operative production to meet its needs and to understand the needs of those who
24 sell their labour to it. I wish to begin by discussing Britain's industrial future. One
25 of the documents that is contained in that very full General Council Report that is
26 in front of you is headed "Into the Eighties — An agreement". It is a statement
27 among other things about Britain's industrial future that has been drawn up by the
28 Liaison Committee of the Trades Union Congress, and the Labour Party. It sets
29 out our objectives and outlines our policies as the country moves towards the
30 1980s with the bonus of North Sea oil. These are the objectives: to re-establish
31 full employment; to secure an improvement in the nation's living standards; that a
32 strong economy must go hand in hand with a fair and just society; that we must
33 create the conditions for additional and alternative job opportunities; that the
34 purpose of the industrial strategy is to strengthen Britain's manufacturing industry.
35 That such strengthening is the best way to ensure an expansion of essential public

36 services; that we shall continue to expand training and retraining for skilled jobs;
37 that part of the extra resources from the North Sea oil shall be devoted to these
38 purposes. And the background to our thinking on these matters and to the
39 objectives that I have stated is that, with other major European and Western
40 countries and others. in the 1980s the Western World as a whole, and Britain in
41 particular, will be entering a period of rapid technological change.
42 You know only too well. those of you who lived through the 1950s and 1960s, the
43 long-standing problems which have beset parts of the British economy: low
44 growth, a weak balance of payments, too high unemployment, not enough
45 innovation. But you know also that industrial productivity has improved greatly
46 and that some British industries will stand comparison with the best in the world.
47 The task of a Labour Government in the 1980s will be to bring the performance
48 of our major industries up to the best in the world so that we may face the coming
49 changes with confidence.
50 I believe we are beginning to see a growing understanding and indeed the
51 beginning of a change in people's approach to this problem. They begin to
52 believe it can be done and that a Labour Government has the determination to do
53 it. Last year, for example, despite the recession in world trade our exporters sold
54 8 per cent more goods overseas, against the fiercest of competition, doing better
55 than most of our other competitors. But we have got to continue to work even
56 harder if we are to recapture our former reputation as a trading nation. British
57 firms must be quick to adapt to changing overseas demands by consumers and to
58 develop new products. For the trade unionist the truth is that there is no way in
59 which low productivity and high real wages can go hand in hand for any length of
60 time.
61 The Government has an important role to play in this. The actions of
62 governments in matters of economic policy will not by themselves. however.
63 improve industrial performance. As a Government we can. and we will, take
64 measures that will create the right background for growth in output and
65 investment and we shall intervene when necessary to stimulate industry directly.
66 All these things we have been doing; and together the successful effort to reduce
67 inflation, the encouragement of a steady rate of growth that is beginning to be felt
68 in industry now, the government policies on financial assistance that are helping
69 to steer a number of industries through the recession that have been bit by the
70 changes that are taking place — all are of help: yes, of help. But when it is all
71 done, they will not by themselves bring a real industrial breakthrough. That will
72 only happen at the level of the individual firm, in the management and on the
73 shop floor.
74 Hence the importance which the government has attached to the industrial
75 strategy and to the working parties in a number of industries. I express the
76 Government's thanks to them. Let me illustrate how one sector working party,
77 made up of management, trade unionists and government representatives, is
78 preparing for the future in one of our important new fields. I refer to the new
79 industry of semiconductors and micro-processors. The joint TUC/Labour Party
80 document that is in your Report calls on the Government to give full support to
81 the National Enterprise Board in making a success of this high technology
82 industry. This we have done. We have given our backing to the National
83 Enterprise Board on which there are serving. let me add, four members from

84 trade unions. three of whom are members of the General Council and one of them
85 is not unknown to you, Mr. President. The National Enterprise Board Is now
86 giving a lead to ensure that British industry will get its full share of the new
87 world markets that are emerging for products and services using micro-
88 electronics. The NEB. private industry and Government are together developing a
89 strategy to ensure that adequate capacity will exist in this country to make the
90 micro electronic chips. The Government, acting on the recommendations made
91 by the joint working party in the electronic components industry, is bringing
92 forward a scheme that costs £70 million to support a United Kingdom
93 microelectronics design and manufacturing industry. One major project is a joint
94 venture by GEC and by the Fairchild Company of the United States. Another is
95 the creation by the National Enterprise Board which has committed £25 million
96 lo a major United Kingdom based micro-electronics company. called Inmos.
97 These two new projects could themselves create as many as 5,000 new jobs and
98 further projects should lead to total investment of over £250 million. creating
99 15,000 to 18,000 new job opportunities in all. We are encouraging firms to set up
100 as many of these projects as possible in areas of unemployment.

101 In addition, £15 million has been committed by the Government to support the
102 industrial applications of micro-electronics, again acting on advice from both
103 sides of industry. The scheme was started just over a month ago. already over
104 1,500 enquiries have been received, mostly from firms; and financial support for
105 the first project has already been approved. The first Government-sponsored
106 training courses start this month so that trainees can acquire the new skills that
107 microprocessor technology will require. Every one of the 39 industrial working
108 parties has been made aware of the significance of this revolutionary
109 development and will be watching the implications for their own industries and
110 alerting individual firms lo the opportunities that are open to them. All this will
111 have industrial consequences that cannot be clearly foreseen. It is the greatest
112 challenge of the 1980s, and I have therefore myself set up group inside
113 Government to co-ordinate work and to study the profound social and
114 employment consequences that will emerge for workers. for jobs. for industries,
115 for firms, and have asked them to make the first of their reports to me later this
116 year.

117 I have gone into a little detail on this one strand of our industrial policy because it
118 illustrates the way in which the Government, on this occasion successfully, wants
119 industry to be thinking ahead and preparing for the future. preparing for the
120 opportunities and challenges that are going to come in the 1980s. The industrial
121 strategy is part of a long-term plan for the regeneration of British industry. No
122 one should expect it to produce miracles overnight. it will take time to reverse the
123 deep trends of the past. But there is another important element in looking ahead.
124 How will our future be affected by the economic policies of other countries?
125 There has been growing recognition among the nations of the world since the oil
126 crisis of 1973 that their economic fortunes are closely intertwined with ours, and
127 that our problems are similar: slow growth; high unemployment rapid inflation;
128 balance-of-payments problems: running down of traditional industries like steel
129 and textiles and ship building, not problems that are unique to the United
130 Kingdom; they are to be found to some degree in a large number of industrialised
131 countries.

132 So our policy is to work through the industrial strategy. The counterpart of that
133 policy in the international economy is for us to get other countries to agree that
134 no single country can provide a solution to the problem of world recession on its
135 own, but that we must look for a coordinated response from all governments.
136 This is why throughout the past year Britain has taken a leading part in
137 international discussions at a world level to tackle the problems of unemployment
138 and inflation, and to seek to offset the adverse effects, to which the last speaker
139 referred, of our position in the Western World—the effect it is having on poverty,
140 on health and on employment in the Third World. This is the message which I
141 went to Washington to preach, to Brussels and to Bonn.

142 Our efforts have not been wasted, Last March, the British Government was the
143 first to put forward a broad outline for a concerted international approach to
144 world economic problems. Following months of preparation met in July in Bonn
145 with the heads of government of the six other major western industrial countries.
146 They accepted our approach on the need for a concerted effort, and as we went
147 round the table each of us analysed our own problems and the others gave their
148 own criticism of what each of us was doing. at the end, each of us gave
149 undertakings on behalf of our own countries for specific action that was designed
150 to create more jobs without rekindling inflation, Chancellor Schmidt of Germany
151 undertook to introduce legislation for measures that would strengthen West
152 German demand in 1979 by up to 1 per cent of Germany's national product.
153 Accordingly, a short while ago he announced proposals for measures worth more
154 than 12 billion Deutschmarks as Germany's contribution to stimulate
155 international economic growth. He did so despite the fact that he has involved
156 himself in some domestic difficulty because of his action

157 Prime Minister Fukuda undertook that Japan's growth would be 1 half per cent
158 more than last year. A few days ago his Government announced a major package
159 of public spending to stimulate their economy. it will be equivalent to over 1 per
160 cent of their gross national product.

161 President Carter undertook to reduce the United States balance of payments
162 deficit by a programme that would conserve energy, avoiding excessive and
163 wasteful use by the United States through a comprehensive energy policy. The
164 United States Congress has still to redeem his promise, but I am confident from
165 my conversations with leaders of the Congress as well as with the President that
166 working together they will do so.

167 The heads of Government have agreed that we will meet again in 1979 to see
168 how far we have all kept to our undertaking. Whether that summit comes before
169 or after an election, with your aid I shall hope to be there to represent Britain.
170 incidentally. I perhaps ought to apologise to all those distinguished visitors who
171 are under a misapprehension that I am talking about the real problems of Britain

172 At the July Summit there was general agreement when we discussed Britain's
173 position, that the best contribution we could make to renewed world growth
174 would be for our government to hold the rate of inflation firmly
175 check. Unless we do so we shall not be able to take advantage of any upturn in
176 the world economy for which the others are now preparing. It was with this
177 knowledge and against this background that the Government published six weeks
178 ago its policy for winning the battle against inflation. I come here today once
179 more to ask for your support for this policy. There is no dispute between us on the

180 objectives. Our jointly agreed document “Into the Eighties” truly states that
181 inflation destroys the value of earnings. weakens our ability to compete in trade
182 with other countries. and undermines our social policies.

183 The document — your document, my document — goes on to resolve that
184 reducing the rate of inflation will continue to be a vital objective. Not only is
185 there no difference between the trade union Movement and the Government on
186 this. but what is more there is general acceptance of the need to beat inflation in
187 the country as a whole. This has been a source of great strength to the
188 Government during the last 12 months. If we were left to fight the battle against
189 inflation on our own it would be like putting the cavalry in to charge the tanks.
190 so the Government continues. and will continue, to take the utmost care to
191 acquaint the British people with the facts about inflation and the prospects for the
192 future.

193 You know my view — I have expressed it before — that pay clearly is not the
194 only element that affects inflation. If anybody doubts that he need only be
195 referred to, or attend, one of the meetings of the European Community’s
196 Common Agricultural Policy Committee on food prices. Under successive
197 Labour Ministers of Agriculture. we have begun to reform and change this
198 unsatisfactory policy. There are new welcome signs that other countries, such as
199 Germany. are also beginning to see its disadvantages. We shall continue to put
200 forward alternative policies that will avoid the excesses. the build up of food
201 surpluses that can only be disposed of at a loss which the taxpayers of our
202 countries have to subsidise.

203 But although pay is by no means the only element in inflation, it is a vital factor
204 and — just as important — it is a factor which lies within our control. Our joint
205 statement frankly acknowledges that there are differences between us on this. It
206 admits that we have still to reach a national consensus on these matters. I agree. It
207 is true. But the fact that such a consensus does not yet exist does not diminish the
208 responsibility of the Government. It increases it. Without a consensus Britain is
209 more likely to indulge in a scramble in which the devil takes the hindmost and the
210 weakest goes to the wail. So until we can reach a consensus — and I will be the
211 first to work with you to try to reach such a consensus — the Government must
212 state its views on what is most likely to achieve what we both agree is the vital
213 objective how to keep inflation under control.

214 We have stated our conclusions. You know our views. We shall not depart from
215 them. You have replied that you cannot accept a centrally fixed figure of 5 per
216 cent because what you want is free collective bargaining. you also say that whilst
217 you intend to act responsibly — and I am ready to accept that — you must be free
218 to deal flexibly with terms and conditions of employment. Yes, I understand all
219 that, but I must say also that free collective bargaining only serves the interests of
220 your members if it produces real increases in their pay packets that will last and
221 keep their value. That is going to be the test of the policies that you will follow
222 during the next 12 months. By our joint efforts — because we did work together
223 in a very considerable way — we went a good deal of the way to achieve this
224 during 1978. This year has been a year of success. Since Congress met 12 months
225 ago there have been tax cuts amounting to £3½ billion, plus additional public
226 expenditure amounting to £1 billion to pay for the higher child benefits, to aid the
227 construction industry. to defer the increase in the price of school meals. to

228 provide free school milk, and to help with additional overseas aid.
229 A lower rate of tax at 25p in the pound has been introduced for the first £750 of
230 taxable income. Child benefit will be further increased to £3 a week for every
231 child in November and to £4 per week in April.
232 There are to be pension increases in November by £2 a week for a single person
233 and £3.20 for a man and his wife. Our economy is growing at the rate of 1 per
234 cent a quarter. Inflation has declined from 17 per cent a year ago to between 7 per
235 cent and 8 per cent. The living standards of your members have improved and are
236 continuing to improve as a consequence of those policies.
237 It has been a success, but it has not been an unqualified success. I will tell you the
238 reason why I think it has not been an unqualified success. A year ago we asked
239 for increases in earnings to be limited to 10 per cent. Instead they are likely to
240 turn out at about 14 per cent, although perhaps that figure could be reduced
241 reasonably by one or two per cent because of self-financing productivity deals.
242 But the fact that earnings have gone ever the ten per cent mark is making far more
243 difficulty than we need, as indeed I forecast it would when I addressed you a year
244 ago and urged you to keep within ten per cent.
245 How is it showing itself? I will tell you. This larger increase in earnings means
246 that instead of inflation going down below the seven to eight per cent level at
247 which it is standing now, and as it would have done, it is now hovering around
248 eight per cent, and could go a little higher although certainly not into double
249 figures during the rest of this year. What it will be in 1979 will depend partially
250 on the level of wage settlements in the forthcoming round.
251 I have heard it argued if inflation is around eight per cent then why do you expect
252 us to settle for five per cent? We shall need a higher rate than five per cent if we
253 are going to compensate for the rate of inflation if it is going to be higher. My
254 friends, if you push for settlements on that basis you will be stepping on the
255 escalator going up once again. I say to you that if you accept five per cent. in so
256 far as other factors remain constant. then inflation will probably be lower by the
257 end of 1979 than it is today.
258 On the other hand, exert your muscle, secure wage settlements higher than five
259 per cent. and I say to you — and I think the country. everybody. should know
260 this, I do not wish to stand here on a false prospectus — that if that is the
261 outcome then inflation will probably be higher in a year's time than it is today.
262 The memory of last year is surely still green. you accepted increases in pay then
263 that were lower than the rate of inflation at the beginning of the pay round, and yet
264 at the end of it your members are better off than they would have been if they had
265 settled for higher figures.
266 I am not blind to the difficulties. though I must say I regret that you did not take
267 mere opportunity last year to deal with them. Ten per cent was a large enough
268 figure and was thought to be a large enough figure to give scope to deal
269 progressively with some of these anomalies that have accumulated during the
270 early years. In many instances negotiators did wisely use the kitty principle to
271 move towards consolidating outstanding pay settlements, but too many groups
272 took the full ten per cent or more across the board so that less progress was made
273 in solving these problems than there might have been.
274 The current guideline is again in the form of a percentage and permits once more
275 the operation of the kitty principle. I ask negotiators to make full and effective

276 use of it as well as of the provision contained in the White Paper which removes
277 the five per cent limitation in respect of negotiations for those earning less than
278 £44.50 a week. those on the lowest rates of pay.

279 I refer now to the growing demand for a reduction in normal working hours, a
280 demand that will grow especially as the technical changes to which I have
281 referred earlier become more apparent. There is no reason why present working
282 hours should be either immutable or regarded as desirable if we can get adequate
283 production through technical development. The trade union Movement has
284 already begun to study the problems related to shorter hours and as you knew this
285 will involve many consequences and the Government's social policies will need
286 to be adjusted so that your members, the community as a whole, can lead fuller
287 lives in every sense. That is the importance of the study I have already set in hand
288 on the consequences of the introduction of micro-electronics on a much wider
289 scale than I am discussing now. I have urged in my international discussions that
290 if there is to be any general move towards reduced hours it would best be done in
291 concert with our international competitors.

292 Meantime, however the future may lie, the Government must State its policy for
293 the next 12 months. It is clear that in that time if we reduce hours in a way that
294 increases industrial costs, whilst our international competitors do not take similar
295 action, we shall make ourselves less competitive and so lose jobs. Therefore, for
296 the next 12 months the Government's policy is that any negotiated reduction in
297 hours forming part of the settlement should either be self-financing or should be
298 offset against the five per cent guideline. (Interruption) I understand. I am only
299 indicating to you how you will be best off. It is up to you whether you take good
300 advice or not. I ask you to remember if you are negotiating self-financing deals
301 that part of the benefit of improved productivity could also be passed on with
302 advantage to the consumer in the form of restraint on prices.

303 The demand for shorter hours has been given greater impetus because of the
304 impact of unemployment and from a willingness to share work so as to reduce
305 their number. This human and social problem rightly dominates our thinking, for
306 unemployment has risen starkly since inflation began to rise in the early 1970s,
307 together with the oil crisis in 1973.

308 The slackening in world trade which followed the oil crisis has added to our
309 problems. World trade has grown by only 11 per cent in total during the last four
310 years, in the preceding four years it grew by 42 per cent. This partly accounts for
311 the large unemployment that exists throughout the western industrialised world.
312 To this has been added the difficulties that are caused by technical change and the
313 challenge that we are seeing to some of our traditional industries from
314 competitors in the Third World, what we used to regard as those who were not
315 able to indulge in industrial manufacture but are now showing they can do it as
316 well, or better than we can.

317 Whatever theorists like Sir Keith Joseph may argue, no country has been
318 insulated from these forces, whatever its policies. Nor does he explain why other
319 countries, whose policies are more akin to those he recommends, have suffered
320 rises in unemployment proportionately as much or larger than the rise in the
321 United Kingdom's unemployment rate. So the Labour Government will continue
322 to follow a policy of direct and indirect intervention in industry to create
323 productive jobs. Hence our ambitious programme of industrial incentives. That is

324 why the Government agreed only last week to provide resources of considerable
325 magnitude to high technology industries like Rolls Royce and British Aerospace
326 so that they will remain among the world leaders. But in addition to helping in
327 the creation of these productive jobs. we have introduced the most comprehensive
328 set of measures to help maintain employment. Compensation arrangements for
329 short-time working. Encouragement for early retirement. The special temporary
330 employment programme. The extension of the temporary employment subsidy.
331 Schemes to subsidise employment in small manufacturing firms. Extra training
332 places. Most important, a scheme to ensure that by next Easter every young
333 person who left school in July should be given an opportunity of a job. a place on
334 a work experience or employment scheme. or further education.
335 Altogether, we shall be protecting some 400.000 jobs that Sir Keith Joseph's
336 theory would put in peril if it were ever put to the test.
337 But before I sit down I do not want to disappoint everybody who has come here
338 and so perhaps i had better say a word about the political situation. I deeply
339 appreciate the resolution which you will be debating expressing support for the
340 return . . . (interruption) If you want a job now, come and see me afterwards and I
341 will find you one!
342 I deeply appreciate the resolution that you will be debating expressing support for
343 the return of a Labour Government at the next election, whenever that may come.
344 The resolution is based on the achievements of the Government and the co-
345 operation that exists between us. I have claimed that together we have made
346 substantial advances — social, and economic — during the lifetime of the present
347 Government, but I would also agree with the amendment. I hope I am not
348 presuming on what the General Council is going to recommend when I say that.
349 There is still much to be done before we can claim to have created a fair and just
350 society. I understand the reasons for the present speculation about the prospect of
351 a General Election. It was inevitable once the Liberals had withdrawn, although I
352 must say I had done nothing myself to fan that speculation. Nobody could have
353 been more silent than I have been. The only mild complaint I would utter is that
354 so many people are presenting
355 their speculations as though they are hard facts. In the process they are bound to
356 get something right, I suppose. Let me just give them a little encouragement by
357 saying one thing they have got right. They are correct in forecasting that I shall
358 not be giving an indication of my future intentions this afternoon. Indeed. I begin
359 to wonder whether I need do so at any time if I am to believe all that I read in the
360 newspapers. The commentators have fixed the month for me. They have chosen
361 the date and the day. Well, I advise them, "Don't count your chickens before
362 they're hatched". Remember what happened to Marie Lloyd. She fixed the day
363 and the date and then she told us what happened. As far as I remember, it went
364 like this: "There—was I—waiting—at the church." Perhaps you will recall how it
365 went on: "All at once — he sent me round a note — here's the very note — this is
366 what he wrote — can't get away to marry you today — my wife won't let me."
367 Let me just make clear that I have promised nobody that I shall be at the altar in
368 October, nobody at all. So all I want to add this afternoon is that I certainly intend
369 to indicate my intentions very shortly on this matter. When I do so I shall do it in
370 the belief that people have come to trust that this Government does not flatter in
371 its actions now to deceive later. We do not cut corners when the national interest

372 is at stake. We are ready to argue out honest differences with our friends openly
373 and without bitterness. The Government will fight for what we believe to be in
374 the best interests of the country and our people, even if it is not instantly popular.
375 Let others stoop if they must to scapegoat politics. So the unions are a convenient
376 whipping boy. So are the coloured immigrants. So is expenditure on welfare. In
377 Scotland last week the leader of the Conservative Party even turned the word
378 ‘entitlement’ into a matter for scorn. Well, I am the first to insist that our
379 responsibilities and our obligations to one another are as important as our rights,
380 but I never expected, even from this hard, uncaring, abrasive Conservative
381 leadership that we have today, that the word “entitlement” could be twisted to
382 beat the poorest and the neediest in our society.

383 So here and now I serve notice that we shall match tolerance against prejudice,
384 policies against slogans, co-operation against conflict, unity against racialism and
385 sectarian divisions; that we will not tolerate policies that would require the sick to
386 pay if they go to visit their doctor or spend time in hospital; or policies that would
387 endanger people’s jobs by simple-minded theories.

388 There is much more to be done. I listened to the debate on the Health Service. I
389 agree with much that was said. There is work for the next Labour Government for
390 the next five years as long as there is a family without a home. as long as there is
391 a patient waiting in a queue for a hospital bed. as long as there is a man or woman
392 without a job. someone who suffers from discrimination because of their colour.
393 So long will our work, without a Labour Movement, not be done. We go forward
394 in that spirit and with that resolve. (*The Prime Minister was accorded a standing*
395 *ovation.*)

396

397 **The President:** Prime Minister, I am afraid I cannot give you the gold badge of
398 Congress, you already have one, but it has been suggested to me that after that
399 performance — the latter part of it in particular — the General Council may
400 change their mind on this subject.

401 Prime Minister. you will not tell us your intentions but I think I ought to tell
402 you what our intentions are. Our intentions are very clear: they are to fight the
403 next election as we have never fought one before. We know the importance of
404 that election. We know we have to grasp the opportunity. That is what we shall be
405 doing.

406 Prime Minister. my task now is to call on the mover of Motion 118, and perhaps
407 you will listen to this debate to hear the sincerity of this Congress in supporting
408 your Government and supporting you in the forthcoming year.

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- 1 The Prime Minister (Mr. James Callaghan)
2 With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the strike action
3 planned by two Civil Service unions for tomorrow. Seven other unions will not be
4 taking action.
- 5 The two unions concerned, the Civil and Public Services Association and the
6 Society of Civil and Public Servants, have called on their members not to work
7 tomorrow, in support of a pay claim. They have taken that decision in spite of
8 assurances already given to all the unions concerned that the Government will
9 implement a settlement based on a joint evaluation of the evidence submitted by
10 the independent Civil Service Pay Research Unit. That work is now going on. The
11 unions concerned have also been informed that any increases will be staged and
12 that the staging will be the subject of negotiation. Moreover, the present pay
13 settlement has not yet expired and will not do so for another five weeks, on 1
14 April.
- 15 I also understand that tomorrow's action may be followed by an orchestrated
16 campaign of disruption designed to achieve maximum disruption to public
17 business in the forthcoming weeks, arranged to ensure the least loss to the unions'
18 members. Rarely can there have been a more unnecessary and unjustifiable strike.
19 This action and any continuing disruption are wrong both in principle and in
20 practice. They are against the best long-term interests of the Civil Service and are
21 contrary to the guidance recently issued by the TUC—to which both unions are
22 affiliated—which emphasises that strikes are to be used only as a last resort. In no
23 circumstances can the present position on negotiations be interpreted in that way.
24 The civil servants who go on strike will suffer a loss of pay for the day or days
25 concerned.
- 26 Even at this late stage, I ask the two unions to show a proper sense of leadership
27 and responsibility, and I express the Government's thanks in advance to those civil
28 servants who will remain at their posts tomorrow and thus maintain the traditions
29 of service to the public.
- 30 The Government regret any inconvenience that will be caused to the public. [623]

31 Contingency action will be taken, as far as possible, to mitigate the effects.

32 Mrs. Thatcher

33 May I put three points to [James Callaghan] the Prime Minister? First, does his
34 statement not cast considerable doubt on the agreement that he reached with the
35 TUC about a week ago, in that the two unions should be in breach of it so soon? Is
36 he aware that we join him, agreement or no agreement, in condemning a strike
37 that takes place before a current agreement has run out and while negotiations are
38 still in progress?

39 Secondly, the Prime Minister has given us few details about the preparations that
40 he will be making to keep going some emergency services in vital areas. Can he
41 give us a few more details about that? For example, a press statement released
42 today says that the Royal Courts of Justice will be picketed and that there will be
43 attempts to disrupt hearings at courts and industrial tribunals. What arrangements
44 is the Prime Minister making to ensure that the administration of justice
45 continues? In addition, what arrangements is he making to ensure that there are
46 minimal services for air traffic control, defence installations and immigration
47 control? Those are vital matters, and unless the public are certain that there will be
48 a minimum of manning there could be serious effects.

49 Thirdly, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his announcement shows the
50 wisdom of resisting a closed shop in the Civil Service? Will he give the House an
51 assurance that anyone who crosses the picket lines and carries on working will not
52 be victimised in any way?

51 The Prime Minister

52 The right hon. Lady raised a number of red herrings, but I shall do my best to
53 answer her other points.

54 The proposed strike shows the importance of keeping the agreement with the
55 TUC. I promise the right hon. Lady and the scoffers on her side of the House that
56 there must be a sense of responsibility when agreements are entered into because
57 nothing but a sense of responsibility will keep people at work. I hope that the
58 unions concerned will bear that in mind in future considerations. I have done my
59 best, and the Lord Privy Seal has done his best, to remind them of that fact. [624]

60 On contingency plans, I am told that what is planned by the unions is "a
61 demonstration of what we can do". I hope that the right hon. Lady will not press
62 me to say what the Government's response will be. There is no doubt that the
63 unions propose a series of guerrilla actions to try to discomfort the public and to
64 get at the Government machine in the most vulnerable areas. I ask the right hon.
65 Lady not to press me to say what we are doing in response. I do not want to give
66 those who are planning these strikes any more ammunition than I have to.

67 The question of a closed shop is a matter for discussion. Talks have been going on
68 for some time. The Government have put forward certain proposals, which the
69 unions have not so far accepted because they have thought that the conditions are
70 too stringent. We shall continue those discussions on the basis of which the House
71 is already aware.

72 Mr. David Steel

73 Is the Prime Minister aware that the secretary of one of the unions involved
74 admitted in a radio interview at lunchtime today that the proposed action was
75 irresponsible, but added that the only way to get anything done with the
76 Government was to be irresponsible? Since that appears to be the unions' view,
77 will the Prime Minister think again about trying to create an effective long-term
78 pay policy and a frame-work of industrial relations, backed by the authority of the
79 House, to deal with matters such as holding ballots before strikes take place? Will
80 the right hon. Gentleman accept that the whole process of subcontracting the
81 authority of the Government and the House to other bodies will not work?

82 The Prime Minister

83 If it is the case that people believe that the only way that they can get anything is
84 through strikes, it is important that the Government should make clear that they
85 cannot be subjected to pressure in that way when claims are irresponsible. As I
86 have said before, almost everyone in this country is central to the needs of the
87 community. Almost any group can upset the whole of the community and bring
88 things to a halt.

89 Therefore, I must make clear, as I do now, that we shall examine the claim—
90 though none has been put in yet, because the evidence is still being evaluated
91 [625]—on its merits, reach a conclusion on its merits and implement a settlement
92 on its merits. That is the most important thing. We shall get into a dangerous
93 situation if any group thinks that it has the power to push the community around.
94 How many groups nowadays have that power? We have seen some signs of that
95 attitude recently, and the community must stand up and say "Thus far and no
96 farther".

97 Mr. Ovenden

98 As we all approve of trade union democracy, will the Prime Minister confirm that
99 his recent statement was not an invitation to trade unionists to defy the agreed
100 policies of their trade unions by going to work on Friday? Will he also confirm
101 that he has been unable to give the trade unions involved any assurance that the
102 Government will this year implement in full the proposals of the Pay Research
103 Unit as those proposals relate to pay not next year or the year after, but to the level
104 that should exist now? Will he further confirm that the strike on Friday is not in
105 defiance of agreements but in defence of agreements and of the idea that the
106 agreed procedures on pay research should be implemented in the Civil Service?

107 The Prime Minister

108 No. I disagree with my hon. Friend, who I know has a particular interest in this
109 matter. [*Interruption.*] My hon. Friend is entitled to have a particular interest in
110 this matter. I know that he has an interest, but I must disagree with him on every
111 point that he made.

112 We shall reach a properly negotiated agreement without duress on either side, I
113 trust. We have already indicated that, as with the Armed Forces, the police and the
114 firemen, it will be staged. That staging is the subject of negotiation.

115 I am asking civil servants not to defy their unions but to keep to their contract and
116 to come to work.

117 Mr. William Clark

118 The Prime Minister is right to deplore this strike. As the pay agreement does not
119 expire until 31 March, will he have urgent discussions with the TUC to see
120 whether a change in the law should be introduced to make contracts legally
121 binding?

122 The Prime Minister

123 No, Sir. I have already explained my position and that of the Government many
124 times.

125 [626]

126 Mr. Molloy

127 Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Civil Service unions which are not yet
128 involved in this form of action have some real problems? Will he use his influence
129 and assist his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to meet the leaders of these
130 unions, who are on the lip of an agreement, to try to seal that agreement before
131 they are compelled to take similar action?

132 The Prime Minister

133 I am not aware of the problem that my hon. Friend has in mind. In the two cases
134 that I am discussing this afternoon, there is no reason for a strike tomorrow. Work
135 is steadily going ahead on trying to get the evidence evaluated, and the
136 negotiations will then take place. I have no words of defence for what is to be
137 done tomorrow. I cannot find any words to excuse it. If there is any possibility of
138 expediting the work, or if there is a criticism or feeling that it will not come into
139 operation by 1 April, I suggest that those concerned all work hard to see whether
140 they can get it done by then. But this agreement does not expire for another five
141 weeks.

142 Mr. Emery

143 Does the Prime Minister consider that instead of refusing to reveal what he and
144 the Government are going to do about the strikes tomorrow it would be more
145 helpful to inform the public that the Government will take every possible step to
146 ensure that such action will not limit or inconvenience the public? In particular,
147 will he consider the position at London airport, through which 50,000 to 70,000
148 people will be passing tomorrow? Can he assure us that the Government will do
149 everything possible to ensure that the traveller is not inconvenienced?

150 The Prime Minister

151 The hon. Gentleman knows that he is asking an impossibility. Obviously he did
152 not hear the last sentence of my statement:

153 "Contingency action will be taken, as far as possible, to mitigate the
154 effects"

155 of the strike. That is what the Government are doing.

156 Mr. Wigglesworth

157 Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be helpful to the House, to union

158 members and to the public if we could have some proper information about the
159 findings of the Pay Research Unit? So far we have had only press leaks from
160 sources that may not [627] be reliable. Therefore, will my right hon. Friend
161 arrange for the findings of the Pay Research Unit to be published, so that we can
162 make our own judgments on them?

163 The Prime Minister

164 I do not see any objection in principle to doing that, but it is for the Pay Research
165 Unit to decide what it does with the evidence. It is made available to the unions
166 and to those on the Government side involved in the negotiations. It will be a
167 matter for the Unit whether it decides to publish. There is no difficulty in principle
168 about it.

169 Mr. Baker

170 Does the Prime Minister accept that most people agree that this strike is
171 unnecessary and irresponsible? I should like to refer to an answer that the right
172 hon. Gentleman gave a few minutes ago. A Civil Service union leader said "We
173 are striking because this is the only language that the present Government
174 understand." Is that not a damning indictment of the lack of authority of the
175 Government? Does the Prime Minister appreciate that while he speaks strongly
176 and acts weakly, the unions will continue to look upon him as a pushover?

177 The Prime Minister

178 If it were true, it would be so, but the hypothesis is untrue. Therefore, the
179 conclusion is unfounded.

180 Mrs. Wise

181 May I express the hope and ask for my right hon. Friend's confirmation that this
182 matter will be dealt with on its merits? Some of us would welcome that very
183 thing. Does my right hon. Friend accept that the refusal to deal with cases on their
184 merits is at the root of a good deal of the present unrest? Dealing with cases on
185 their merits involves meaningful negotiations and free collective bargaining not
186 pre-empted by Government instructions and norms.

187 The Prime Minister

188 I thought that we had been going through a period of free collective bargaining,
189 with results of which the House is aware.

190 The Pay Research Unit is an independent body. It produces independent evidence,
191 made available to both sides. Both sides then proceed to negotiation and, we hope,
192 reach an agreement. There is nothing in the procedure here which, on any rational
193 grounds, would lead [628] anybody to believe that there was a case for
194 withdrawing labour tomorrow.

195 Mr. Mayhew

196 Is it not the case that the Government can be and will go on being subjected to
197 pressure so long as a strike that the Prime Minister has roundly condemned as
198 indefensible can be carried out with complete immunity from any civil legal
199 procedure? The Prime Minister said that he had made his position clear. Is not that
200 just the trouble?

201 The Prime Minister

202 All Governments are subject to pressure. This Government yield to less than most
203 —[Hon. Members: "Oh!"]—including our predecessors, who called in a
204 distinguished legal luminary to get the dockers out of gaol when they put them
205 there.

206 Mr. Skinner

207 Is the Prime Minister aware that this matter has been boiling up for a period of not
208 less than three months, to my knowledge? There have been questions on this
209 matter in the House to the appropriate Minister on several occasions and warnings
210 to the Government of the consequences of the failure of the Pay Research Unit to
211 deal with this matter as these people require. Is he aware that many of these civil
212 servants—indeed, the great proportion—can be categorised as low paid? When
213 the Prime Minister refers to people not having the right to strike or not agreeing
214 with their right to strike, does he not understand that these people live in an
215 environment in which, only two or three years ago, they were being subjected to
216 cuts in public expenditure, which they did not like, as a result of which thousands
217 of sackings took place? Is not the only way in which——

218 Mr. Speaker

219 Order. The hon. Gentleman is developing a statement rather than a question.

220 The Prime Minister

221 I should like my hon. Friend to point out to me how many thousands of sackings
222 from the Civil Service in recent years he is aware of.

223 My hon. Friend is wrong again about this issue boiling up. It is untrue to say that
224 the Pay Research Unit has failed to deal with this matter. I hope that my hon.
225 Friend will listen to me. The Unit has dealt with it in accordance with——

226 [629]

227 Mr. Skinner

228 It has not.

229 The Prime Minister

230 My hon. Friend does not know anything about it. The Unit——

231 Mr. Skinner

232 I have been to meet it. That is more than my right hon. Friend does.

233 The Prime Minister

234 The Unit has dealt with it in accordance with the normal procedures. The
235 discussions are going on, and the evaluation is taking place. The discussions can
236 continue and can, I hope, be concluded by 1 April. It is about time my hon. Friend
237 stood by some of the agreements which are made instead of trying to have them
238 broken.

239 Mr. Forman

240 When this inexcusable strike is over, will the Prime Minister undertake to have his

241 officials look carefully at the results of the strike to see whether the services of a
242 considerable number of these civil servants who will be on strike tomorrow are
243 not indispensable?

244 The Prime Minister

245 No, Sir. I do not believe that. A great many staffing investigations are made from
246 time to time. The level of efficiency in the Civil Service is as high as we shall find
247 in a great many other institutions, both private and public. Certainly it is higher
248 than in some. However, there is always room for improvement in these areas. That
249 we shall continue to try to undertake. I would not want to cast any general
250 aspersion on the general level of efficiency, or, indeed, on the attitude, of the Civil
251 Service in its approach to public affairs.

252 Mr. Speaker

253 I propose to call one further speaker from each side.

254 Mr. Arthur Latham

255 My right hon. Friend said that we had come through a period of free collective
256 bargaining. Is not the truth of the matter the fact that unions have been free to
257 make claims but that the employers have claimed that they were [630] not free to
258 make settlements? As we are going through a period of discussion about
259 communication and human understanding, does my right hon. Friend accept that
260 many members of these unions have lobbied Members of Parliament over recent
261 weeks? They certainly did not appear to be taking action in the spirit that the
262 Prime Minister described. Will he make a last attempt to allay their genuine fear
263 that they are likely to be cheated over the Pay Search Unit?

264 The Prime Minister

265 I thought that my hon. Friend gave a perfect definition of free collective
266 bargaining—where one side made claims and the other side either accepted or
267 rejected them. That is what it is about.

268 As to the fear expressed by my hon. Friend, there is absolutely no occasion for
269 fear unless it is spread by those who have a desire to do so. I am sure that my hon.
270 Friend will accept my assurance on this and will do his best to allay any misplaced
271 fears that may have been spread by other people.

272 Mr. Burden

273 Will the Prime Minister be a little more forthcoming on a matter of great
274 importance? What arrangements will be made at the ports of entry tomorrow to
275 ensure that customs and immigration clearance facilities will be available to
276 travellers? Many passengers from abroad will not be able to cancel their journeys.
277 They should be able to know whether they will be able to clear customs and come
278 into this country, or whether they will be totally blocked tomorrow.

279 The Prime Minister

280 Without going into detail, I can say that contingency plans have been made on
281 matters such as immigration controls, the airports, and in other areas, including
282 the courts of justice. I do not wish to disclose details of those actions. I do not
283 know that they will be 100 per cent. successful, but we shall do the best we can

284 with the resources that are available.

285

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House of Commons PQs 1979 Jan 23 Tu

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(ENGAGEMENTS)

2 Q1. Mr. Mike Thomas

3 asked the Prime Minister if he will list his public engagements for 23 January.

4 The Prime Minister (Mr. James Callaghan)

5 This morning I attended and addressed an industrial strategy conference organised
 6 by the Trades Union Congress to review the progress of the electronics sector
 7 working parties. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be holding further
 8 meetings with ministerial colleagues and others.

9 Mr. Thomas

10 Is my right hon. Friend aware that the House will support his firm reaffirmation
 11 this morning of the Government's policy on inflation and his statement about the
 12 continued application of pay limits, productivity bargains and help for the low
 13 paid? Is he further aware that this formula cannot work for the public sector if
 14 those workers see that every private sector group that enters into a strike achieves
 15 its objectives, often with the active support of the Opposition?

16 The Prime Minister

17 My contribution to a very good conference this morning—and it was composed of
 18 a number of representatives working in microelectronic industries—was to
 19 emphasise two points. The first was that, if firms are to plan four or five years
 20 ahead with their new investment, it is necessary that inflation should be low. That
 21 demands, among other things, moderate wage settlements. The second was that
 22 higher productivity and a willingness to change, retrain, and move into these new
 23 industries is essential if Britain is to take advantage of them.

24 On the last part of the question, of course the private sector is in a different
 25 position from the public sector. There is at least some operation of market

26 disciplines in the private sector and people can lose their jobs, as indeed they are
27 losing them at present, especially in industries where they price themselves out of
28 work. The difference between that and the public sector is that nobody so far
29 [198] has lost his job as a result of wildly inflationary wage increases over
30 previous years. It is essential to be absolutely frank, and I must point out that there
31 are limits to what the Government are prepared to ask Parliament to vote in the
32 way of votes for public expenditure. Therefore, if more money is taken out in
33 higher wages because of the comparisons to which my hon. Friend correctly
34 draws attention, there is less money for the services which the public employees
35 are there to provide. That is an inescapable truth.

36 Mrs. Thatcher

37 Is [James Callaghan] the Prime Minister aware that there are more people on
38 strike now than when we debated this matter this time last week? At that time we
39 made an offer to him to support him should he bring forward legislation to deal
40 with picketing, the closed shop and secret or postal ballots. The Prime Minister
41 said that he did not like secondary picketing, was not a closed-shop man and
42 would prefer to have more secret ballots. Therefore, does he propose to take up
43 our offer of support for legislation for the future? Also, will he do anything to
44 assert the right of ordinary people to carry on working without interference?

45 The Prime Minister

46 The Leader of the Opposition has raised a number of important questions.
47 However, I do not think that legislation on postal ballots or on picketing would do
48 anything to affect the fact that there are more people on strike this week than there
49 were last week. Although she may advance these remedies for particular purposes,
50 they would not affect that situation. As regards the present situation, I assert very
51 clearly, as I always have done, that everyone has the right to work and everyone
52 has the right to cross a picket line. It is not a sacred object. If, when people are
53 stopped—if they choose to stop—they desire to go on, there is nothing in the
54 criminal law or the civil law to stop them from carrying out their duties. I hope
55 that they will so do.

56 Mrs. Thatcher

57 I asked the Prime Minister what steps he proposes to take to assert that right,
58 because that right is not being honoured at present. But if the right hon.
59 Gentleman has no immediate proposals, will he at least persuade [S. Silkin] the
60 Attorney-General to do what [Lord Rawlinson] the Attorney-General in the 1970–
61 74 Government did—make a clear statement about [199] what the law of
62 picketing is, particularly as it has been changed by the 1974 and 1976 legislation?

63 The Prime Minister

64 I shall consider that suggestion by the right hon. Lady. But the law of picketing is
65 well known. It is clear. It has been frequently stated. It is for the police to take
66 action if complaints of intimidation, threats and, obviously, violence are made to
67 them. I hope that the police will carry out their responsibilities in this matter if
68 they see any cases of intimidation or threats of any sort.

69 Ms Colquhoun

70 Will my right hon. Friend tell us where he and members of his Government were
71 yesterday when the low-paid workers came to see them in this House? Surely we
72 have not reached the stage when they consider themselves too good to rub
73 shoulders with the workers. [Hon. Members: "Oh."]

74 The Prime Minister

75 I can assure my hon. Friend that I think that I have known as many workers in
76 Britain as she has known, and for a long period, and I rub shoulders with them
77 very often and will continue to do so. I think that I know what a great many of
78 them are feeling at present. They are feeling that a great deal of what is going on
79 is totally unnecessary and should be stopped.

80 Q2. Mr. Gordon Wilson

81 asked the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23
82 January.

83 The Prime Minister

84 I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I have just given to my hon. Friend the
85 Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Thomas).

86 Mr. Wilson

87 Will the Prime Minister try to take time off today from his other troubles to look
88 at the drastic increase in unemployment in Scotland, where the number has risen
89 by 18,500? Even allowing for the fact that many of these are school leavers,
90 Scotland seems to be the worst affected area of the United Kingdom. Will he,
91 therefore, say whether the Government have any intention of honouring the
92 promise that they made at the last election to give economic powers to the
93 Scottish Assembly to make it a powerhouse for Scotland? Will he seek to transfer
94 those powers from the [200] Treasury immediately after the referendum?

95 The Prime Minister

96 The position is that seasonally adjusted unemployment in Scotland, which is
97 generally regarded as the best trend to look at, was stable or falling throughout
98 1978. That is the truth of the matter. There has been an increase this month, which
99 is due partly to normal seasonal factors and to the flow of school leavers at
100 Christmas. Therefore, I think that we can take comfort from the fact that the rate
101 of unemployment has been declining steadily over the past 12 months. But, of
102 course, the hon. Gentleman will know better than I about the adverse weather
103 conditions which have existed in Scotland, which have had an impact on
104 unemployment.

105 As regards giving additional economic powers to the Scottish Assembly, the Act is
106 quite clear on the powers of the Assembly, and it would be quite foolish to say that
107 we intend to change that.

108 Mr. Robert Hughes

109 Does not my right hon. Friend agree that, in a very difficult industrial situation,
110 the way in which the Leader of the Opposition and her cohorts vent their spleen
111 on strikers and spew bile into the situation can only exacerbate this very difficult
112 situation? Would it not be much better to concentrate all our efforts on finding

113 constructive ways in which we can assist the lower paid?

114 The Prime Minister

115 Yes, Sir. I agree that it is far better that we should try to do this. Indeed, in my
116 speech last Tuesday, I put forward certain proposals, which stretched over the
117 whole range of the public service and the private sector.

118 Concerning public sector employees, a very fair proposal has been made to study
119 the conditions and pay of public service workers to see how far they are
120 comparable with those of other workers. That offer should be taken up. In
121 conjunction with the pay negotiations that are now being undertaken, I believe
122 that it will both do justice to the local government workers and, at the same time,
123 enable the Government to continue with the primary task of overcoming inflation,
124 and not increasing the money supply in order to pay out confetti wages which
125 would have no value at all.

126 Mr. Mates

127 Will the Prime Minister take time today to have a discussion with [201] his right
128 hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science? Is the right hon.
129 Gentleman aware of the intimidation which accompanied yesterday's action by the
130 National Union of Public Employees, whereby a school which many of my
131 constituents attend was forced to close although the headmaster and all the
132 teachers were determined to carry out their statutory obligation to educate our
133 children? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that the headmaster was told
134 that, if that school opened, there would be heavy picketing of both the teachers
135 and the children—[An Hon. Member: "Rubbish."]
136 indefinitely blacked? How does this match up with the Prime Minister's oft-
137 proclaimed boast that only his Government can come to terms with the trade
138 unions?

139 The Prime Minister

140 I have never made that last remark. What I have always said and continue to say is
141 that I believe that the trade union movement would work with any Government of
142 this country. That has always been my approach and my principle on the matter.

143 Of course, I do not have details of the school to which the hon. Member has
144 referred. He did not name it—probably very properly. However, I really do not see
145 why anyone is forced to cease work in this situation. [Hon. Members: "Oh."]

146 Mr. Mates

147 May I tell the right hon. Gentleman why?

148 The Prime Minister

149 I am using the word that the hon. Gentleman used. Everyone in this country is
150 entitled to cross a picket line if he disagrees with the arguments that are put to
151 him. There is nothing to stop any citizen—I would not hesitate to do it myself—
152 from crossing a picket line if he believes it to be right to do so.

153 Mr. Fernyhough

154 When my right hon. Friend replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle

155 upon Tyne, East (Mr. Thomas), he said that this morning he met representatives of
156 the microelectronics industry. Will he please tell me whether at that meeting there
157 was any discussion about Inmos, and where the factories that will arise from this
158 industry are to be situated? [202]

159 Secondly, will my right hon. Friend promise me that he will send to the right hon.
160 Lady the Leader of the Opposition a copy of annex 6 to the Royal Commission's
161 report so that she can see how useful legislation is in relation to industrial
162 disputes?

163 The Prime Minister

164 There was no discussion at the TUC conference which I attended this morning
165 about the situation of Inmos, although there was support for the Government's
166 decisions to give it financial backing. As I think my right hon. Friend knows, the
167 headquarters will be at Bristol, but the factories to which he refers—they, of
168 course, will provide by far the overwhelming proportion of the employment—will
169 be in the development areas, although I believe that the sites have not yet been
170 chosen.

171 As regards the impact of legislation on trade unions and on the behaviour of
172 individuals, I have always expressed my scepticism about its efficacy. Indeed, we
173 have had practical experience of it. There do come times when a nation's patience
174 may run out, and then, despite the unwisdom of the legislation, it might be
175 shackled upon the trade unions, to the overwhelming dislike of the country in the
176 long run and, I believe, to a great disintegration of our society.

177 Mr. Brotherton

178 Will the Prime Minister today make arrangements to meet his right hon. Friend
179 the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and tell him two things—first, that
180 the complacent statement made by the right hon. Gentleman in the House
181 yesterday, particularly on the subject of animal feeding stuffs, was quite
182 intolerable and, secondly, that the fact that the right hon. Gentleman is a member
183 of the Transport and General Workers' Union, and that he is sponsored by the
184 TGWU, in no way precludes the right hon. Gentleman from condemning violence
185 and excesses against the law which have been perpetrated by various members of
186 the union to which he belongs?

187 Hon. Members

188 Where?

189 The Prime Minister

190 I repeat again that, if examples of violence are known to the hon. Gentleman, and
191 which can be vouchsafed, they should be brought to the attention of the police. I
192 have repeated my hope that the police, who are [203] independent in these
193 matters, will not shrink from taking action if there are cases that they believe
194 should be brought before the courts. Knowing the police, I do not believe that they
195 will hesitate to do so.

196 As to the supply of foodstuffs, the situation varies from day to day. I am told—I
197 can only repeat the advice that I am given by those concerned with these matters

198 —that there seems to be some improvement today, including the supply of animal
199 feeding stuffs and also the movement of salt and sugar, which apparently were in
200 rather short supply. Indeed, the principal concern today, where I hope that those
201 concerned will stop any picketing in respect of this matter, is about chemicals
202 needed for pharmaceuticals. In some areas they are being held up. I know that the
203 union itself is doing its best to ensure that they are moved. If it cannot ensure that,
204 of course in the long run we simply cannot permit an interruption in the supply of
205 raw materials for pharmaceuticals which are necessary for medicine, and we
206 would have to take the necessary action.

207 Several Hon. Members

208 *rose*—

209 Mr. Speaker

210 I shall call one more hon. Member from either side.

211 Mr. Pavitt

212 In his grasp of the very real problems which face the lower paid after three years,
213 will my right hon. Friend accept that the nurses are not just a special case but that
214 they are an exceptional case? However, they have no intention of withdrawing
215 their labour at this time. Will he bear that in mind in his economic policies in
216 relation to the nurses?

217 The Prime Minister

218 Yes, I shall bear that in mind. I would be very happy indeed to look into that
219 matter in greater detail. But I am bound to say that every special case becomes an
220 exceptional case until it runs right across the economy. In view of what is
221 happening at present in the private sector in respect of pay negotiations and pay
222 settlements, it is doubly essential that the Government [204] give no indication
223 that they are likely to depart from a very strict application of their monetary and
224 fiscal policies. I repeat that now, because that is bound to affect the extent to
225 which we can assist public service employees in the way that they think is right.

226 Mr. Prior

227 Is the Prime Minister aware that with regard to the crossing of picket lines, a
228 number of people have the very real fear that their union cards will be taken away
229 and that they will be excluded or expelled from a trade union without any recourse
230 to a court of law, thereby losing their jobs without being able to claim damages for
231 the loss of their jobs? Is he aware that this is a direct result of the legislation that
232 was introduced by his own Government and that this is industrial relations
233 legislation which he has put on the statute book? In view of what he himself has
234 said today, would not it now be right to accept the offer from the Conservative
235 Opposition to reform this piece of legislation, so that the practices which the
236 Prime Minister says are correct can be followed?

237 The Prime Minister

238 It is a matter of dispute between us as to whether the action taken by this
239 Government has led to the kind of picketing to which the right hon. Gentleman
240 referred. In our view, it is the case—certainly history bears it out—that this kind

241 of picketing, but not in this intensive way, went on long before any amendments
242 to the Act. It is a matter of very great doubt as to what extent the law can deal with
243 this issue. I assume that the right hon. Gentleman is now moving his position. I
244 understand that recent events may have made him do so. But up to 10 days ago he
245 was saying that it was the policy of his party to reaffirm the existing law and to try
246 to secure a voluntary code. I quite understand that he may have changed his mind,
247 but at least it is only in the last 10 days that he has done so.

248 Several Hon. Members *rose*—

249 Mr. Speaker

250 Order. I am afraid that Question Time must come to an end.

251

TV Interview for London Weekend Television *Weekend World* 1979 Jan 7 Su

Document type:	Public Statement
Document kind:	TV Interview
Venue:	LWT Studios, central London
Source:	Thatcher Archive: LWT transcript
Journalist:	Brian Walden, LWT
Editorial comments:	The interview was broadcast live. The programme ran from 1200-1300, opening with a short report on the "Tory approach to the General Election" and concluding with the interview, unbroken by adverts, in part two. The text in the Thatcher Archive seems to have been checked against a video or audio tape, resulting in a number of slight corrections to the transcript (incorporated but not explicitly indicated in text).
Importance ranking:	Key
Word count:	8666
Themes:	Pay, Trade unions, Trade union law reform, Social security and welfare, Taxation, Monetary policy, Employment, Strikes and other union action

252

PART 2

- 1 Brian Walden
- 2 Mrs. Thatcher, most politicians seem to agree that one of the main problems in the
3 fight against inflation is to prevent powerful groups of workers from forcing their
4 bosses to give them inflationary wage awards. Now, I notice that in your speech at
5 Paddington, on December the 18th, you spoke of "Open discussions and
6 explanations between Government, employers and Unions." Now I wonder if you
7 could spell this out a bit. For instance, how often are these meetings going to take
8 place? Who's going to be there? Is it going to be done through the N.E.D.C.
9 National Economic Development Council Could you give us some details?
- 10 Margaret Thatcher—M.P. Leader of the Opposition
- 11 Can I just make one point first? I think you've got the debate on the wrong point.
12 Why people are talking so much about incomes policies and having government
13 impose incomes policies on the unions is because they fear the power of the
14 unions. Every power implies responsibility, every liberty a duty. The unions have
15 tremendous power over the years. Power enough to smash any incomes policy.
16 They smashed ours, [Edward Heath] Ted's policy, it was statutory. So incomes
17 policies as such will not work to keep inflation down. Monetary policy could keep

18 it down, but not alone, without causing other problems. So people have gone to
19 the debate on incomes policy, when what they really should be debating, and the
20 great debate should be on, how Unions use their power. There are two things, the
21 existence of the power, and how it's used, and that's why they are so much in
22 favour of incomes policy, because they think it reduces the power of the unions. It
23 doesn't in fact. It enables the strong ones to smash anything, and leaves the weak
24 ones having to take the policy, and I think it's absolutely important to get that right
25 at the outset.

26 Brian Walden

27 Well you see, what puzzles me about that is this, if you're going to invite them
28 along for these nice cosy tri-partite chats, surely that would give them even more
29 power?[fo 8]

30 Margaret Thatcher

31 Ah, no, it will not give them more power. I hope it will get a public debate going
32 on the right issues. After all, there's a tremendous amount of trade union law; the
33 law consisted of exempting trade unions from certain legal provisions, which
34 apply to other people. I just looked back the other day at some of the early history,
35 you know they were put above the law in some respects in 1906, when there were
36 only 1½ million members of trade unions, now there are 11 million members, and
37 Carson, a very famous lawyer of the day, said the King and trade unions are
38 above the law, but they were put above the law not to have a licence to inflict
39 damage, harm and injury on other people. They were put above the law then
40 because it was thought that they needed it to get decent wages. Now, if I may say
41 so, the conditions have changed totally. There are now 11 million members of
42 trade unions, who used also incidentally to have restraints on strikes in public
43 utilities, you couldn't suddenly break your contract if you worked in water, gas,
44 electricity. We removed that. This is what the debate has got to be about—How
45 unions use their power. I'm a Parliamentarian, I am not in Parliament to enable
46 anyone to have a licence to inflict harm, damage and injury on others and be
47 immune from the law, and if I see it happening, then I've got to take action, and I
48 expect many members of trade unions themselves to go to their union leaders and
49 say "Hey, we're unionists too, we're trade unionists too, what are you doing about
50 stopping those others inflicting damage on us and our wives".

51 Brian Walden

52 I can't seem to interest you very much in these poor old tri-partite meetings can I?
53 Are you sure you're going to have them at all?

54 Margaret Thatcher

55 I am prepared to talk with anyone, I love talking, I love arguing, I love debating.
56 Of course, but I'm only prepared to talk on a basis of realism. I'm not prepared to
57 flannel over anything, I'm prepared to take the facts and not flinch from them, and
58 say, "This is the problem, we've got to meet it." I'm in Parliament to look after the
59 interests of all people, whether they're trade unionists or not. There are 11 million
60 members of trade unions, I don't believe[fo 9] there are 11 million irresponsible
61 people. There might among that 11 million be a few tens of thousands wanting to
62 smash the system, otherwise, that 11 million are no different from those who don't

63 belong to unions. Oh yes, of course I'll talk, but I'll take the whole thing, monetary
64 policy, the other great inflationary factor, government expenditure, because if
65 government takes too much out of the pay packet, they'll apply for wage increases
66 to get the tax back. Ah, those are two very important things. Incomes policy,
67 depends what you mean by it. No-one in government can ever stand back and see
68 people being able to take more out than they're prepared to put in in production.
69 They just can't.

70 Brian Walden

71 Let me make quite certain I've got you clear on this. Despite this stuff about tri-
72 partite meetings, I get the feeling from you that you don't think that that's going to
73 have much impact.

74 Margaret Thatcher

75 Oh please, in that case it's a false feeling, ah, because I do think, if you get to grips
76 with the real issues, but just glossing over them won't. We've been afraid to talk
77 about trade union power for four years. I remember when I came to see you
78 before, I started to, I started again in the debate on the Queen's speech because I
79 sat down and thought about this, and thought someone's got to grasp this nettle,
80 dare I? And I did.

81 Brian Walden

82 All right, now let's talk exactly about that, about grasping this nettle. Let me take
83 you through a few of the possibilities that have been suggested here, for, let's put
84 it quite bluntly—Curbing the unions' negotiating powers to some extent, to redress
85 the balance. For instance, a lot of people talk about having secret ballots before
86 strikes. Now are you going to legislate to do that?

87 Margaret Thatcher

88 Can I take that in stages? We're prepared to legislate to have free secret postal
89 ballots for the election of union officials and for secret ballots, but permissive,
90 paid for by the government. It would be cheap at the price. I believe then, that
91 with the number of responsible trade unionists, they then would demand those,
92 and so[fo 10] that's permissive. Postal ballots, which must be secret, either for the
93 election of union officials, or for any major decision which affects the livelihood
94 of their members, and of course a major strike does. Now you are going to say,
95 "Am I going to impose that decision?" At the moment, I'm reluctant to impose it,
96 until I see where I can get by giving the full facilities. There are other things we
97 could do ... Can you just, because there's one variation ... But you would like to
98 come first, yes.

99 Brian Walden

100 Well, you see, what worries me about that is this, if you leave it as a purely
101 voluntary choice by the unions themselves, the people that you regard as the worst
102 offenders won't have the secret ballots, will they?

103 Margaret Thatcher

104 There is another thing that I could do, without imposing it. Now we've not gone as
105 far as this yet but it would be possible to say that you should only be able to get

106 benefits, social security benefits, etc., as a result of a strike, if it is quite clear that
107 that strike has been taken as the result of a secret ballot. Now that would be one
108 possibility, without imposing it. We've taken no decision of that kind yet, but what
109 I'm trying to do is say to you, I'm going to have postal ballots paid for, by
110 governments. It'll be very cheap at the price. Before going all of the way to
111 imposing a secret ballot, because it's not very easy to draft, we've had a go. Not
112 very easy to draft all the circumstances when you should have at a secret ballot.
113 Let's consider all other possibilities ... that would be an intermediate one ... please,
114 we've taken no decision to have it yet, but all right, I am prepared to have tri-
115 partite talks to discuss it, but never lose sight of the power, the fact if you have
116 power, you must use it responsibly. If you have power, you must be seen to use it
117 democratically, and don't flinch from that. I won't flinch from it, if asked to take a
118 decision.

107 Brian Walden

108 Let's come back to something you said there, which I confess is plainly is, a new
109 one on me. If you're going ...

110 Margaret Thatcher

111 We do have new ideas in the Tory party, we have a lot of them and they are
112 relevant.[fo 11]

113 Brian Walden

114 Well, well, if you're going to withhold social security benefits, in fact ... no, let me
115 say what I think you said ... for people who may be on strike without having taken
116 a secret ballot, that surely is going to require legislation, isn't it?

117 Margaret Thatcher

118 Oh, that would, yes, that would, and I think we do everything by persuasion
119 before that. This is why, I'm not going into straight legislation, other than on
120 postal ballots. There are a number of other pledges, for example to relieve the
121 closed shop, to relieve some of the Employment Protection Act decisions, and to
122 undo some of the things which were done by this government to increase the
123 power of the unions. But you're not asking me about those at the moment.

124 Brian Walden

125 No, and I may come to that, but let me, I'm very interested still in this idea of
126 legislation to withhold social security benefits, in the circumstances that you
127 explain. Let me put another idea on the same lines. If a man goes on strike at the
128 moment, he, and is paying P.A.Y.E., he gets an immediate tax rebate, either from
129 his employer or in fact from the inland revenue. Now a lot of people have said that
130 this is, in effect, financing strikes. Are you going to do anything about those tax
131 rebates?

132 Margaret Thatcher

133 Point number one, ah, the employer is under no legal duty to open up his clerical
134 department to pay back the P.A.Y.E., no legal duty at all, if he does it, it's by
135 choice. If people want back tax from the Inland Revenue, they should do what you
136 and I have to do. Go and apply and wait nine or ten months to get it back, or even

137 eighteen months to two years. So he's under no legal duty. Point number two, one
138 of the problems is, that the short term benefits, unemployment benefit, sickness
139 benefit, social security benefit, are not taxable, so you've got, I think the silly
140 position, under which your earnings are taxable, but your substitution for earnings
141 are not taxable. So a chap who earns, say £80.00 a year, of earnings pays full tax
142 on it, £80.00 a week on earnings pays full tax on it, a chap who gets his £80.00 a
143 week, partly from earnings and partly from social security benefit is better off,
144 because the part from benefit is not taxable. We are going to tax the short-term
145 benefits, so that they are just as much a part of your taxable income as other things
146 ... and that of course ...

147 Brian Walden

148 How are you going to do that?[fo 12]

149 Margaret Thatcher

150 Well, it's been said for years that you can't tax short-term benefits. My goodness,
151 they don't hesitate to tax pensions, which are also National Insurance benefits, and
152 if anyone is trying to tell me that after thirty years of increasing office equipment
153 and computers you cannot pick up these benefits on tax, then I just plain don't
154 believe them. They've no difficulty if I'm paid a Royalty by ITV or BBC on
155 picking that up and taxing it. They've no difficulty on taxing you, as you go from
156 one employer to another, why in the world should they have difficulty on taxing
157 you, merely because your benefits are paid by a government office. It is
158 ridiculous.

159 Brian Walden

160 Well, that's going to involve legislation

161 Margaret Thatcher

162 Oh indeed, but ah ... why do you think I'm flinching from legislation?

163 Brian Walden

164 Well, it's just

165 Margaret Thatcher

166 We've got the position, this government ...

167 Brian Walden

168 I'll tell you why I keep asking that ...

169 Margaret Thatcher

170 This government used legislation to increase the powers of unions, it would like to
171 increase them even further ...

172 Brian Walden

173 I'll tell you why I keep asking you about legislation, because a lot of people have
174 been saying, "Oh, well, the Conservative Party are not planning any substantial
175 legislation on unions." Now you've[fo 13] already told me two things this
176 morning, which will undoubtedly in fact involve legislation.

177 Margaret Thatcher
178 The first thing, the social security benefits, unless it's a full democratic decision, is
179 not a decision that I, has yet been taken. It is a possibility, and no more than that.
180 Postal ballots are an absolute pledge, there are other things as well

181 Brian Walden
182 Now let me come back again, because I do think this is very important, the whole
183 idea of taxing short-term benefits. Do I take it that ...

184 Margaret Thatcher
185 That ... that's a decision, yes

186 Brian Walden
187 You're really putting that forward, basically, are you, as a way of reducing the
188 benefits that strikers can get if they choose to go on strike?

189 Margaret Thatcher
190 Oh, no, on taxation of short term benefits, no, that is making it taxable income. I
191 mean if all you've got during a year are social security benefits, or unemployment
192 pay, you're not going to come into the tax bracket at all, but what one wants to
193 stop is people stopping work after nine months, and then going onto
194 unemployment and wage-related unemployment, which is not taxable, that is
195 totally wrong.

196 Brian Walden
197 But it would have the effect, would it not, of reducing the amount of money that
198 strikers would have immediately available when they went on strike?[fo 14]

199 Margaret Thatcher
200 Well they'd probably pick it up as they went back to work on the P.A.Y.E., it just
201 depends how you did it.

202 Brian Walden
203 Yes ...

204 Margaret Thatcher
205 I mean after all, when I get a Royalty from you ah, I don't well, I'm leader of
206 the Opposition, I hasten to say, I'm not paid for anything other than my duties as
207 leader of the Opposition and a member of Parliament, ah, we pay towards the end
208 of the year, or frequently, it's picked up in your re-coding on P.A.Y.E.

209 Brian Walden
210 Yes, but I still want to stress this particular point to make quite sure that all the
211 viewers have followed this. Of course eventually, any rebate that you're entitled
212 to, you do get, but at the moment, strikers usually get an immediate rebate from
213 their employer. Now what you're suggesting is in fact that they wouldn't get that
214 rebate, and therefore they'd be worse off

215 Margaret Thatcher

216 Now there are two things and I do think it's important not to muddle them up.
217 They get back P.A.Y.E.

218 Brian Walden

219 Yes ...

220 Margaret Thatcher

221 Because their income is below the calculation that would otherwise have held.
222 There is no duty on the employer to open up his clerical department when
223 everyone else is on strike. It amazes me that people expect the clerks not to strike,
224 to pay out the P.A.Y.E., no duty on him, they in fact should get the rebate from the
225 tax office later.

226 Brian Walden

227 But it's hardly the point is it, because what, what in practice happens is that they
228 more or less force the employer to pay them the rebate[fo 15] By being very
229 troublesome about it.

230 Margaret Thatcher

231 Why should they expect the clerks to go in to pay it when they're out on strike, it
232 does not always happen ...

233 Brian Walden

234 But they do do it though don't they ...

235 Margaret Thatcher

236 Yes, I'm afraid sometimes they do, but I'm saying there's no legal duty on an
237 employer to do it. After all, if people stay honestly and earnestly and
238 conscientiously at work, they will pay tax on every penny piece of their earnings.
239 What I am saying is, if you go on strike, or you leave a job say after nine months
240 and you pick up unemployment benefit, it's absolutely wrong that you should be
241 better off than a person who's stayed conscientiously hard at work. I'm really in
242 favour of the conscientious hard workers.

243 Brian Walden

244 But there is an important point involved in this, of general application, not that I'm
245 not suggesting that what you've already said is not in a way quite surprising,
246 almost sensational perhaps ... but ...

247 Margaret Thatcher

248 Oh no, no there's nothing sensational about it, please don't, you chaps use
249 'sensation' far too easily.

250 Brian Walden

251 I think it's a radical suggestion, shall I put it like that? But there is a general point
252 involved in it, and we keep having this disagreement on this point. Let's suppose I
253 was an employer, and came along to you and said, "All right, Mrs. Thatcher, it's
254 quite true, I don't have to give them their rebates, but, my god, you don't know
255 much about industrial relations if you think I could get away with not giving them

256 their rebates, unless you legislate, so that I can't give them the rebates, now why
257 don't you[fo 16] do that?"

258 Margaret Thatcher

259 No, why should I? We live in a free country. He's a responsible person and should
260 make his own choice, and if everyone is going to come and say, "I'm not going to
261 make a choice myself, unless you legislate and tell me I've got to do it," then we're
262 well on the way to a totally different state to anything we've ever known. No Do
263 you know, there's a marvellous quotation of a—I think it's George Bernard Shaw,
264 and he wasn't exactly one of us. "Liberty means responsibility. That's why many
265 men dread it" Yes, Liberty does mean responsibility, and the choice is his. He may
266 prefer to make it, it won't make any difference at the end of the year. If you have
267 the short-term benefits taxable.

268 Brian Walden

269 But I don't really see, you see, what this great philosophic difference is, between
270 now, wait a moment, between, for instance, taxing short term benefits, which
271 will involve legislation, and while you're at it, passing another bit of legislation,
272 which says "and by the way, employers can't in fact give you tax rebates, and
273 neither will the revenue until you go back to work."

274 Margaret Thatcher

275 But Mr. Walden ...

276 Brian Walden

277 Now what's the difference?

278 Margaret Thatcher

279 I just said I'm not going to pass legislation on tax rebates. Employers have the
280 choice, you and I together ...

281 Brian Walden

282 Do they really?[fo 17]

283 Margaret Thatcher

284 Of course they do

285 Brian Walden

286 You talked yourself about the imbalance in bargaining. Now you know employers
287 don't have the kind of choice you say they do.

288 Margaret Thatcher

289 Employers have a choice and they must exercise their choice. If they wish to pay
290 it out, so be it, but if you tax the short term benefits, the amount of tax you pay at
291 the end of the year won't differ, according to whether you've honestly stayed at
292 work and earned it all, or whether you've had it as unemployment pay. Now, if
293 you're one of the real unfortunates and can't get a job, then your unemployment
294 pay ought not to bring you into the taxing bracket at all, because the threshold
295 should start above that. So it won't harm the really unfortunates, but taxation of

296 short term benefits, I think, is just and reasonable. After all, they don't hesitate to
297 tax the long term benefits like pensions. Pensioners have to pay tax on their
298 National Insurance benefits. But you said earlier, "Is there any difference between
299 you and Mr. Callaghan?" A tremendous difference, money supply isn't everything;
300 if you get your money supply wrong, look, there was no inflation in a barter
301 society, when you exchange goods for goods, there's no inflation. There might be
302 a price rise in something one year, because a harvest fails, it'll be corrected when
303 the harvest is good another year. There is no inflation in a barter society. It's only
304 when you introduce money that you get problems, and then you find the tendency
305 of governments is to promise so much that they have to debase the coinage, and
306 that's what inflation is, it's a fraud on everyone whos saved, because they debase,
307 they clip it or they substitute copper for silver. Now, money supply isn't
308 everything, if you get it wrong, you'll get nothing right. Further, you accuse me of
309 leading to unemployment—I have not ever led to unemployment in my policies.
310 It's Mr. Callaghan's policies that in practice have led to unemployment. He will
311 take far too much in government expenditure. The Labour Party doesn't believe in
312 leaving people's earnings in their own pockets in sufficient quantity. These are
313 things that enormously, they believe in government power over everything. I
314 believe in freedom of choice.[fo 18]

315 Brian Walden

316 Let's come back to the issue that I suspect is on people's minds most this weekend,
317 and indeed may well determine the result of the next election. The questions that
318 everybody keeps asking, what is going to be done about the unions? Now you've
319 mentioned certain things, they seem in some ways peripheral. Let me tell you why
320 I think so, and ask your opinion on a current dispute. Take the lorry drivers' strike.
321 That's having a devastating effect, can't move food from the docks, prices are
322 going up, there's talk of farmers having to slaughter livestock, etc.. Now none of
323 the things that you've suggested in fact would have very much impact on that,
324 because the strikes so devastating. If you were Prime Minister, what would you do
325 about the lorry drivers' strike at the moment, which is likely to become official
326 next week?

327 Margaret Thatcher

328 The Government's job is to see that essential services are continued, and they must
329 use all means in their power to do so, their duty is to the population as a whole,
330 but I also expect a number of Trade Unionists to be at their leaders. Come back to
331 this, 11 million trade unionists, they're not sort of set aside from other citizens,
332 they're the same as the rest of us. Those people who are on strike are a small
333 proportion, they are damaging the rights of their fellow trade unionists just as
334 much as they're damaging the rights of those of us who are not trade unionists.
335 Why don't the rest go to Len Murray, and to their trade union leaders and say,
336 "Look, what are you doing to protect our interests because ..."

337 Brian Walden

338 But, Mrs. Thatcher

339 Margaret Thatcher

340 Because, can I just make the fact ...[fo 19]

341 Brian Walden
342 Well, the fact remains that they don't do that do they?
343 Margaret Thatcher
344 Not yet, ...
345 Brian Walden
346 We shall wait for ever if we wait for that to happen.
347 Margaret Thatcher
348 Oh, no, no, no, we shall not, oh no, we shall not, the fact is that under trade union
349 powers at the moment, we've got to the stage when each and every trade union has
350 more power to inflict damage on others than it has power to protect its own
351 members from damage inflicted by other trade unions, that seems to me
352 ridiculous, that was not what the trade union movement was started up for. Why
353 don't they look to their ideals again? That, this is exactly why I say, is the debate
354 on trade union power. People cannot go on paying more and more. Look, another
355 point you've left out, critical ... production's no more than in 1973
356 Brian Walden
357 But let's turn back to this lorry drivers dispute
358 Margaret Thatcher
359 Production's no more than in 1973, but we're paying ourselves twice as much, so
360 the value of money's halved, people cannot pay any more.
361 Brian Walden
362 Let's come back to this lorry drivers dispute. Do I take it from what you've said,
363 namely that the Government has the responsibility to make sure that these
364 supplies go through, that you'd declare a state of emergency and use the troops?[fo
365 20]
366 Margaret Thatcher
367 You must in fact, you must keep the essential supplies through to your hospitals,
368 to your old people's homes, to your schools, and also, I must say, I would be pretty
369 critical of any unions who deny and who strike against the weakest members of
370 society. Now lets not be mealy-mouthed about it, of course, and don't think that
371 there's anything unusual in that, the troops were used to break to, to, break the
372 firemens strike ultimately. The Governments duty is to see that essential services
373 are kept going, there can't be any doubt about it.
374 Brian Walden
375 All right, now lets come back to this general thing about trade union powers,
376 because I think, er, you and many other people think that this is the key to the
377 problem.
378 Margaret Thatcher
379 Oh, it is undoubtedly
380 Brian Walden

381 All right, then, have you any other proposals at all, in regard to diminishing, or if
382 you like well diminishing trade union power, as you put it, redressing the balance
383 between the employers and unions?

384 Margaret Thatcher

385 We've started, on the powers of the unions over their own members, this is why I
386 say postal ballots for the election of union officials because they are secret. We
387 also fought, as you know, the enormous increase in powers that Michael Foot and
388 Jim Callaghan put through in 1974 and 1976. In 1974, we could introduce certain
389 safeguards. The moment the Labour party got a majority, they introduced the
390 closed shop, you could have sympathetic strikes, even if they were in sympathy
391 with overseas things. So

392 Brian Walden

393 Are you going to change it ...?[fo 21]

394 Margaret Thatcher

395 One moment, they removed the right of a person to have compensation for loss of
396 his job because of a closed shop, we shall restore that by law. They removed... .

397 Brian Walden

398 Who will pay this compensation?

399 Margaret Thatcher

400 It'll have to be by the employers, because the employers decide, along, with the
401 unions whether there shall be a closed shop. At the moment a chap can be sacked
402 because of a closed shop, even though he's done a jolly good job for thirty years,
403 and there's a case going to the European court about it, because it couldn't happen
404 in Europe, it can happen here, because the difference between trade union power
405 in Europe and here is that these, our trade unions, have powers that no other
406 unions in the world have, so that's compensation. He must have right of appeal to
407 a court of law, if a union won't allow him in or if they expel him. The Labour
408 Party removed that right. Now that's three things that we're pledged to do. Now
409 there are a number of other things under the Employment Protection Act ...

410 Brian Walden

411 Yes.

412 Margaret Thatcher

413 There are a number of things about the terms of reference at A.C.A.S which are
414 are perhaps not wholly impartial, there are a number of things about unfair
415 dismissal. As you know, employers say they spend a tremendous amount of time
416 at those tribunals and they daren't take people on. The period of time under, in, in
417 which, after which a person can take an employer to a tribunal, at the moment is
418 six months, we'll need to look at that, it may be too short, we may need a longer
419 period. There is a section, section 11, which people are using to get round any
420 incomes policy, any pay policy, because what section eleven says, if someone else
421 in the area[fo 22] is doing a similar job to you, you can have the same pay,
422 regardless of the condition of the company. That is ridiculous. Now that's a

423 number of other things that's quite a start, and I don't want to get too detailed,
424 because it sounds dull, but I just want to say enough to let you know that we have
425 considered these things, and we're pledged to do things on some of them, and on
426 the big things, we are going to discuss them, and have the great debate with the
427 unions, the employers, the small businesses and, don't forget, it was the small
428 business which kept people going during the bread strike and they didn't put up
429 their prices.

430 Brian Walden

431 Well, far from being dull, it sounds on the whole to me to be reasonably
432 comprehensive, but admittedly it's got to be a matter of judgement. But I do see
433 one great problem with it and I put it to you now. If you do that, or even a half of
434 it, the unions are going to resent it and you may find yourself in a confrontation,
435 do you expect that?

436 Margaret Thatcher

437 Do you know, I think, you underestimate, if I might say so, the tremendous feeling
438 of many, many members of trade unions. Look, I come back to it again and again,
439 11 million members of trade unions, many of them, when surveys are done, and
440 that's a poll you didn't put on, say the trade unions have too much power, and I
441 believe that if you did a survey again among trade unionists about the power of
442 trade unions, that is the conclusion they would come to. And many of them, who
443 else can they look to, other than Parliament, to have these questions discussed?
444 Parliament put unions above the law, it put them above the law to use their powers
445 responsibly, provided they use them responsibly, then we don't need to interfere,
446 for Heaven's sake if something's working well, if a firm and company is working
447 well and can afford to pay its workers more, leave them.

448 Brian Walden

449 But you don't know if it is working well, do you ... [fo 23]

450 Margaret Thatcher

451 At the moment there are some spheres in which the unions have the power to hold
452 the nation to ransom, gas, electricity, water is one, we I'm afraid removed certain
453 provisions in that Act, those workers were not allowed to break their contract just
454 without notice, we removed that. It may be that you have to say, that there are
455 certain services which are so vital, so vital, that you're not allowed just to
456 withdraw your labour under the same terms and conditions as other unions but ...

447 Brian Walden

448 You'll take

449 Margaret Thatcher

450 ... then you'd have to make certain that the pay of those people was looked after.
451 I'm not suggesting anything outrageous.

452 Brian Walden

453 No, but let me make it quite clear what ...

454 Margaret Thatcher

455 One moment, let me make it quite clear, the army can't withdraw their labour, the
456 police can't withdraw their labour,
457 Brian Walden
458 Yes.
459 Margaret Thatcher
460 We've been the party that's insisted on looking after ...
461 Brian Walden
462 But who are you going to add to this list?
463 Margaret Thatcher
464 The people who can't withdraw their labour.
465 Brian Walden
466 This sounds interesting, who are you going to add to this list?[fo 24]
467 Margaret Thatcher
468 Again, there used to be in legislation the public utilities, now the Donovan
469 Commission recommended that that stay as it was, it so happened they were
470 criminal sanctions, and we didn't like criminal sanctions, so we took them off, but
471 again, we're going to have to look at it with the unions, if you've got power to hold
472 the nation to ransom ...
473 Brian Walden
474 Yes, but
475 Margaret Thatcher
476 If you've got power, then it maybe, and if you use it in a way against the sick, the
477 elderly, the children, then we have to look at that power, of course we do, and we
478 have to find another way. Do you know, those provisions on public utilities were
479 only removed by us, in the Industrial Relations Act?
480 Brian Walden
481 But, let me come back to confrontation ...
482 Margaret Thatcher
483 I don't like criminal sanctions ...
484 Brian Walden
485 No, I understand that, but let me come back to confrontations ...
486 Margaret Thatcher
487 What is confrontation?
488 Brian Walden
489 Well ...
490 Margaret Thatcher

491 They're confronting the public, the sick, the elderly ...[fo 25]
492 Brian Walden
493 All right, but your the Government, you represent the public and you will be
494 asked again and again and again this year, and you may win or lose the election on
495 whether your answer's believed or not, if you get into a confrontation, and a lot of
496 voters think you will, even if you don't, what are you going to do?
497 Margaret Thatcher
498 A confrontation, with whom? One moment ...
499 Brian Walden
500 The Trade Unions.
501 Margaret Thatcher
502 Trade Unions. Eleven million. Do you think I'm going to be in a confrontation
503 with eleven million ...
504 Brian Walden
505 You might.
506 Margaret Thatcher
507 No, no, no, things have changed ...
508 Brian Walden
509 You were in 1971.
510 Margaret Thatcher
511 Things have changed, things have moved a lot, public opinion has moved a
512 tremendous amount, you would have asked me that question about the bread
513 strike, had I'd been here three months ago, because you would have said, the
514 bakers will withhold bread, they've a closed shop, oh, no, some trade unionists
515 went in, conscientiously, the small businesses came, cooked the bread, baked the
516 bread, didn't put up their prices, look. Please, public opinion has changed
517 tremendously since 1971, it is ready for things which it is was not ready for ...[fo
518 26]
519 Brian Walden
520 That may be true
521 Margaret Thatcher
522 There are more trade unionists, and they are ready to do things ...
523 Brian Walden
524 Yes, but that may be true ...
525 Margaret Thatcher
526 That they were not ready to do before.
527 Brian Walden

528 I think in that sense you aren't being wholly frank with me.

529 Margaret Thatcher

530 Oh, I am.

531 Brian Walden

532 You may be right, that the public believes all sorts of things. What I'm trying to
533 put to you is, that the public may, the trade unions may not, and they may say,
534 "We're not having it, we don't care what the public wants, or what the government
535 wants." Now if they say that, and they act on it and there are sympathetic strikes
536 and blacking, what are you going to do?

537 Margaret Thatcher

538 At the moment, there's a case about sympathetic strikes before the courts, an
539 extremely important one. Let me tell you what I'm not going to do. This
540 government increased the capacity for sympathetic strikes in the 1976 Act. We
541 tried to hold it, and say you couldn't have sympathetic strikes with things
542 overseas, unless they've increased the powers. I am saying to you and I will say
543 again and again, my duty is to the people of Britain as a whole.

544 Brian Walden

545 And will you have a referendum for instance?[fo 27]

546 Margaret Thatcher

547 Unions have been given enormous powers, by Parliament, Parliament's placed
548 them above the law, anyone who does not use power responsibly must expect its
549 position to be reconsidered by Parliament. Referendum, you asked me about
550 referendum, we discussed it last time, since then I've had a study group on it, it's
551 reported completely, it was published, I think, in August and September, er, we
552 haven't made a final decision on its recommendations, but all the
553 recommendations are there for everyone to read, we have considered it, and they
554 suggest that we do in fact have a general enabling power for referendum, in a bill,
555 when we return.

556 Brian Walden

555 That's ...

556 Margaret Thatcher

557 Now, I stress, we're still discussing it, we've done the work, published it, there are
558 the recommendations.

559 Brian Walden

560 Mrs. Thatcher, thank you very much indeed. Well, that's all for this week, good
561 bye.

562

Conservative manifesto, 1979

Foreword

FOR ME, THE HEART OF POLITICS is not political theory, it is people and how they want to live their lives.

No one who has lived in this country during the last five years can fail to be aware of how the balance of our society has been increasingly tilted in favour of the State at the expense of individual freedom.

This election may be the last chance we have to reverse that process, to restore the balance of power in favour of the people. It is therefore the most crucial election since the war.

Together with the threat to freedom there has been a feeling of helplessness, that we are a once great nation that has somehow fallen behind and that it is too late now to turn things round.

I don't accept that. I believe we not only can, we must. This manifesto points the way.

It contains no magic formula or lavish promises. It is not a recipe for an easy or a perfect life. But it sets out a broad framework for the recovery of our country, based not on dogma, but on reason, on common sense, above all on the liberty of the people under the law.

The things we have in common as a nation far outnumber those that set us apart.

It is in that spirit that I commend to you this manifesto.

Margaret Thatcher

[...]

1 2. Restoring the balance

1 SOUND MONEY and a fair balance between the rights and obligations of unions,
2 management and the community in which they work are essential to economic
3 recovery. They should provide the stable conditions in which pay bargaining can
4 take place as responsibly in Britain as it does in other countries.

5 THE CONTROL OF INFLATION

6 Under Labour prices have risen faster than at any peacetime period in the three
7 centuries in which records have been kept, and inflation is now accelerating again.
8 The pound today is worth less than half its '974 value. On present form it would
9 be halved in value yet again within eight years. Inflation on this scale has come
10 near to destroying our political and social stability.

11 To master inflation, proper monetary discipline is essential, with publicly stated
12 targets for the rate of growth of the money supply. At the same time, a gradual
13 reduction in the size of the Government's borrowing requirement is also vital. This
14 Government's price controls have done nothing to prevent inflation, as is proved

15 by the doubling of prices since they came to power. All the controls have achieved
16 is a loss of jobs and a reduction in consumer choice.

17 The State takes too much of the nation's income; its share must be steadily
18 reduced. When it spends and borrows too much, taxes, interest rates, prices and
19 unemployment rise so that in the long run there is less wealth with which to
20 improve Our standard of living and our social services.

21 BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY

22 Any future government which sets out honestly to reduce inflation and taxation
23 will have to make substantial economies, and there should be no doubt about our
24 intention to do so. We do not pretend that every saving can be made without
25 change or complaint; but if the Government does not economise the sacrifices
26 required of ordinary people will be all the greater.

27 Important savings can be made in several ways. We will scrap expensive Socialist
28 programmes, such as the nationalisation of building land. We shall reduce
29 government intervention in industry and particularly that of the National
30 Enterprise Board, whose borrowing powers are planned to reach £4.5 billion. We
31 shall ensure that selective assistance to industry is not wasted, as it was in the case
32 of Labour's assistance to certain oil platform yards, on which over £20 million of
33 public money was spent but no orders received.

34 The reduction of waste, bureaucracy and over-government will also yield
35 substantial savings. For example, we shall look for economies in the cost (about
36 £1.2 billion) of running our tax and social security systems. By comparison with
37 private industry, local direct labour schemes waste an estimated £400 million a
38 year. Other examples of waste abound, such as the plan to spend £50 million to
39 build another town hall in Southwark.

40 TRADE UNION REFORM

41 Free trade unions can only flourish in a free society. A strong and responsible
42 trade union movement could play a big part in our economic recovery. We cannot
43 go on, year after year, tearing ourselves apart in increasingly bitter and calamitous
44 industrial disputes. In bringing about economic recovery, we should all be on the
45 same side. Government and public, management and unions, employers and
46 employees, all have a common interest in raising productivity and profits, thus
47 increasing investment and employment, and improving real living standards for
48 everyone in a high-productivity, high-wage, low-tax economy. Yet at the moment
49 we have the reverse an economy in which the Government has to hold wages
50 down to try to make us competitive with other countries where higher real wages
51 are paid for by higher output.

52 The crippling industrial disruption which hit Britain last winter had several
53 causes: years with no growth in production; rigid pay control; high marginal rates
54 of taxation; and the extension of trade union power and privileges. Between 1974
55 and 1976, Labour enacted a 'militants' charter' of trade union legislation. It tilted
56 the balance of power in bargaining throughout industry away from responsible
57 management and towards unions, and sometimes towards unofficial groups of
58 workers acting in defiance of their official union leadership.

58 We propose three changes which must be made at once. Although the Government
59 refused our offer of support to carry them through the House of Commons last
60 January, our proposals command general assent inside and outside the trade union
61 movement.

62 I. PICKETING

63 Workers involved in a dispute have a right to try *peacefully* to persuade others to
64 support them by picketing, but we believe that right should be limited to those in
65 dispute picketing at their own place of work. In the last few years some of the
66 picketing we have witnessed has gone much too far. Violence, intimidation and
67 obstruction cannot be tolerated. We shall ensure that the protection of the law is
68 available to those not concerned in the dispute but who at present can suffer
69 severely from secondary action (picketing, blacking and blockading). This means
70 an immediate review of the existing law on immunities in the light of recent
71 decisions, followed by such amendment as may be appropriate of the 1976
72 legislation in this field. We shall also make any further changes that are necessary
73 so that a citizen's right to work and go about his or her lawful business free from
74 intimidation or obstruction is guaranteed.

75 2. THE CLOSED SHOP

76 Labour's strengthening of the closed shop has made picketing a more
77 objectionable weapon. In some disputes, pickets have threatened other workers
78 with the withdrawal of their union cards if they refuse to co-operate. No union
79 card can mean no job. So the law must be changed. People arbitrarily excluded or
80 expelled from any union must be given the right of appeal to a court of law.
81 Existing employees and those with personal conviction must be adequately
82 protected, and if they lose their jobs as a result of a closed shop they must be
83 entitled to ample compensation.

84 In addition, all agreements for a closed shop must be drawn up in line with the
85 best practice followed at present and only if an overwhelming majority of the
86 workers involved vote for it by secret ballot. We shall therefore propose a
87 statutory code under Section 6 of the 1975 Employment Protection Act. We will
88 not permit a closed shop in the non-industrial civil service and will resist further
89 moves towards it in the newspaper industry. We are also committed to an enquiry
90 into the activities of the SLADE union, which have done so much to bring trade
91 unionism into disrepute.

92 3. WIDER PARTICIPATION

93 Too often trade unions are dominated by a handful of extremists who do not
94 reflect the common-sense views of most union members.

95 Wider use of secret ballots for decision-making throughout the trade union
96 movement should be given every encouragement. We will therefore provide
97 public funds for postal ballots for union elections and other important issues.
98 Every trade unionist should be free to record his decisions as every voter has done
99 for a hundred years in parliamentary elections, without others watching and taking
100 note.

101 We welcome closer involvement of workers, whether trade unionists or not, in the

102 decisions that affect them at their place of work. It would be wrong to impose by
103 law a system of participation in every company. It would be equally wrong to use
104 the pretext of encouraging genuine worker involvement in order simply to
105 increase union power or facilitate union control of pension funds.

106 TOO MANY STRIKES

107 Further changes may be needed to encourage people to behave responsibly and
108 keep the bargains they make at work. Many deficiencies of British industrial
109 relations are without foreign parallel. Strikes are too often a weapon of first rather
110 than last resort. One cause is the financial treatment of strikers and their families.
111 In reviewing the position, therefore, we shall ensure that unions bear their fair
112 share of the cost of supporting those of their members who are on strike.

113 Labour claim that industrial relations in Britain cannot be improved by changing
114 the law. We disagree. If the law can be used to confer privileges, it can and should
115 also be used to establish obligations. We cannot allow a repetition of the
116 behaviour that we saw outside too many of our factories and hospitals last winter.

117 RESPONSIBLE PAY BARGAINING

118 Labour's approach to industrial relations and their disastrous economic policies
119 have made realistic and responsible pay bargaining almost impossible. After
120 encouraging the 'social contract' chaos of 1974-5, they tried to impose
121 responsibility by the prolonged and rigid control of incomes. This policy
122 collapsed last winter as we warned that it would. The Labour government then
123 came full circle with the announcement of yet another 'social contract' with the
124 unions. For five years now, the road to ruin has been paved with such exchanges
125 of promises between the Labour government and the unions.

126 To restore responsible pay bargaining, we must all start by recognising that Britain
127 is a low-paid country because we have steadily become less efficient, less
128 productive, less reliable and less competitive. Under this Government, we have
129 more than doubled our pay but actually produced less in manufacturing industry.
130 It will do yet further harm to go on printing money to pay ourselves more without
131 first earning more. That would lead to even higher prices, fewer jobs and falling
132 living standards.

133 The return to responsibility will not be easy. It requires that people keep more of
134 what they earn; that effort and skill earn larger rewards; and that the State leaves
135 more resources for industry. There should also be more open and informed
136 discussion of the Government's economic objectives (as happens, for example, in
137 Germany and other countries) so that there is wider understanding of the
138 consequences of unrealistic bargaining and industrial action.

139 Pay bargaining in the private sector should be left to the companies and workers
140 concerned. At the end of the day, no one should or can protect them from the
141 results of the agreements they make.

142 Different considerations apply to some extent to the public sector, of whose seven
143 million workers the Government directly employs only a minority. In the great
144 public corporations, pay bargaining should be governed, as in private ones, by
145 what each can afford. There can be no question of subsidising excessive pay deals.

146 Pay bargaining in central and local government, and other services such as health
147 and education, must take place within the limits of what the taxpayer and
148 ratepayer can afford. It is conducted under a variety of arrangements, some of
149 long standing, such as pay research. In consultation with the unions, we will
150 reconcile these with the cash limits used to control public spending, and seek to
151 conclude no-strike agreements in a few essential services. Bargaining must also
152 be put on a sounder economic footing, so that public sector wage settlements take
153 full account of supply and demand and differences between regions, manning
154 levels, job security and pension arrangements.

155

Green paper: Trade union immunities

Cmnd.8128

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1 1. A nation's prosperity rests ultimately on the ability of its people to live and
2 work in harmony with each other. If its industrial relations are marked by conflict
3 rather than cooperation the nation as a whole pays the price of economic stagna-
4 tion. For at least a generation now our industrial relations have failed us because
5 they have inhibited improvements in productivity, acted as a disincentive to in-
6 vestment and discouraged innovation. The results are apparent in our poor indus-
7 trial performance and lower standard of living compared with our major compet-
8 itors overseas.

9
10 2. The incidence of strikes and other forms of industrial action in this country is
11 the most evident manifestation of the inadequacy of our industrial relations, but it
12 is by no means the only one. The persistence of restrictive practices, of outdated
13 working methods and of overmanning have contributed just as powerfully, if
14 more insidiously, to our economic problems. Such practices and the attitudes they
15 embody have stood in the way of the achievement of high productivity, high out-
16 put and high real wages.

17
18 3. The freedom of employees to combine and to withdraw their labour is their ul-
19 timate safeguard against the inherent imbalance of power between the employer
20 and the individual employee. This freedom has come to be accepted as hallmark
21 of a free society. But implicit in that acceptance is the assumption that this free-
22 dom will be used responsibly that industrial action will be taken only with proper
23 regard for the interests of others and of the community as a whole. In times of na-
24 tional emergency, for example, greater restraint is expected - and has been shown
25 - in the use of this essentially disruptive power.

26
27 4. The importance of the freedom to combine to withdraw labour in the face of
28 serious grievances at work is not in question. What is questioned is the readiness
29 to threaten and deploy the strike weapon with apparent disregard for the con-
30 sequences, whether for the future of the enterprises affected, for the jobs and live-
31 lihoods of their employees or for the rest of the community. Many strikes effect-
32 ively repudiate agreements made by those organising them or by their representat-
33 ives and the vast majority are called without reference to senior trade union offi-
34 cials and without their endorsement. All too often the strike or the threat of a
35 strike is a tactic of first instead of last resort. And, when strikes occur, the degree
36 of disruption is sometimes quite disproportionate to the grievance felt. Industrial
37 action is extended deliberately to harm employees who have no interest in the dis-
38 pute and pushed even further to inflict the maximum hardship and inconvenience
39 on the community. Moreover, the mere threat of a strike can in some circumstances
40 be as effective a weapon as a strike itself. The readiness to threaten industrial ac-
41 tion has imposed serious obstacles to necessary change, greater efficiency and im-

42 proved performance in many of our industries. As a result our ability to compete
43 in home and overseas markets has seriously declined.

44

45 5. All this has led to questioning of the scope which the law permits to industrial
46 action and to a wider debate about the role of trade unions and management in
47 our society. These have long been a matter of con controversy. For at least a hun-
48 dred years there has been argument about the acceptable balance of bargaining
49 power between employees and their employers and the duties they and their rep-
50 resentatives owe to the nation. I industrial relations cannot operate fairly and effi-
51 ciently or to the benefit of the nation as a whole if either employers or employees
52 collectively are given pre-dominant power - that is, the capacity effectively to dic-
53 tate the behaviour of others. What the law can achieve in affecting the balance of
54 power must not be over-estimated, but it has always been recognised as a proper
55 role of Parliament to intervene by statute to correct manifestations— whether by
56 employers or employees—of a disequilibriurn of bargaining power.

57

58 6. A rational and informed public debate about the Law and practice of industrial
59 relations is now essential. Such a debate took place in the years following the
60 Donovan Commission report. It must now be resumed. Many of the problems
61 identified then have remained or intensified. Our success as a manufacturing and
62 trading nation depends crucially on the improvement of our industrial relations.

63 7. It is not possible for the debate to be joined without an understanding of the
64 long and often turbulent history of our industrial relations and the way in which
65 the present legal framework has developed. Nor is it possible to ignore the deep
66 emotions which have been aroused in that process and which are still evident.
67 Britain was the first country to face the problems of accommodating the phe-
68 nomenon of trade unions within its legal system Against the background of an un-
69 codified system of law and an unwritten Constitution, the approach adopted was
70 to exempt trade unions from the prohibition of conduct “in restraint of trade” to
71 which many of their activities would otherwise have been liable and to provide
72 them with immunities from legal actions under both the criminal and civil law.
73 The law today still takes this form.

74

75 8. Other countries with different legal traditions and constitutional frameworks
76 have taken a different approach. They have elected instead to give trade unions
77 positive but defined rights. In Britain there is no specific legal right to strike. An
78 employee who takes industrial action in breach of his contract of employment
79 faces the risk of lawful dismissal or other sanctions. But since the 1870s, the law
80 has provided immunity against charges of criminal conspiracy for those who or-
81 ganise industrial action and, since 1906, immunities for individuals and trade uni-
82 ons against being sued in tort. In this way the law gives British trade unions a po-
83 sition for which there is no parallel in other countries. These immunities mean
84 that, in certain circumstances, employers who would otherwise have been able to
85 bring civil proceedings to secure redress against those organising industrial action
86 are prevented from doing so. These immunities protect trade unions against hav-
87 ing their officials imprisoned or penalised in the courts for organising trade union
88 activities, and their funds drained away in civil proceedings.

89

90 9. This method of giving legality to collective industrial action through immunit-
91 ies has been criticised on two general grounds. First, it is argued that it leaves the
92 boundaries of lawful industrial action unclear and consequently more subject to
93 determination in the courts than is desirable. One result of this is that the “rights”
94 of trade unions and their officials have been asserted without the development of
95 corresponding obligations or protection for the individual worker against trade
96 union power. Secondly, it has satisfied neither employers nor trade unions: many
97 employers, particularly if they are not parties to a dispute, are reluctant to accept
98 that they should be deprived of what they see as their normal rights in law to seek
99 redress against damage to their business, while it has made trade unionists defens-
100 ive and suspicious in their attitude to both the legislature and the courts, particu-
101 larly when the courts have had to deal with cases on the borderline of immunity.
102 One of the issues considered in this Green Paper (Chapter 4) is the extent to
103 which a “positive” legal right to take collective industrial action—such as exists
104 in other countries—might avoid or temper these criticisms.

105
106 10. In examining this and other options it must be remembered that the way in
107 which the law on industrial action has developed so far in this country has been
108 characteristic of our industrial relations as a whole. Compared with most other
109 countries there has traditionally been a minimum of legal interference and regula-
110 tion. The conduct of our industrial relations is basically voluntary. It is dependent
111 primarily on managements and trade unions sorting out problems and differences
112 for themselves and developing their own agreed procedures, arrangements and
113 practices, as well as the institutions which embody them. We have no great tradi-
114 tion of legally enforceable agreements as there is, for example, in Sweden—al-
115 though there has been nothing to prevent managements and unions concluding
116 them if they wished. There is no tradition of compulsory arbitration as there is in
117 Australia; no tradition of resorting to the courts or to legally binding arbitration to
118 resolve disputes which arise from collective agreements as there is in the USA.

119
120 11. The Donovan Commission in 1968 described the British system of industrial
121 relations as:
122 “based on voluntarily agreed rules which, as a matter of principle, are not en-
123 forced by law. This is an outstanding characteristic which distinguishes it from
124 the systems of many comparable countries. No trade union, no employer in
125 private industry, no employers’ association, is under any legal obligation to bar-
126 gain collectively; and, exceptions apart, the law does not intervene to enforce
127 such a bargain, or any of its terms. The law has done little to restrict or otherwise
128 to regulate the use of industrial sanctions such as the strike and the lock out, A
129 right to strike has never been formulated in positive terms, but statutes have been
130 enacted to remove obstacles which the common law placed in the way of the use
131 of industrial! sanctions. With very few exceptions. the law prevents no one from
132 joining a trade union, and protects no one against attempts made by others to im-
133 pede the exercise of his freedom of association. The law has never been called
134 upon to help in organising or operating a system of workers’ representation at en-
135 terprise or at plant level In short, it has been the traditional policy of the law as
136 far as possible not to intervene in the system of industrial relations”.(paragraph
137 751)

138 The avoidance of legal intervention in collective bargaining appears to have been
139 pursued as a matter of principle by both employers and trade unions alike. it is
140 clear, for example, that as long ago as the legislation of 1906 trade unions pre-
141 ferred to proceed by way of immunities, rather than accept liability as corporate
142 bodies with consequent legal responsibilities.

143
144 12. However, over the last twenty years the role of the law in industrial relations
145 has been considerably extended. This extension has, in the main, taken the form
146 of new statutory rights for the individual employee and corresponding obligations
147 for his employer. The effect of this has been to create a dual framework of law in
148 industrial relations. The role of the law remains non-interventionist as it affects
149 trade unions, but it has clearly become more interventionist as it affects employ-
150 ers. No obligations have been placed on the the unions to use new procedures es-
151 tablished by law or to adopt them as alternatives to industrial action, but many ad-
152 ditional obligations have been placed on employers. Partly as a result of this,
153 there has developed a widespread public feeling, not least among trade union
154 members, that trade unions have too few obligations and too much power. This
155 has been coupled with a growing concern over the impact on the community of
156 unregulated industrial action. It has brought into focus the issue of the role of the
157 law in restraining excesses and abuses of industrial power and it has led to re-
158 newed questioning of the legal framework within which employers and unions
159 operate.

160
161 13. What is the role of the law in improving industrial relations 7 Where a society
162 has a tradition of legal regulation in industrial relations—as in West Germany—
163 the law has a better chance, over the years. of reinforcing and encouraging re-
164 sponsible behaviour on both sides. But in Britain, where there is a different tradi-
165 tion, attempts to secure reform by means of legal restraint on trade union power
166 have had to contend with obstructive and uncooperative attitudes. if the law is to
167 be respected and to play a useful role in changing behaviour these attitudes have
168 to be overcome. The law by itself cannot change such attitudes overnight. The In-
169 dustrial Relations Act 1971 was frustrated both because trade unions were able to
170 build a concerted campaign of opposition to it and because employers did not
171 generally see it as in their immediate interests to make use of its provisions. The
172 contribution which changes in the law can make must be seen in the context of
173 our still predominantly voluntary system and of the far reaching changes in the
174 nature of trade union power, of industrial action and of the labour market over the
175 last two decades and more. In particular, proposals for changing the law which
176 are designed to influence the behaviour of trade unions as formally organised in-
177 stitutions, but which ignore the reality of shop floor power and the current
178 propensity for unofficial action. are unlikely to be effective at either level.

179
165 14. The uncertain legal status of trade unions in their formative years s has inevit-
166 ably influenced their attitudes to the law. Trade unions came into existence in the
167 nineteenth century despite the law and not under its protection. They developed
168 voluntarily as workers came together to use their collective strength to offset the
169 power of the employer to hire and fire and to provide for their members in times
170 of need, That collective power has its expression in the threat of withdrawal of la-

171 bour. Without it trade unions in Britain would have no effective sanction against
172 employer is ultimately that power—not any legally enforceable right to be in-
173 formed. consulted or involved in decision making—which trade union leaders
174 bring to the negotiating table. It is a power which, in the end stems from the shop-
175 floor, from the members.

176
177 15. A shift of power has been taking place in the trade union movement from the
178 centre to the shopfloor, from full-time officials of the unions the shop stewards
179 drawn from those among whom they work. it is reflected in the tendency for plen-
180 ary power to call industrial action, negotiate and settle to be seized by the shop-
181 floor or delegated to it. In other countries such as the USA, Sweden and West
182 Germany, union leaders at national level have substantive authority. This is appar-
183 ent, for example. in their capacity to negotiate effective long term, legally bind-
184 ing, collective agreements. But, in Britain, it is the more active union members -
185 and their lay shopfloor leaders—who have increasingly taken the head in collect-
186 ive bargaining. ‘The development of this informal system of management/trade
187 union relationships alongside the formal system was clearly identified by the
188 Donovan Commission- Its effect in the years since 1968 has been to weaken the
189 authority of many large trade unions and to make the task of their leaders and of
190 the TUC more difficult. It has been associated with an increase in unofficial in-
191 dustrial action to the extent that some 90 per cent of strikes are now unofficial. It
192 has been accentuated by the impact of technological change and the increased in-
193 terdependence of firms and industries, giving to small groups on the shopfloor —
194 such as computer operators-enormous disruptive power.

195
193 16. The Donovan Commission saw the solution to these problems in the integra-
194 tion of the formal system of industrial relations with the informal The last decade
195 has seen some increase in structured plant bargaining but the benefits the
196 Donovan Commission envisaged flowing from this in terms of improved proced-
197 ures and a reduction in industrial conflict have not been achieved. The problems
198 remain. Even within the “formal” system a single employer in Britain may still
199 have to negotiate with as many as twenty different unions. often with competing
200 and incompatible objectives. and he may be unable to establish common bargain-
201 ing arrangements for employees whose work is closely linked. The process of
202 trade union amalgamation has been relatively slow and piecemeal and not always
203 directed towards securing improved collective bargaining arrangements. Those
204 changes in trade union structure which have taken place have occurred in re-
205 sponse to organic developments in industry. such as the growth of white collar
206 and public service union, or to alterations in the balance between groups within
207 particular trade union. such as the development of shop stewards’ combines as a
208 result of the growth of plant bargaining. But these changes in individual trade uni-
209 on have not always been reflected in the structure of the TUC and sometimes they
210 have created direct conflict between local and national leaders. It can be argued
211 that unless the trade union movement comes to more rational structures for the
212 conduct of collective bargaining. it cannot best serve the interests of its members
213 or contribute to improved economic performance and the benefits this would
214 preside to the community as a whole.

215

216 17. Whilst the old problems of our industrial relations remain and indeed have
217 been intensified by developments in the years since the Donovan Commission,
218 new pressures from outside have put a more urgent emphasis still on the search
219 for solutions. Industry and jobs are changing at an ever faster rate under the im-
220 pact of increasingly sophisticated technology. New jobs are arising in the service
221 sector rather than in manufacturing and in white collar rather than blue collar oc-
222 cupations: and there is a growing need for new skills and for a greater readiness
223 to acquire them, to change jobs and to retrain in the course of a working life
224 These developments confront new generations whose attitudes are themselves
225 evolving. Our workforce is now generally better educated than before, more
226 highly unionised and less deferential, both to management and trade union lead-
227 ers.

228

229 18. These developments have put a great strain on our industrial relations. There
230 is a pressing need for both trade union and management to develop a capacity, to
231 respond to change. But this is frustrated because our industrial relations are
232 shackled by suspicion and deeply resistant to change.

233

234 19. It is against this perspective that the role of the law has to be assessed.
235 Changes in the law can influence attitudes and behaviour over time. The Employ-
236 ment Act 1980 provided new protection against the identified, worst abuses. But
237 good industrial relations cannot simply be legislated into existence. Reform must
238 also come from within: from trade union and employers adapting their institutions
239 and practices to the social and economic pressures for change.

240

241 20. For the trade union an essential element in this process must be to ensure that
242 they are fully representative of their members and responsive to their wishes and
243 interests. It is still rare for union to consult their members directly on major de-
244 cisions which affect them deeply. In only a few unions is the leadership elected by
245 postal ballot of all the members. In some cases, once elected, national officials are
246 not required to submit themselves for re-election. The internal authority of trade
247 union over their members will always be inadequate if their leaders are felt to be
248 out of touch with those they represent and without proper democratic procedures
249 there will inevitably be suspicious that trade union sometimes pursue policies
250 which the majority of their members do not support. If trade union are to restore
251 their authority and regain or sustain the confidence of their members they must be
252 fully democratic both in the way they take critical decisions and in the method of
253 electing their officials. This means, for example, making greater use of postal bal-
254 lots to consult the membership on such questions as the calling of industrial ac-
255 tion (see Chapter I Section F) and to elect (and re-elect) their leaders.

256 Trade unions can no longer reasonably claim that they are inhibited from holding
257 postal ballots by virtue of expense. Under the Employment Act public funds are
258 now available for postal ballots for union elections and votes on other important
259 issues.

260

261 21. Employers share the responsibility for the present state of our industrial rela-
262 tions. Many of the inadequacies of our present system and the barriers to greater
263 productivity and efficiency are the result of employer attitudes and practices

264 which. in their way, are just as inflexible and outdated as the trade union practices
265 described in earlier paragraphs. The tendency of employers, particularly in times
266 of full employment. to look for the short-term solutions in relations with their em-
267 ployees and trade union officials without regard to the long-term consequences
268 has stored up a legacy of inefficiency and restrictive practices from which we are
269 now suffering.

270

271 22. Employers have over the years paid too little attention to their industrial rela-
272 tions policies. They have been reluctant in their collective bargaining arrange-
273 ments to enter into precise or legal commitments as much as have trade union.
274 They have been disinclined to seek legally enforceable agreements, preferring in
275 general imprecise arrangements, so unclear and ambiguous in some cases that to
276 have translated them into legally binding agreements would have been very diffi-
277 cult.

278

279 23. Employers have also contributed to the growth in authority of shopfloor rep-
280 resentatives. The easy accessibility of shop stewards and local lay officers com-
281 pared with the frequently overworked, full-time officials has proved attractive to
282 management seeking a rapid solution to “wildcat” action: they have often been
283 ready to enter into negotiations with “unofficial” elements to the detriment of the
284 authority of more senior officials.

285

286 24. Above all, employers have shown too little willingness to involve employees
287 and their representatives in policies and decisions which affect their working
288 lives. As a result employees, particularly in large companies. feel remote from the
289 centre of decision making in their firm and powerless to influence the running of
290 their enterprise. In turn this makes them distrustful of changes in their working
291 practices and of the introduction of new techniques. The failure of many manage-
292 ments to adopt coherent and consistent policies to involve and communicate with
293 employees, or to show sufficient sensitivity towards the legitimate hopes and
294 fears of their workforce, continues to make the task of responsible trade union
295 leaders more difficult and nourishes the distrust and defensiveness occasioned by
296 former failures.

297

298 25. The responsibility for initiating changes in this area clearly rests with man-
299 agers It is not simply a matter of developing new machinery for involving em-
300 ployees or increasing the flow of information about the company but a readiness
301 to extend the range of matters on which they are prepared to consult and to take
302 their employees into their confidence. Unions in their turn must be ready to meet
303 managements half way and respond positively to their initiatives.

304

305 If consultation comes too late—only when there is bad news or an unpopular
306 decision to impart—the results will inevitably be negative and discouraging.
307 The essence of employee involvement lies in involving employees at the points at
308 which they wish to be involved and where they have a specific and direct interest
309 in being involved. To be successful it must fit the individual circumstance and the
310 perceived needs of both employer and employees. It is therefore best developed
311 voluntarily and not imposed by legislation. it must be seen to be effective and rel-

312 evant. it must not be limited to minor issues and not seen as a substitute for col-
313 lective bargaining to be pursued with some unrealistic idea of removing all con-
314 flict of interest in industry. If our industrial relations are to improve, managements
315 and unions in industry must genuinely desire cooperation and must work to
316 achieve it. That is the key in a modern industrial society to higher productivity,
317 real competitiveness, greater profits and greater reward for employees.

318
319 27 It is within the enterprise that a real improvement is most necessary. We need
320 effective management prepared to be firm and to give a lead, but which is under-
321 standing and sensitive to the views, interests and aspirations of their employees,
322 We need trade unions who are able to defend their members' interests robustly but
323 who recognise that job security and increased rewards can only come from an ef-
324 ficient industry competing in world markets.

325
326 28. But there are also issues of a wider and more fundamental importance for the
327 future of our society which need to be tackled if workable solutions to the de-
328 tailed problem discussed in this Green Paper are to be found. As the Donovan
329 Commission pointed out, the role of law has to be seen as one factor only in an
330 evolutionary process which is conditioned also by institutions, conventions and
331 understandings, indeed, all discussion of the law must inevitably involve judge-
332 ments—both implicit and explicit— about the wider context: in particular, about
333 the duties which trade unions and employers owe to the community as a whole.
334 Are they merely pressure groups with obligations only to their own members and
335 no duty to take a wider view? Or have they already, by virtue of a very long in-
336 formal relationship with the state and their importance in the running of a com-
337 plex model of economy, become bodies of a different type whose influence and
338 concomitant duties have, however not yet been properly defined?

339
340 29. The continuing absence of a well-defined, stable and publicly accepted rela-
341 tionship between trade unions, employers' organisations and the Government has
342 contributed to damaging dissension both in industrial relations and more widely.
343 Both trade unions and employers' associations have had more or less continuing
344 right of access to Ministers and departments of state. Unions and employers have
345 also had a balanced representation on Royal Commissions and other Committees
346 of Inquiry. The National Economic Development Council (NEDC) has been es-
347 tablished and maintained as a permanent forum in which both groups can voice
348 their concerns on issues of the day.

349
350 30. The effectiveness of this practice, however, as an aid to the good government
351 of the nation has been limited. It has not led to a meeting of minds on important
352 issues. Rather, it has led to fresh arguments with a strong emotional content about
353 what sort of relationship is "necessary" or "legitimate" for these purposes. There
354 has been little evidence that the involvement of the leaders of employers' and
355 trade union organisations in national affairs has led to greater understanding of
356 the issues amongst their members, whether in the boardroom or at shopfloor
357 level. Here again, we have failed where other nations have succeeded in establish-
358 ing stable working relationships which both recognise the need for change and
359 smooth its path. At no time have we in Britain needed to rebuild from scratch

360 work people's and employers' organisations as had to be done in Germany in the
361 late 1940s.

362

363 31. The sensible running of industry and the wider interests of the community
364 have frequently been frustrated by the incapacity of either trade unions or em-
365 ployer organisations to enter into agreements or undertakings commensurate with
366 the influence they have claimed to possess. These problems cannot be resolved
367 simply or quickly. It can be argued that for that reason they should not be dis-
368 cussed at all; that they confuse issues which can better be dealt with in a pragmat-
369 ic way; or that they create political friction which should be avoided. On the other
370 hand, it is argued that there is now an opportunity to clarify the essential differ-
371 ences which distinguish the functions, duties and rights of these bodies from
372 those of political parties, Parliament and the Government and to set out what the
373 relationship between each of them should be.

374

375 32. The absence of reasoned debate leading to a wider understanding of common
376 problems seriously hampers progress. If it were possible to establish clear and ac-
377 ceptable relationships between these dissimilar bodies as a working understand-
378 ing, the incessant flexing of industrial muscle to impress Government might be
379 replaced by more constructive activity. The realisation of such a working under-
380 standing, freely entered into for mutual advantage and for the greater good of the
381 community, would require a high degree of responsibility and education. It is an
382 area where Government could be of tangible help, though not one where it could
383 —or should—seek to impose solutions. Questions of the day already find a focus
384 in the NEDC. This practice could be expanded with advantage.

385

386 33. The purpose of this Green Paper is to prompt a wide and informed debate on
387 the law concerning industrial action and on the role in modern life of trade uni-
388 ons and employers and their duties and obligations. The recognition of the crucial
389 need to make progress in building a better climate for improvements in industrial
390 relations with help to produce a fuller and more considered debate on all the is-
391 sues involved than has taken place for many years. This paper is designed to
392 provide information and ideas which can stimulate that debate. Chapter 2 de-
393 scribes how the present law on immunities has developed since the nineteenth
394 century.

395 Chapter 3 discusses a wide range of proposals which have been put forward for
396 amending the existing system of immunities. Chapter 4 examines the case for and
397 the feasibility of moving to a new legal framework based on "positive rights". But
398 discussion of the law naturally involves consideration of the wider questions
399 raised in the concluding paragraphs of this introductory Chapter, about relations
400 between trade unions and employer organisations and between both these groups
401 and Government.

Speech to 1922 Committee ("the enemy within") 1984 Jul 19 Th

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- 1 (1) Thatcher Archive: speaking notes:
- 2 Rough notes by MT. [?] indicates illegible word. [? words] indicates uncertain
- 3 words.
- 4 Year ago — we spoke — victory
- 5 — Euro-elections
- 6 Could not have foreseen
- 7 Coal strike. 19th week.
- 8 without a ballot
- 9 $\frac{1}{3}$; miners working
- 10 Violence & intimidation we have witnessed.
- 11 Best pay, highest investment
- 12 redundancy payment far greater than that of most taxpayers who have to
- 13 finance^[fo 1]

14 p2
15 Stand firm.
16 Militancy must not win.
17 If that was Thatcher's Law
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24 Strikes — lose business
25 — lose custom
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28 its own from that attack — let alone other unions?
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39 Strikes in nationalised industries
40 Privatisation programme
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43 Steel production last week was as great as before strike.[fo 4]
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48 Brave — Nos. — equipment well [? deployed][fo 5]
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50 Apart from
51 Dock — all distance
52 themselves from N.U.M.
53 5 New T.U. Bill will deprive unions of immunity without secret ballot
54 6 Some very efficient industries
55 &/&/
56 Since Office
57 Enemy without — beaten him
58 & strong in defence
59 Enemy within —[fo 6] p8
60 Miners' leaders
61 Liverpool & some local authorities
62 — just as dangerous in a way more difficult to fight
63 But just as dangerous to liberty
64 Scar across the face of our country
65 ill motivated
66 ill intentioned
67 politically inspired[fo 7] p9. Following quotations typed.
68 There is no week, nor day, nor hour when tyranny may not enter upon this country
69 if the people lose their supreme confidence in themselves and lose their roughness
70 and spirit of defiance. Tyranny may always enter — there is no charm or bar
71 against it. The only bar against it is a large resolute breed of men.
72 WALT WHITMAN
73 Ecclesiasticus: Be not made a beggar by banqueting upon borrowing[fo 8] p9a.
74 Rough notes by MT.
75 92%; in jobs
76 Surely they can look after the 8%;
77 When things can't get any worse they will.
78 When all else fails — read the instructions[fo 9] p10
79 Immediate Problem
80 Transcends all others
81 Sterling — [?Economists]
82 Interest rates.

83 RPI[fo 10] p11
84 5 pts.
85 N.I.S.1 Cut cost of business
86 N.I.S.
87 Rates
88 2 the tax incentive
89 enterprise Personal
90 & efficient [?]
91 management. [?]
92 3 New technology — [? increase in]
93 competition — Privatisation
94 [? proper]
95 4 [? Xtensive] [Training] Y.T.S.
96 Tech [?]Inf. Tech.
97 5 Trade Unn Reform
98 Budget for a Parliament.[fo 11] p12
99 Public Xpenditure &/ Personal Taxation
100 Fought & won
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102 Jobs —U.S. — Japan
103 Pub spending lower
104 Wages — output
105 Flexible labour market
106 Atmosphere which applaudssuccess.
107 leads to enterprise[fo 12] p13
108 Welfare
109 CPRS —Using leaks — not to help open discussion but to destroy it.
110 Nurses— Honour Pay Review
111 Increases in medical staff
112 Decreases on non-medical staff.
113 Increased services[fo 13] p14
114 E.E.C.
115 Strasbourg
116 Underestimate difficulties which lie ahead but don't be submerged by them.

117 Xpenditure —Delors
118 Enlargement —Spain — Portugal
119 [? Med. products]
120 Continuing rebate[fo 14] p15
121 E&/W.
122 Keep the American&/Anglo
123 — bright
124 Generous —
125 Too little appreciated
126 We thank them —
127 Once they came to Europe to conclude wars
128 Now to prevent wars
129 We must understand their problems too —[fo 15] p16
130 Politics — not an essay in public relations
131 Decisions right.
132 Thank you — Mr. du Cann
133 & executive
134 — [John Wakeham] Chief Whip —
135 life intolerable before '[? bisques]' introduced
136 — recognition of long hours of their Lordships
137 hope their [? aberrations] will not become a habit[fo 16] p17
138 — valuable work of this whole committee — now a strong effective
139 Parliamentary Party
140 44 measures — Royal [?]
141 [?] [?in] [?] [?] [?] Bill.
142 [? very long Crime] Bill.
143 — thanks to families for their support.
144 May have to return
145 good recess ready for whatever the next year brings.
146 (2) *The Times*, 20 July 1984

147 **Thatcher Makes Falklands Link**

148 **Attack on ‘Enemy Within’**

149 The Prime Minister last night drew a parallel between the Falklands War and the
150 dispute in the mining industry. Speaking at a private meeting of the 1922
151 Committee of Conservative backbench MPs at Westminster, Mrs Thatcher said
152 that at the time of the conflict they had had to fight the enemy without; but the
153 enemy within, much more difficult to fight, was just as dangerous to liberty.

154 Of the tactics of the miners' leader, she said that the country was witnessing an
155 attempt to circumvent democracy. The violence and intimidation were a scar
156 across the country's face.

157 She gave the backbenchers the impression that she was keenly aware of the
158 importance of reaching a settlement in the docks so that the Government could
159 give its full attention to the miners' dispute. She said that, but for the scenes of
160 violence, the dispute in the mines had made little impact in its 19 weeks. By
161 contrast, the effect of the docks strike had been severe and immediate.

162 She surprised and pleased some Conservatives by saying that, once the disputes
163 were resolved, the Government should seek a good working relationship with the
164 trade unions. She did not enlarge on this and her meaning was not plain.

165 On the miners, Mrs Thatcher was unbending. She said that the message she was
166 receiving from all quarters was that militancy must not win.

167 She compared the industrial scene with the winter of discontent in 1978-79, the
168 last year of the Government led by Mr James Callaghan, but said that the
169 difference then was that Labour had given in and had become the puppet of the
170 unions.

171 She praised what she described as the act of daily courage by miners who were
172 going to work, and suggested that the spectacle of miners going to work to secure
173 their rights represented an astonishing advance brought about by five years of
174 Conservative government.

175 Mrs Thatcher was warmly received, but not all who heard her were impressed by
176 her 30-minute speech. Some thought it brave, others described it as strident. All
177 agreed that its tone was uncompromising.

178 Mrs Thatcher said she hoped that MPs would not find themselves recalled from
179 their summer recess, which start on August 1, for the proclamation of a state of
180 emergency, but she gave the impression that such a development would not
181 surprise her.

182 End of *The Times* article.

183

Interview for *Yorkshire Post* 1984 Sep 26 We

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1 I BLAME LEADERS FOR PIT VIOLENCE

2 **MRS. THATCHER yesterday placed blame for violence on the pit picket**
3 **lines squarely at the door of the leadership of the National Union of**
4 **Mineworkers.**

5 In an interview at the end of a day in Yorkshire, the Prime Minister said:

6 "It is no earthly good coming out with ritual condemnations of violence and then
7 trying to say the police are violent.

8 "People don't believe it. Stop looking at the words. We saw words, words at the
9 TUC.

10 "We saw the violence stopped there which indicates that the NUM leaders can
11 stop it. Don't look at the words. Look at what has happened on the picket lines
12 since.

13 "Look at the ball bearings one inch in diameter that have been catapulted at the
14 police.

15 "I looked this morning at what had been found in fields. They had tried to get
16 under the feet of police horses with upstanding nails, with the sharp end of the nail
17 to get under the horses' feet.

18 "That is what the NUM leadership is doing. That is what is happening on the
19 picket line. "I cannot think it happens by accident. I cannot think that all that
20 number of pickets turn up at 4 a.m. or 6 a.m. by accident. But that is what is
21 actually happening.

22 "The TUC must be very worried. Many people who for years have solidly

23 supported Labour must be worried about it. It is not what they regard as the
24 Labour party. But it is what is happening.

25 "And it is the trade unions who support the Labour party, because the Labour
26 party is the political wing of the trade union movement; that is how historically it
27 was born in this country.

28 "And that is why it is difficult for Labour. They are the political wing of the trade
29 union movement.

30 "At the moment the main striking union is causing violence against its own
31 members, against the police, against people whose only crime is they want to
32 work to keep their wives and children.

33 "The mob violence we are seeing is a blot on Britain's reputation. It is doing
34 immense harm. You think that what we see on television shocks us, but they are
35 seeing it the world over. The fantastic reputation of Britain which has been built
36 up over the years as fair, honourable and law-abiding, is suffering badly.

37 "The [Nicholas Edwards] Secretary for Wales now is going to Japan to try to get
38 investment. They are seeing these things on the television screen and it is not
39 going to help either investment in Britain or orders for Britain.

40 "It is doing immense harm to jobs, and the idea of mob violence and the bullyboy
41 strong arm tactics in Britain is not what one expects of Britain. It is horrifying us.

42 "But I think, I must say, that the police are handling it superbly. They are doing
43 their job and seeing that anyone who wanted to go to work shall be got to work."

44 With an apparently closer liaison between Mr. Scargill's miners and the TUC, and
45 a power industry engineering leader predicting power cuts within eight weeks,
46 what sort of winter did she see in store?

47 "I wonder how many times I have heard the same thing during the last six months
48—that in eight weeks, or however many weeks, there will be power cuts.

49 "If I had been talking to you a year ago and said to you that within a year there
50 would be a coal strike and after six months there will be no power cuts, would you
51 have believed me?"

52 If some trade unionists—a small number of trade unionists—were trying to stop
53 coal reaching the power stations, then they were attempting to destroy the jobs of
54 their own members.

55 "Trade unionists who do this are saying three things:

56 ONE—We support mob violence even against trade unionists. We do not believe
57 in the rule of law—we believe in mob violence.

58 TWO—We don't believe that ordinary trade unionists should have a say in the
59 decision to strike.

60 THREE—We don't care about the consequences of what we are about to do to our
61 own members. We don't care if they lose their own jobs.

62 "I can't believe that trade unions want to do that, but if they do I cannot see why
63 people want to belong to a trade union."

64 Also at stake was the good name of trade unionism.

65 "There must be enough trade union members who care about that.

66 "It's not for them to turn round to me and say you do something about
67 unemployment. What they are doing is destroying jobs faster than anything else.

68 "The railwaymen normally move most of the coal. They are only moving a small
69 part of the coal at the moment, so those railwaymen whose jobs is to move coal,
70 and who have been asked by their trade unions not to do it, are being made, by
71 their trade union leaders, to suffer to the extent of £20 or £30 a week. They have
72 geared their standard of living to that sort of wage. Is that the function of a trade
73 union—to lower the standard of living of its members.

74 "They attempted to close down steelworks. Is it the function of a trade union to
75 say: 'All right, we are going to support mob violence, close down the steelworks
76 and lose all our jobs in steel?'"

77 The [Nigel Lawson] Chancellor had told the International Monetary Fund that
78 Britain's growth rate had slowed down. What did the Prime Minister think:

79 "We expected three per cent. growth. The forecast is now down to two per cent.
80 But we are getting two per cent. growth even with a miners' strike. Just think of
81 the growth we should have had if the miners had not gone on strike.

82 "It is not only the miners; it is the industries that supply the miners who are
83 affected. It is not only the direct effects of the strike; it is the orders that would
84 have come to Britain from people who thought that at last Britain was pulling out
85 of bad industrial relations.

86 "If there is a feeling that people wish to kill their own livelihoods I am doing
87 everything I can to stop them.

88 "Who is, in fact, responsible for cutting down growth and cutting down jobs and
89 cutting down prospects and cutting down orders and cutting down investment in
90 this country?

91 "Those who are prepared to sacrifice everyone else's job and who know full[fo 1]
92 well they will be actively sacrificing far more of their own as well.

93 "Our unit labour costs have gone up by more than anyone elses. That is bad. The
94 United States were down, the Japanese were stable, Germany was up about two
95 per cent. and we are up about four per cent. That is bad.

96 "I think prices and incomes policies did immense harm to this country. They got
97 people thinking in terms of wages and salaries only—I am entitled to a certain
98 income regardless. Now, no-one is entitled to a certain income regardless.

99 "We have to earn it and if we don't, we can't have it.

100 "If we were half as obsessed with getting maximum output as we have been with
101 getting maximum income, we would have better output and better income.

102 "Throughout the last five years, average earnings in this country have gone ahead
103 faster than prices. In other words we have had an increase in real terms. But we
104 have had very little growth, so the extra growth that we have had has gone into an
105 increasing standard of living for those in work at the expense of the unemployed.

106 "I am constantly saying that and no one takes any notice because it does not come
107 home to them."

108 Mrs. Thatcher was not in favour of action to protect the pound against the dollar.

109 "You cannot intervene for long against the market," she said. "You might just
110 intervene for a day. That is to say if everyone is selling Deutchmarks, and a lot of
111 people who hold Deutchmarks are selling Deutchmarks, and not enough people
112 are selling dollars, the Deutchmark goes down and the dollar goes up.

113 "Then the bank comes in and says: 'We are going to buy Deutchmarks'. But they
114 have got to buy them with dollars.

115 "The point is you can intervene for a day, a day and a half, or two days. And then
116 what happens? Things go back to what they were before because the speculators
117 are using the intervention."

118 Mrs. Thatcher was not "fussed" about turbulent priests. Of the [David Jenkins]
119 Bishop of Durham's comments on the strike, she said:

120 "I really don't get so fussed about what people say. I turn round and look at the
121 facts and then try to make the facts tell the story, as Peter Walker indicated in his
122 letter to the Bishop of Durham.

123 "For every day we have been in government, £2m. has been invested in new coal
124 mines.

125 "Because the miners quite rightly regard themselves as among the top paid of
126 people working in industry, they get about 25 per cent. above the average
127 industrial wage which is a higher differential than under any previous
128 government.

129 "You have to change—otherwise we would all be in a museum society and we
130 could not simply have said you must go and make those steam locomotives
131 forever that I saw this morning. So it is in coal. You have to change from old pits
132 to new ones.

133 "Some people would otherwise be hurt or have to lose their jobs. So how do you
134 deal with it? With the most generous redundancy scheme ever offered.

135 "A miner of 49 who has spent his life in the industry gets £33,000; at age 50 we
136 felt we needed to change it because people want a combination of capital and
137 income—so he gets £20,000, plus £78 every week; £20,000 invested at ten per
138 cent. gives a return of £2,000 a year, which is nearly £40 a week added to £78.

139 "He has got his capital intact and got a reasonable income.

140 "These are the facts. The fact is that these redundancy terms are so good that
141 people queue up to take them. There has not been a single, compulsory
142 redundancy.

143 "These are the facts and I think that from the feeling that comes to us—we are
144 constantly in touch—a lot of people after this will apply for redundancy because
145 they want out.

146 "What some of them have gone through, wholly against their wishes, wholly
147 against everything within them, means that a lot will apply for redundancy. They

148 want out.

149 "The working miners have been magnificent. There are many many miners on
150 strike who would like to go back to work. There are others who don't want to go
151 on the picket lines but are intimidated to do so and there is a small group of
152 bullyboys who do the stone throwing, the catapulting, the dropping of stones from
153 bridges.

154 "There will be quite a lot of people who want to get out who will want to take that
155 redundancy even if a pit is not closing."

156 After her day in Yorkshire, the Prime Minister summed up the situation in the
157 coalfield like this:

158 "What we have seen in Yorkshire is not Yorkshire at all. The sooner it gets rid of
159 that blot on its reputation the better. It is not Yorkshire at all."

160 The Prime Minister hinted that there could be more aid for the North East.

161 "I am constantly thinking about how to get more to the North East," she said.

162 "So many people talk about Wales, Scotland and Merseyside. But there are people
163 saying constantly—'Look, you have got the North East'.

164 "Shipbuilding is going down because we are not able to compete with Japan and
165 South Korea.

166 "So we have to watch that very carefully, because you have your traditional
167 shipbuilding, heavy engineering, coal and steel in the North East.

168 "I can only tell you we took out some figures of how all the grants that we offer
169 nationwide—the ones for starting up small businesses, the ones for innovation, the
170 enterprise alliance scheme for people who are self-starters—and you will find that
171 the take-up of available grants in the North East is not good.

172 "I was enormously pleased that Nissan decided to go there because I knew it
173 would raise the morale of the area.

174 "But one of the things Japan hesitated about was the history of this country's
175 industrial relations."

176 Before the serious business of the day, Mrs. Thatcher enjoyed herself playing
177 trains at the National Railway Museum.

178 She waved a green flag to signal a full scale replica of Rocket to come steaming
179 into the museum, and then climbed onto the footplate.

180 Her first reference to the strike came when she glanced into the locomotive's
181 tender, and said to the driver, Mr. John Bellwood: "I see you have got some."

182 She looked over a huge locomotive which Britain had sold to the Chinese before
183 the last war, and who had returned it as a gift for the museum. "It cost them
184 £25,000 to buy, and us £26,000 in freight charges to bring it back," she said.

185 While at the museum, the Prime Minister met the chairman of British Rail, Mr.
186 Bob Reid, who gave her a private briefing on the £306m. electrification of the
187 East Coast main line.

188 After lunch, the Prime Minister went to York Minster to see the repair work on the
189 fire damaged south transept. She was clearly impressed. "The great thing about
190 this country is that when we have a disaster everyone forgets everything else and
191 gets on with it.[fo 2]

192 Mrs. Thatcher climbed more than 100 stone steps and arrived slightly breathless at
193 the top of the 70ft. high scaffolding to see the fire damaged stonework for herself.
194 She firmly discounted suggestions that the fire had been an Act of God.

195 "The laws of physics were fixed at the beginning of time," she said. "It is up to us
196 to try and rebuild, and the way the work is bringing people together is pulling
197 something positive out of the tragedy."
198

HOW THE MINERS ON STRIKE HAVE BEEN MISLED...

3. ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.

The sad thing is that this strike is totally unnecessary.

To get them out on strike, our miners have been deliberately misled by their leaders.

They have been told their industry is under threat.

That is not what the facts show.

Investment

For the last five years, the Government has been investing an average of £2 million a day in the future of the industry.

That's more than is being invested in coal by the rest of the countries in the EEC put together!

Wages

Average wage earnings for face workers will be almost £186 a week when the present offer has been accepted. That's 28 per cent higher than the average earnings in the manufacturing industry - and it will keep the miners top of the earnings league for industrial workers.

Redundancies

Over the past three years, not a single miner has been forced into redundancy who didn't want to go.

Current redundancy terms are the most generous in Western Europe. They offer lump sums of up to £35,000.

This year, 20,000 redundancies have

been asked for. There is every reason to believe that, like last year, they will all be voluntary. Not a single miner is "being thrown on the scrap-heap". Not a single miner who wants to stay in the industry is being asked to go.

Closures

The Coal Board has asked for four million tonnes of our most expensive coal - coal that no-one is buying - to be taken out of production.

This is exactly in line with the 1974 Plan for Coal, agreed between the Coal Board, the mining unions and the Government. The Final Tripartite Report on the Plan for Coal said in paragraph 27: "inevitably some pits will have to close as their useful economic reserves of coal are depleted".

Plan for Coal also envisaged that between three and four million tonnes of capacity would be closed each year through exhaustion and exceptional mining difficulties.

Yet an average of only about half that amount has been closed since then. Just 12 per cent of our production is directly costing more than £275 million a year to support.

By closing our most expensive pits, we can get the average price of our coal down. And, by doing so, get the sales of our coal

up - for the first time in many years.

This is what the Coal Board wants to do.

Heavy investment means that we are building 42 million tonnes of new capacity. Coal that can be produced at costs low enough to find customers.

How can we operate this new capacity when we still have pits working in which coal is being produced at around £96 a tonne?

How can that be justified?

Yet that is what this strike is about.

The strike is costing millions of pounds - which will push the price of coal up, making it even harder to sell.

It is frightening away new customers.

And, if it continues much longer, the strike is threatening up to 30 good pits with closure for ever.

This strike - not the Coal Board - could butcher the industry.

That's why it is so important that this strike ends soon.

It was called by the miners' leaders. It now needs to be called off by the miners themselves.

NCB

One in a series issued
by the National Coal Board.

HOW THE MINERS ON STRIKE HAVE BEEN MISLED...

4. ABOUT THE PLAN FOR COAL.

Miners who are on strike are angry. And it's easy to understand why.

They are angry because of what they have been told by their leaders.

But have they been told the truth?

The sad thing is that this strike is totally unnecessary.

To get them out on strike, our miners have been deliberately misled by their leaders. Causing both bitterness and hardship among miners.

If it goes on long enough, the strike threatens up to 30 good pits with permanent closure. And it could cost not only miners, but also steel workers and railwaymen jobs that should not be lost.

It will drive away future coal customers.

It will make coal more difficult to sell.

Surely this isn't what our miners want.

That's why, day by day, the Coal Board is publishing the facts. Facts that have been buried by the emotion, and the propaganda of the strike.

Has Plan for Coal's investment been honoured?

Time and time again, the miners' leaders have accused the Coal Board of not honouring the Plan for Coal.

The Plan for Coal, drawn up in 1974 between the NCB, the mining unions and

the Government, hoped for £4.3 thousand million to be invested in the coal industry between 1974 and 1985.

So far, £6.5 thousand million has been invested. That's £2 billion, or 50 per cent more than envisaged. (All figures are expressed in today's money).

Is Plan for Coal's production target being achieved?

Because Plan for Coal did not predict the effects of the fall in energy consumption, the forecast for coal demand in 1985 was about 20 million tonnes more than we now estimate will be used. But, in percentage terms, the Plan hoped that by 1985, coal would be providing a third of the nation's energy needs. Currently, we have a slightly better share of the market than forecast.

Is the industry being modernised - as hoped for by Plan for Coal?

Plan for Coal looked for 42 million tonnes of new capacity by 1985. All this capacity is now completed or under construction.

Plan for Coal expected that the new low-cost capacity would replace the worst, most uneconomic capacity.

Yet the miners' leaders refuse to recognise this.

The Final Tri-partite Report on the Plan for Coal said in paragraph 27:

"inevitably some pits will have to close as their useful economic reserves of coal are depleted".

The Plan for Coal envisaged that between three and four million tonnes of capacity would be closed each year. Yet the average has been only about half that amount.

Since 1974, only 80 pits have closed. Just 12 per cent of our production is now directly costing more than £275 million a year to support. This is money that should be going into modernising our better pits - as Plan for Coal intended it would.

Britain is the only country in Western Europe that is investing so heavily in the future of coal.

The British coal industry has excellent prospects.

This strike - not the Coal Board - could butcher the industry.

That's why it is so important that this strike ends soon.

It was called by the miners' leaders. It now needs to be called off by the miners themselves.

NCB

One in a series issued
by the National Coal Board.

GREEN PAPER "REMOVING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT" 1989 – Cm 655

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Since 1979 the Government have given high priority to a programme of step-by-step reform of industrial relations and trade union law, a major purpose of which has been to remove unnecessary barriers to jobs. Before 1979 poor industrial relations was a major cause of job losses. Since then, employers have been given new freedoms which have enabled them to manage their businesses more efficiently and productively. Trade union members have been given the freedom to decide for themselves whether or not they wish to take part in industrial action. *Figure 1* sets out the major rights, freedoms and protections now provided by the Employment Acts of 1980, 1982 and 1988 and the Trade Union Act 1984.

1.2. Removing barriers to economic efficiency has made an important contribution to the improvement in the employment scene. The recession of the early 1980s hit the UK labour market hard, but since then the UK has rediscovered the art of job growth. A combination of strong and steadily increasing output, improved industrial relations and a more flexible labour force has provided the framework within which enterprise and job and training opportunities can flourish.

1.3. The numbers in the workforce in employment have increased enormously since March 1983 when job growth resumed. Over the five and a half years to September 1988, 2.8 million jobs and training places have been created. All the ground lost during the recession, and more, has been regained and the workforce in employment now stands at its highest ever level. The scale of this increase in jobs is unsurpassed in the post-war period.

1.4. Within this total, since March 1983 the number of employees in employment has increased by 1.6 million, of which 863,000 were full-time jobs. In addition, self-employment has risen by around 800,000.

1.5. The unemployment situation has also greatly improved. Since the 1987 General Election campaign there has been a record-breaking decline in unemployment, down by over a million. It has fallen in each of the last 31 months, the longest and largest fall since the war. Unemployment in the United Kingdom has fallen faster in the past year than in any other major industrialised country, and is now lower than in the majority of European Community countries.

1.6. All parts of the economy have benefited:

- unemployment has fallen in every region;
- long-term unemployment is down more than half a million from its peak of 1.37 million and has recently been falling at a faster rate than total unemployment;
- unemployment among the young (18-24) has also fallen faster than total unemployment. The United Kingdom now has a lower unemployment rate for the under-25s than any other major European Community country except Germany;
- results from the Labour Force Survey suggest that the unemployment rates among ethnic minorities have fallen faster than for the population as a whole.

Figure 1

Freedom, Rights and Protections

EMPLOYMENT ACT 1980

Individuals given:

—protection against dismissal or discrimination for non-union membership in a closed shop in the case of strongly held personal convictions.

Employers given:

—freedom to decide for themselves whether or not to recognise trade unions;
—right to restrain unlawful picketing;
—right to restrain indiscriminate secondary action;
—freedom from inappropriate restrictions in determining pay levels.

EMPLOYMENT ACT 1982

Individuals given:

—increased protection and compensation if dismissed because of a closed shop.

Employers given:

—freedom to take legal action for injunctions and damages against trade unions themselves;
—right to restrain industrial action which is not about employment-related disputes between workers and their employer;
—right to restrain secondary action intended to establish or maintain union labour only contracts.

TRADE UNION ACT 1984

Individuals given:

—right to regular ballots to decide whether their union should undertake political activities;
—right to elect by secret ballot all voting members of their union's executive.

Employers given:

—right to restrain industrial action unless there has been a properly-conducted secret ballot.

EMPLOYMENT ACT 1988

Individuals given:

—right to restrain their union from calling on them to take any industrial action not supported by a properly-conducted secret ballot;
—protection against dismissal for non-union membership in all circumstances;
—right to inspect their union's accounting records;
—protection against unjustifiable discipline by their union (for example for working during a dispute);
—right to elect *all* principal union leaders by secret postal ballot under independent scrutiny;
—right to take legal action against trustees if they permit union funds to be used unlawfully;
—right to apply to the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members for assistance in taking certain court proceedings against their trade unions.

Employers given:

—right to restrain industrial action intended to establish or maintain any union closed shop practice.

1.7. The improvements which have taken place show the value of the Government's policy of removing barriers to the efficient working of the labour market, but it is essential to continue the search for greater flexibility and to examine obstacles to the growth of jobs which still remain. In this context we must ensure that the legal framework for industrial relations is adapted to the needs of the 1990s.

1.8. The Government consider that it is time to take action against the pre-entry closed shop. This is a restrictive practice, limiting the number of people who can obtain employment in the areas it covers. The effect is to increase labour costs artificially, which in turn destroys jobs. It has a particularly damaging effect on the supply of skilled workers by restricting access to training places. The overall result is higher prices, lower output and an inefficient use of the economy's resources.

1.9. It is also important to keep under review the limits within which industrial action can be lawful. The harm which inappropriate and unnecessary forms of industrial action can do to the economy, and to jobs, needs no emphasis. Much has been achieved already, not least through the right which both employers and trade union members now have to insist on a properly-conducted secret ballot before industrial action. But the Government consider that it is time to examine afresh whether the immunities for secondary action established in 1980 are still appropriate. The Government's view is that, in general, employers who are not parties to a dispute should no longer be exposed to the threat of industrial action—a threat which can deter new enterprises from setting up in this country.

1.10. Finally, the Government consider that thought should be given to whether the scope of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members should be extended.

1.11. The Government invite comments on the proposals for further reform of the law set out in this consultative document. Chapter 2 deals with the pre-entry closed shop, Chapter 3 with industrial action (including secondary action) and Chapter 4 with the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members.

LABOUR MANIFESTO 1997

New Labour because Britain deserves better

1 **Britain will be better with new Labour**

2 'Our case is simple: that Britain can and must be better'

3 'The vision is one of national renewal, a country with drive,
4 purpose and energy'

5 'In each area of policy a new and distinctive approach has been
6 mapped out, one that differs from the old left and the
7 Conservative right. This is why new Labour is new'

8 'New Labour is a party of ideas and ideals but not of outdated
9 ideology. What counts is what works. The objectives are radical.
10 The means will be modern'

11 ' This is our contract with the people'

12 I believe in Britain. It is a great country with a great history. The British
13 people are a great people. But I believe Britain can and must be better:
14 better schools, better hospitals, better ways of tackling crime, of building a
15 modern welfare state, of equipping ourselves for a new world economy.

16 I want a Britain that is one nation, with shared values and purpose, where
17 merit comes before privilege, run for the many not the few, strong and sure
18 of itself at home and abroad.

19 I want a Britain that does not shuffle into the new millennium afraid of the
20 future, but strides into it with confidence.

21 I want to renew our country's faith in the ability of its government and
22 politics to deliver this new Britain. I want to do it by making a limited set of
23 important promises and achieving them. This is the purpose of the bond of
24 trust I set out at the end of this introduction, in which ten specific
25 commitments are put before you. Hold us to them. They are our covenant
26 with you.

27 I want to renew faith in politics by being honest about the last 18 years.
28 Some things the Conservatives got right. We will not change them. It is
29 where they got things wrong that we will make change. We have no
30 intention or desire to replace one set of dogmas by another.

31 I want to renew faith in politics through a government that will govern in
32 the interest of the many, the broad majority of people who work hard, play
33 by the rules, pay their dues and feel let down by a political system that

34 gives the breaks to the few, to an elite at the top increasingly out of touch
35 with the rest of us.

36 And I want, above all, to govern in a way that brings our country together,
37 that unites our nation in facing the tough and dangerous challenges of the
38 new economy and changed society in which we must live. I want a Britain
39 which we all feel part of, in whose future we all have a stake, in which what
40 I want for my own children I want for yours.

41 **A new politics**

42 The reason for having created new Labour is to meet the challenges of a
43 different world. The millennium symbolises a new era opening up for
44 Britain. I am confident about our future prosperity, even optimistic, if we
45 have the courage to change and use it to build a better Britain.

46 To accomplish this means more than just a change of government. Our aim
47 is no less than to set British political life on a new course for the future.

48 People *are* cynical about politics and distrustful of political promises. That
49 is hardly surprising. There have been few more gross breaches of faith than
50 when the Conservatives under Mr Major promised, before the election of
51 1992, that they would not raise taxes, but would cut them every year; and
52 then went on to raise them by the largest amount in peacetime history
53 starting in the first Budget after the election. The Exchange Rate
54 Mechanism as the cornerstone of economic policy, Europe, health, crime,
55 schools, sleaze - the broken promises are strewn across the country's
56 memory.

57 The Conservatives' broken promises taint all politics. That is why we have
58 made it our guiding rule not to promise what we cannot deliver; and to
59 deliver what we promise. What follows is not the politics of a 100 days that
60 dazzles for a time, then fizzles out. It is not the politics of a revolution, but
61 of a fresh start, the patient rebuilding and renewing of this country -
62 renewal that can take root and build over time.

63 That is one way in which politics in Britain will gain a new lease of life.
64 But there is another. We aim to put behind us the bitter political struggles of
65 left and right that have torn our country apart for too many decades. Many
66 of these conflicts have no relevance whatsoever to the modern world -
67 public versus private, bosses versus workers, middle class versus working
68 class. It is time for this country to move on and move forward. We are
69 proud of our history, proud of what we have achieved - but we must learn
70 from our history, not be chained to it.

71 **New Labour**

72 The purpose of new Labour is to give Britain a different political choice:
73 the choice between a failed Conservative government, exhausted and
74 divided in everything other than its desire to cling on to power, and a new
75 and revitalised Labour Party that has been resolute in transforming itself

76 into a party of the future. We have rewritten our constitution, the new
77 Clause IV, to put a commitment to enterprise alongside the commitment to
78 justice. We have changed the way we make policy, and put our relations
79 with the trade unions on a modern footing where they accept they can get
80 fairness but no favours from a Labour government. Our MPs are all now
81 selected by ordinary party members, not small committees or pressure
82 groups. The membership itself has doubled, to over 400,000, with half the
83 members having joined since the last election.

84 We submitted our draft manifesto, new Labour new life for Britain, to a
85 ballot of all our members, 95 per cent of whom gave it their express
86 endorsement.

87 We are a national party, supported today by people from all walks of life,
88 from the successful businessman or woman to the pensioner on a council
89 estate. Young people have flooded in to join us in what is the fastest
90 growing youth section of any political party in the western world.

91 **The vision**

92 We are a broad-based movement for progress and justice. New Labour is
93 the political arm of none other than the British people as a whole. Our
94 values are the same: the equal worth of all, with no one cast aside; fairness
95 and justice within strong communities.

96 But we have liberated these values from outdated dogma or doctrine, and
97 we have applied these values to the modern world.

98 I want a country in which people get on, do well, make a success of their
99 lives. I have no time for the politics of envy. We need more successful
100 entrepreneurs, not fewer of them. But these life-chances should be for all
101 the people. And I want a society in which ambition and compassion are
102 seen as partners not opposites - where we value public service as well as
103 material wealth.

104 New Labour believes in a society where we do not simply pursue our own
105 individual aims but where we hold many aims in common and work
106 together to achieve them. How we build the industry and employment
107 opportunities of the future; how we tackle the division and inequality in our
108 society; how we care for and enhance our environment and quality of life;
109 how we develop modern education and health services; how we create
110 communities that are safe, where mutual respect and tolerance are the order
111 of the day. These are things we must achieve together as a country.

112 The vision is one of national renewal, a country with drive, purpose and
113 energy. A Britain equipped to prosper in a global economy of technological
114 change; with a modern welfare state; its politics more accountable; and
115 confident of its place in the world.

116 **Programme: a new centre and centre-left politics**

117 In each area of policy a new and distinctive approach has been mapped out,
118 one that differs both from the solutions of the old left and those of the
119 Conservative right. This is why new Labour is new. We believe in the
120 strength of our values, but we recognise also that the policies of 1997
121 cannot be those of 1947 or 1967. More detailed policy has been produced
122 by us than by any opposition in history. Our direction and destination are
123 clear.

124 The old left would have sought state control of industry. The Conservative
125 right is content to leave all to the market. We reject both approaches.
126 Government and industry must work together to achieve key objectives
127 aimed at enhancing the dynamism of the market, not undermining it.

128 In **industrial relations**, we make it clear that there will be no return to
129 flying pickets, secondary action, strikes with no ballots or the trade union
130 law of the 1970s. There will instead be basic minimum rights for the
131 individual at the workplace, where our aim is partnership not conflict
132 between employers and employees.

133 In **economic management**, we accept the global economy as a reality and
134 reject the isolationism and 'go-it-alone' policies of the extremes of right or
135 left.

136 In **education**, we reject both the idea of a return to the 11-plus and the
137 monolithic comprehensive schools that take no account of children's
138 differing abilities. Instead we favour all-in schooling which identifies the
139 distinct abilities of individual pupils and organises them in classes to
140 maximise their progress in individual subjects. In this way we modernise
141 the comprehensive principle, learning from the experience of its 30 years of
142 application.

143 In **health** policy, we will safeguard the basic principles of the NHS, which
144 we founded, but will not return to the top-down management of the 1970s.
145 So we will keep the planning and provision of healthcare separate, but put
146 planning on a longer-term, decentralised and more co-operative basis. The
147 key is to root out unnecessary administrative cost, and to spend money on
148 the right things - frontline care.

149 On **crime**, we believe in personal responsibility and in punishing crime, but
150 also tackling its underlying causes - so, tough on crime, tough on the causes
151 of crime, different from the Labour approach of the past and the Tory policy
152 of today.

153 Over-centralisation of **government** and lack of accountability was a
154 problem in governments of both left and right. Labour is committed to the
155 democratic renewal of our country through decentralisation and the
156 elimination of excessive government secrecy.

157 In addition, we will face up to the new issues that confront us. We will be

158 the party of **welfare reform**. In consultation and partnership with the
159 people, we will design a modern welfare state based on rights and duties
160 going together, fit for the modern world.

161 We will stand up for Britain's interests in **Europe** after the shambles of the
162 last six years, but, more than that, we will lead a campaign for reform in
163 Europe. Europe isn't working in the way this country and Europe need. But
164 to lead means to be involved, to be constructive, to be capable of getting
165 our own way.

166 We will put concern for the **environment** at the heart of policy-making, so
167 that it is not an add-on extra, but informs the whole of government, from
168 housing and energy policy through to global warming and international
169 agreements.

170 We will search out at every turn new ways and new ideas to tackle the new
171 issues: how to encourage more flexible working hours and practices to suit
172 employees and employers alike; how to harness the huge potential of the
173 new information technology; how to simplify the processes of the
174 government machine; how to put public and private sector together in
175 partnership to give us the infrastructure and transport system we need.

176 We will be a radical government. But the definition of radicalism will not
177 be that of doctrine, whether of left or right, but of achievement. New
178 Labour is a party of ideas and ideals but not of outdated ideology. What
179 counts is what works. The objectives are radical. The means will be
180 modern.

181 So the party is transformed. The vision is clear. And from that vision stems
182 a modern programme of change and renewal for Britain. We understand that
183 after 18 years of one-party rule, people want change, believe that it is
184 necessary for the country and for democracy, but require faith to make the
185 change.

186 We therefore set out in the manifesto that follows ten commitments,
187 commitments that form our bond of trust with the people. They are specific.
188 They are real. Judge us on them. Have trust in us and we will repay that
189 trust.

190 Our mission in politics is to rebuild this bond of trust between government
191 and the people. That is the only way democracy can flourish. I pledge to
192 Britain a government which shares their hopes, which understands their
193 fears, and which will work as partners with and for all our people, not just
194 the privileged few. This is our contract with the people.

195 **Over the five years of a Labour government:**

196 **1 Education will be our number one priority, and we will increase the**
197 **share of national income spent on education as we decrease it on the**

- 198 **bills of economic and social failure**
- 199 **2 There will be no increase in the basic or top rates of income tax**
- 200 **3 We will provide stable economic growth with low inflation, and**
201 **promote dynamic and competitive business and industry at home and**
202 **abroad**
- 203 **4 We will get 250,000 young unemployed off benefit and into work**
- 204 **5 We will rebuild the NHS, reducing spending on administration and**
205 **increasing spending on patient care**
- 206 **6 We will be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, and**
207 **halve the time it takes persistent juvenile offenders to come to court**
- 208 **7 We will help build strong families and strong communities, and lay**
209 **the foundations of a modern welfare state in pensions and community**
210 **care**
- 211 **8 We will safeguard our environment, and develop an integrated**
212 **transport policy to fight congestion and pollution**
- 213 **9 We will clean up politics, decentralise political power throughout the**
214 **United Kingdom and put the funding of political parties on a proper**
215 **and accountable basis**
- 216 **10 We will give Britain the leadership in Europe which Britain and**
217 **Europe need**

218 We have modernised the Labour Party and we will modernise Britain. This
219 means knowing where we want to go; being clear-headed about the
220 country's future; telling the truth; making tough choices; insisting that all
221 parts of the public sector live within their means; taking on vested interests
222 that hold people back; standing up to unreasonable demands from any
223 quarter; and being prepared to give a moral lead where government has
224 responsibilities it should not avoid.

225 Britain does deserve better. And new Labour will be better for Britain.

226 **Tony Blair**

227 **We will help create successful and profitable businesses**

- 228 • Backing business: skills, infrastructure, new markets
- 229 • Gains for consumers with tough competition law
- 230 • New measures to help small businesses
- 231 • National minimum wage to tackle low pay
- 232 • Boost local economic growth with Regional Development Agencies
- 233 • A strong and effective voice in Europe

234 New Labour offers business a new deal for the future. We will leave intact
235 the main changes of the 1980s in industrial relations and enterprise. We see

236 healthy profits as an essential motor of a dynamic market economy, and
237 believe they depend on quality products, innovative entrepreneurs and
238 skilled employees. We will build a new partnership with business to
239 improve the competitiveness of British industry for the 21st century, leading
240 to faster growth.

241 Many of the fundamentals of the British economy are still weak. Low pay
242 and low skills go together: insecurity is the consequence of economic
243 instability; the absence of quality jobs is a product of the weakness of our
244 industrial base; we suffer from both high unemployment and skills
245 shortages. There is no future for Britain as a low wage economy: we cannot
246 compete on wages with countries paying a tenth or a hundredth of British
247 wages.

248 We need to win on higher quality, skill, innovation and reliability. With
249 Labour, British and inward investors will find this country an attractive and
250 profitable place to do business.

251 New Labour believes in a flexible labour market that serves employers and
252 employees alike. But flexibility alone is not enough. We need '*flexibility*
253 *plus*':

- 254 • plus higher skills and higher standards in our schools and colleges
- 255 • plus policies to ensure economic stability
- 256 • plus partnership with business to raise investment in infrastructure,
257 science and research and to back small firms
- 258 • plus new leadership from Britain to reform Europe, in place of the
259 current policy of drift and disengagement from our largest market
- 260 • plus guaranteeing Britain's membership of the single market - indeed
261 opening up further markets inside and outside the EU - helping make
262 Britain an attractive place to do business
- 263 • plus minimum standards of fair treatment, including a national
264 minimum wage
- 265 • plus an imaginative welfare-to-work programme to put the long-term
266 unemployed back to work and to cut social security costs.

267 **A reformed and tougher competition law**

268 Competitiveness abroad must begin with competition at home. Effective
269 competition can bring value and quality to consumers. As an early priority
270 we will reform Britain's competition law. We will adopt a tough 'prohibitive'
271 approach to deter anti-competitive practices and abuses of market power.

272 In the utility industries we will promote competition wherever possible.
273 Where competition is not an effective discipline, for example in the water
274 industry which has a poor environmental record and has in most cases been
275 a tax-free zone, we will pursue tough, efficient regulation in the interests of
276 customers, and, in the case of water, in the interests of the environment as
277 well. We recognise the need for open and predictable regulation which is

278 fair both to consumers and to shareholders and at the same time provides
279 incentives for managers to innovate and improve efficiency.

280 **Reinvigorate the Private Finance Initiative**

281 Britain's infrastructure is dangerously run down: parts of our road and rail
282 network are seriously neglected, and all too often our urban environment
283 has been allowed to deteriorate.

284 Labour pioneered the idea of public/private partnerships. It is Labour local
285 authorities which have done most to create these partnerships at local level.

286 A Labour government will overcome the problems that have plagued the
287 PFI at a national level. We will set priorities between projects, saving time
288 and expense; we will seek a realistic allocation of risk between the partners
289 to a project; and we will ensure that best practice is spread throughout
290 government. We will aim to simplify and speed up the planning process for
291 major infrastructure projects of vital national interest.

292 We will ensure that self-financing commercial organisations within the
293 public sector - the Post Office is a prime example - are given greater
294 commercial freedom to make the most of new opportunities.

295 **Backing small business**

296 The number of small employers has declined by half a million since 1990.
297 Support for small businesses will have a major role in our plans for
298 economic growth. We will cut unnecessary red tape; provide for statutory
299 interest on late payment of debts; improve support for high-tech start-ups;
300 improve the quality and relevance of advice and training through a
301 reformed Business Links network and the University for Industry; and
302 assist firms to enter overseas markets more effectively.

303 **Local economic growth**

304 Prosperity needs to be built from the bottom up. We will establish one-stop
305 regional development agencies to co-ordinate regional economic
306 development, help small business and encourage inward investment. Many
307 regions are already taking informal steps to this end and they will be
308 supported.

309 **Strengthen our capability in science, technology and design**

310 The UK must be positively committed to the global pursuit of new
311 knowledge, with a strong science base in our universities and centres of
312 excellence leading the world. The Dearing Committee represents a
313 significant opportunity to promote high-quality standards in science
314 teaching and research throughout UK higher education. We support a
315 collaborative approach between researchers and business, spreading the use
316 of new technology and good design, and exploiting our own inventions to
317 boost business in the UK.

318 **Promoting new green technologies and businesses**

319 There is huge potential to develop Britain's environmental technology
320 industries to create jobs, win exports and protect the environment.

321 Effective environmental management is an increasingly important
322 component of modern business practice. We support a major push to
323 promote energy conservation - particularly by the promotion of home
324 energy efficiency schemes, linked to our environment taskforce for the
325 under-25s. We are committed to an energy policy designed to promote
326 cleaner, more efficient energy use and production, including a new and
327 strong drive to develop renewable energy sources such as solar and wind
328 energy, and combined heat and power. We see no economic case for the
329 building of any new nuclear power stations.

330 **Key elements of the 1980s trade union reforms to stay**

331 There must be minimum standards for the individual at work, including a
332 minimum wage, within a flexible labour market. We need a sensible balance
333 in industrial relations law - rights and duties go together.

334 The key elements of the trade union legislation of the 1980s will stay - on
335 ballots, picketing and industrial action. People should be free to join or not
336 to join a union. Where they do decide to join, and where a majority of the
337 relevant workforce vote in a ballot for the union to represent them, the
338 union should be recognised. This promotes stable and orderly industrial
339 relations. There will be full consultation on the most effective means of
340 implementing this proposal.

341 **Partnership at work**

342 The best companies recognise their employees as partners in the enterprise.
343 Employees whose conditions are good are more committed to their
344 companies and are more productive. Many unions and employers are
345 embracing partnership in place of conflict. Government should welcome
346 this.

347 We are keen to encourage a variety of forms of partnership and enterprise,
348 spreading ownership and encouraging more employees to become owners
349 through Employee Share Ownership Plans and co-operatives. We support
350 too the Social Chapter of the EU, but will deploy our influence in Europe to
351 ensure that it develops so as to promote employability and competitiveness,
352 not inflexibility.

353 **A sensibly set national minimum wage**

354 There should be a statutory level beneath which pay should not fall - with
355 the minimum wage decided not on the basis of a rigid formula but
356 according to the economic circumstances of the time and with the advice of
357 an independent low pay commission, whose membership will include
358 representatives of employers, including small business, and employees.

359 Every modern industrial country has a minimum wage, including the US
360 and Japan. Britain used to have minimum wages through the Wages

361 Councils. Introduced sensibly, the minimum wage will remove the worst
362 excesses of low pay (and be of particular benefit to women), while cutting
363 some of the massive £4 billion benefits bill by which the taxpayer
364 subsidises companies that pay very low wages.

365

366

WHITE PAPER “FAIRNESS AT WORK” 1998 – Cm 3968

FOREWORD By the Prime Minister

1 This White Paper is part of the Government’s programme to replace the
2 notion of conflict between employers and employees with the promotion of
3 partnership. It goes along with our emphasis on education and skills - not
4 overburdensome regulation - in the labour market, as the best means of
5 equipping business and people for a modern economy. It complements our
6 prudent economic management and our proposals for encouraging small
7 businesses and stimulating long-term investment. The White Paper steers a
8 way between the absence of minimum standards of protection at the
9 workplace, and a return to the laws of the past. It is based on the rights of
10 the individual, whether exercised on their own or with others, as a matter of
11 their choice. It matches rights and responsibilities. It seeks to draw a line
12 under the issue of industrial relations law. There will be no going back. The
13 days of strikes without ballots, mass picketing, closed shops and secondary
14 action are over. Even after the changes we propose, Britain will have the
15 most lightly regulated labour market of any leading economy in the world.
16 But it cannot be just to deny British citizens basic canons of fairness - rights
17 to claim unfair dismissal, rights against discrimination for making a free
18 choice of being a union member, rights to unpaid parental leave - that are a
19 matter of course elsewhere.

20 These proposals, together with the introduction of a minimum wage - set
21 sensibly, implemented sensibly - put a very minimum infrastructure of
22 decency and fairness around people in the workplace. They have been
23 extensively consulted upon with business and industry. They offer the right
24 way forward for the future.

25 My aim and that of my colleagues is to build a fair and prosperous society
26 in the UK based on a strong and competitive economy. This White Paper is
27 a major contribution to that goal. It is about how a competitive and growing
28 economy itself requires a culture of fairness and opportunity at work so that
29 Britain can harness the talents of all our people.

30 My ambition for this White Paper goes far wider than the legal changes we
31 propose. It is nothing less than to change the culture of relations in and at
32 work - and to reflect a new relationship between work and family life. It is
33 often said that a change of culture cannot be brought about by a change in
34 the framework of law. But a change in law can reflect a new culture, can
35 enhance its understanding and support its development.

36 Already modern and successful companies draw their success from the
37 existence and development of partnership at work. Those who have learnt to
38 cherish and foster the creativity of their whole workforce have found a
39 resource of innovation and inventiveness that drives their companies
40 forward as well as enriching their lives.

41

42 So the new culture we want to nurture and spread is one of voluntary
43 understanding and co-operation because it has been recognised that the
44 prosperity of each is bound up in the prosperity of all.

45 Against such a background the law is there to give shape and support to
46 these new understandings and as a last resort to help resolve differences and
47 disputes if they should arise.

48 The three pillars of our industrial policy are the pursuit of strong markets,
49 modern companies and the creation of an enterprise economy.

50 This White Paper sets out a framework for the second of these aims and, in
51 so doing, the foundation for the third. It builds on the prompt action we
52 have already taken, for example to restore the right to join trade unions at
53 GCHQ, to sign the Social Chapter, to implement the Working Time
54 Directive and to put in place a national minimum wage. It has at its centre
55 our proposals for a fair balance of rights and responsibilities at work. We
56 make a range of proposals - some minor, some more far-reaching in their
57 scope. We intend, subject to the consultation following publication of this
58 document, to legislate to carry it into effect and then to allow a proper
59 process of acceptance, adjustment and stability. So what we set out here are
60 our proposals for an industrial relations settlement for this Parliament.

61

Prime Minister's Press Conference - 25 November 2002

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, brought forward his monthly press conference to allow journalists to ask Questions on a range of issues, most notably the fire strike.

When Questioned on firefighter's pay and modernisation of the fire service, Mr Blair said:

"Any pay above the 4% has to be paid for by modernisation. Now the modernisation is set out in the Bain Report. The Bain Report also sets out certain figures. Anything that the employers and the unions negotiate has got to be paid for by those changes in working practices.

"That has been the position of the government right from the very outset of the dispute. It remains the position now. Now, whatever percentage comes out of that has got to be related back to the modernisation."

Read a transcript of the Press Conference below

Prime Minister:

1 Good morning everyone. I thought in view of the fire strike and the
2 seriousness of the issue at stake that I would bring forward the monthly press
3 conference. I am obviously going to talk in my opening remarks about the fire
4 strike, but feel free as ever to ask me any Questions you want about any issue. I
5 want to explain to you really why we are in the situation we are in, why the
6 Government has to stand firm in the face of this action in order that we protect
7 our economy, jobs and living standards and also say to you where we go from
8 here.

9 It is worth just pointing out the roots of this dispute. Earlier this year,
10 following the election of Mr Gilchrist as the FBU General Secretary, the Union
11 declared its intention to set aside the long-standing indexed-linked pay formula
12 and instead table a pay claim for rises of around 40%. They also demanded a
13 new formula, but on the basis of the 40% claim being already agreed.
14 Understandably the employers said that if the existing agreed formula were to
15 be changed, then a new formula had first of course to be agreed, and then form
16 the basis of any claim. This was refused by the Union. In August we began
17 preparations for the strike with the Armed Forces. But in addition in September
18 in an effort to help we said we would establish an independent review to look
19 at pay and modernisation in the Fire Service. The employers agreed. The
20 Union refused. Nonetheless, after consultation with the TUC, we appointed Sir
21 George Bain, together with the former President of the TUC and an employers'
22 representative to examine the case. The employers co-operated. The Union
23 refused.

24 We then urged both sides to carry on talking. We made it crystal-clear,
25 however, that the basis of the talks had to be the report from Sir George Bain.
26 We brought the conclusions of that report forward to facilitate discussion. The
27 employers offered 4%, but anything more had to be paid for by modernisation.
28 Sir George Bain in his report then set out how that could lead to above
29 inflation pay increases on the basis of savings made possible by changes in
30 working practices. The Union rejected those changes, and that is still the
31 essentially the position we are in today. I would like to thank, and pay tribute,
32 to the soldiers, sailors, airmen and women who are providing fire cover for the
33 country at this time. They didn't join the Armed Forces to fight fires, but as
34 ever they have faced up to what is demanded of them with typical
35 straightforward professionalism, and I commend them for it. I'd like to thank
36 the public too for the way they have responded to this strike. Hoax calls are
37 down, so are call-outs to incidents which suggests that people are heeding the
38 need for greater attention to basic fire safety.

39 It is said, and has been said throughout this, as you know, by the FBU
40 leadership, that the government somehow wanted this dispute and somehow
41 engineered the strike. Let me again say that this idea, particularly at a time of
42 heightened security and terrorist concerns, is palpably absurd.

43 I also perhaps should deal briefly with the events of last Thursday night and
44 Friday morning. Again, in an effort to resolve this dispute without a strike, we
45 urged the two sides to negotiate. They did so and eventually approached a deal
46 - though it was never formally put - but this deal consisted only of an
47 agreement to talk about modernisation, plus in effect four pay rises over the
48 next 12 months amounting to 16% in all. The employers' side frankly admitted
49 that it would not be paid for by modernisation but only by government i.e. tax
50 payers' money. We made it clear, as we have throughout, that we could not sign
51 such a cheque, especially a blank one with no costing.

52 I think it is also helpful from the point of view of the public to explain what we
53 mean by modernisation and changes in working practices. Now there are a
54 whole set of things outlined in the Bain report, but just let me give you some
55 examples of what we mean. It means, for example, full-time fire-fighters
56 working in the same crew as part-time fire-fighters. At present this is banned.
57 It means management being able to change, where necessary, a shift system of
58 two days on, two nights on, four days off, if that produces a better service. It
59 means for example allowing overtime where it is needed. It means agreeing to
60 basic training in paramedical work. It means sharing control rooms with other
61 emergency services so that the service to the public is improved and money is
62 saved. And all these changes, which I think when people hear them listed in
63 that way will think are pretty basic changes to working practices, all of those
64 would of course save money and produce efficiency gains. And frankly I defy
65 anyone to say that they are unreasonable, but at present the Union has not
66 agreed to any of them at all.

67 If we were to concede this pay claim, the economic consequences would be
68 dire, and this is really what I want to stress to you today. This Government has

69 worked very hard in our first term to lay the platform for economic stability,
70 for full employment, for rising living standards, and it has required some
71 difficult decisions. But it was only as a result of the hard-won stability and our
72 success in getting down unemployment, and the costs of economic and social
73 failure that we were able to begin properly then the programme of investment
74 in our public services. We have in this country low inflation historically, we
75 have the lowest unemployment for decades, we have got the lowest mortgage
76 rate for decades. As a result of that economic stability we have been able to
77 invest in our public services, but it is only on the basis that we keep managing
78 the economy in a sensible and prudent way. We cannot therefore allow the
79 good work to be undone now with pay settlements that risk driving up
80 inflation, interest rates and unemployment, and we are not going to allow the
81 record investment in public services to be swallowed up simply in extra pay.
82 The Chancellor will make this clear on Wednesday when he presents the pre-
83 Budget report the world economic situation is of course poor and no country is
84 immune from the effects of that. Though Britain is better placed than most, but
85 we are only better placed than most because we have taken the tough decisions
86 that have allowed us to have low inflation, low mortgage rates, low
87 unemployment.

88 The fire-fighters do, of course, a very important job. We have never disputed
89 that throughout. But I hope that they understand - that you understand - that
90 they are not the only public sector workers who do important jobs. Nurses do a
91 great job, so do teachers, so do the police, so, as we are seeing once again, do
92 the Armed Forces and many of these are paid far less than fire-fighters.

93 We have now had some opportunity to look at the so-called deal last Friday
94 morning in some detail. The Treasury has said that it would add some £500
95 million to the costs of an unreformed Fire Service. The 16% pay deal which
96 the employers claimed they were able to offer, if applied across the whole of
97 the Local Authority sector would cost an extra £4 billion. If it was applied
98 across the public sector as a whole it would cost an extra £16 billion. Now, just
99 to put that in context for you, it would mean for the basic rate income tax payer
100 something like a 30% increase in their income tax bill. Now of course people
101 will say well the fire-fighters are a special case. But I think you and I know
102 that most public sector workers will argue that they are special case, and in a
103 way they are all special cases - the nurses, the teachers, the Armed Forces, the
104 police.

105 The Question then is where do we go from here? Of course during these eight
106 days of this second part of the strike we will continue to ensure an adequate
107 fire service through the Armed Forces and our other emergency services. We
108 are continuing to co-ordinate and monitor the situation through proper, cross-
109 government management structure that is working well. The military have
110 made clear to us that they are coping well with what they have, and we have
111 made it clear that if they need more by way of support and equipment then of
112 course they will get it. To take forward the negotiations the Deputy Prime
113 Minister has already asked Sir Jeremy Beecham, the Head of the Local

114 Government Association, to consult with his local government colleagues on
115 putting together a small cross-party group to give greater focus to the
116 negotiations. The purpose of that would be to establish the financial
117 parameters by drawing on the advice of the independent Bain Commission on
118 how savings could be made and the service improved for the benefit of the
119 communities.

120 Now, the only serious negotiation, however, is one which agrees modernisation
121 in return for enhanced pay that makes the modernisation possible. If that
122 cannot be agreed, then the existing formula has to stay until it is changed by
123 agreement. And I say to the fire-fighters and their families, we did not and we
124 do not want confrontation with you. Rightly you are valued members of your
125 communities. We do not wish for you to go without pay from fire-fighting any
126 longer than you have to. But I ask them to understand the broader economic
127 reasons why the government cannot give in to this kind of claim, to this kind
128 of action being pursued in this kind of way. If we were to yield to this claim,
129 made in this way, at this time, we would do fundamental and lasting economic
130 damage to the economic stability - the low inflation, low unemployment, low
131 mortgage rate - we have fought so long and hard to achieve as a country. That
132 is the simple and blunt truth that we in government have to take on board. If
133 we were to provide the necessary for the type of deal the fire-fighters are
134 claiming, their pay rise today would simply become their rising mortgage bill,
135 rising prices, the country's unemployment tomorrow. So, the two-day strike
136 was wrong and dangerous, and it follows that an eight-day strike is more so.
137 We did not want it. We will continue to seek to resolve the issues involved, but
138 both sides must be clear in the end they have to resolve this within the limits
139 that the real world puts down. There are limits to the money that can be made
140 available, there are limits to the extent that outdated working practice can be
141 allowed to go on, so pay linked to modernisation is the only way that this can
142 be resolved. Both sides know it means getting back round the negotiating table
143 sooner or later. I hope it is sooner. Thank you very much.

144 **Question:**

145 Prime Minister, you talk about limits to the money available. From many
146 people's perspective there has been great confusion about what the
147 government's actual bottom line offer is. All sorts of figures bandied around.
148 Can you clear up now, if you got modernisation from the Fire Brigades Union,
149 what you regarded as real modernisation, what is the maximum sort of
150 percentage that they could expect in return?

151 **Prime Minister:**

152 Any pay above the 4% has to be paid for by modernisation. Now the
153 modernisation is set out in the Bain Report. The Bain Report also sets out
154 certain figures. Anything that the employers and the unions negotiate has got to
155 be paid for by those changes in working practices. That has been the position
156 of the government right from the very outset of the dispute. It remains the
157 position now. Now, whatever percentage comes out of that has got to be related

158 back to the modernisation.

159 **Question:**

160 Some of your Ministers have changed from using the formula that it had to be
161 funded by modernisation, to simply saying that it had to be linked to
162 modernisation.

163 **Prime Minister:**

164 Well, I think that's just splitting hairs, to be honest. From the very beginning, I
165 think I said this in one of my first comments on this, and this has been said by
166 John Prescott, it has been said by Gordon Brown, it has been said by
167 everybody. You have your 4% pay increase at the moment - or 4% pay on the
168 table at the moment - and that is frankly what they would expect under the
169 existing formula. And I may say that is more than many other public sector
170 workers are getting. Anything above that has got to be based on a new formula,
171 and the new formula is modernisation of the working practices. So whatever
172 percentage comes out of this, it has to be funded by the modernisation. And
173 with the greatest respect to those who say there has been some uncertainty
174 about, that has been clear right from the outset. From the very beginning we've
175 said, if you want a new pay claim, not under the existing formula, it has got to
176 be paid for by modernisation. The reason we set up the Bain Report is to
177 provide the basis of that modernisation.

178 **Question:**

179 Just on the Question of the negotiations, I think many people in the country
180 will feel that if this is so important as you have said it is this morning, that
181 rather than having unknown figures, or figures which have been heavily
182 criticised by the government from local authorities negotiating, that now the
183 government ought to take charge of negotiating on this directly, why don't you
184 do so? And secondly, in view of the confused signals that emerged from
185 Ministers over the weekend, are you convinced that you have got the right
186 Ministerial team intervening from a distance as they have been?

187 **Prime Minister:**

188 I totally understand when you get into a dispute like this and where there are
189 two separate aspects: there is the percentage of the pay and then there is the
190 modernisation and how you put all that together. I totally understand why
191 people, unless they are following it in very close detail, say does this statement
192 match up with that statement. The answer is that all the statements stress
193 throughout that modernisation has to pay for the additional pay over the 4%.
194 Now I think that you will find if you go back and look at the statements, they
195 were all entirely consistent with that. The reason why we have asked the Local
196 Government Association to try and streamline the negotiating procedure for
197 the local government employers is not that we think we should go and
198 negotiate this. In the end we are not the employers. But I think if they had a far
199 more streamlined and frankly rather more effective negotiating structure, you
200 wouldn't get into the difficulties that were got into last Thursday and Friday

201 night. You just have to understand that the problem that the government had in
202 that situation is that in effect by the time that Friday morning came, we were
203 being presented with something that could have perhaps formed the basis of a
204 deal between the employers and the unions, but essentially said we had to end
205 up footing the bill. Now we can't have that. We have made that clear
206 throughout.

207 **Question:**

208 Just going to the point about the actual negotiations. Are you prepared to fund
209 at least a transitional amount? John Prescott seemed to suggest yesterday that
210 if it was a relatively small amount you might be prepared to let the local
211 authorities have a little extra to help them fund the cost of modernisation as it
212 was being introduced.

213 **Prime Minister:**

214 I don't think it is sensible for me to get into the absolute intricacies of the
215 negotiation. But what they have got to do is to keep the top line in their mind,
216 and the top line in their mind is, if it is more than 4% it is paid for by
217 modernisation, and modernisation equals Bain. Now, the FBU are perfectly
218 able to put different types of modernisation on the table, and they have done
219 that, but they have got to agree to the basic changes in Bain, because they are
220 the things that yield the benefit. Let me just give you a couple of examples
221 from the way that this dispute has been operating at the moment, because
222 effectively you have had the Fire Service taken over by the Army who are
223 doing it with about one-third of the manpower. Now, what they have already
224 discovered is (1) joint control rooms make sense for them, and the Army are
225 actually operating these joint control rooms; and (2) what they have found is
226 that the vast bulk of the calls on the Fire Service's time come during the day,
227 and so what the military are doing is saying that during the day we need more,
228 and during the night we need less. It is not rocket science. But all these things
229 are possible and therefore if you were to change the working practices, you
230 would save money. Now, we could have said, well that money all goes back to
231 the government. But we haven't. We've said OK, we accept the fire-fighters do
232 a good job, if you can save the money on efficiency then get it back to the fire-
233 fighters and I think most people think that is a reasonable position.

234 **Question:**

235 Prime Minister, if I understood you rightly you said that in return for 16% the
236 FBU had only agreed to talk about modernisation, but isn't it in fact the case
237 that under even the second formula the money would only have been given to
238 the fire-fighters in return for modernisation? In other words, at each stage they
239 would have had to agree to it, that the employers would have been free to
240 introduce all the Bain proposals, and any disagreements would have been
241 referred to a binding arbitration body on which the Audit Commission were
242 going to sit. That's not quite the same, is it?

243 **Prime Minister:**

244 This is the important thing about getting this cleared up right at the outset. You
245 can't have a situation where you are going to agree to talk about
246 modernisation . You say well they may have come to agreements over the
247 course of the year. They may, they may not. But the fact of the matter is you
248 have got to be clear about modernisation right from the outset. And if you go -
249 correct me if I'm wrong - I think if you go to paragraph 6 of the document that
250 was presented on Friday morning, what it said was that this can't be paid for by
251 modernisation. They were quite explicit about that. When people say why did
252 the government say we couldn't agree to this document on Friday morning,
253 well the answer is perfectly simple. In paragraph 6 of the document it said this
254 cannot be paid for by modernisation. There will be a substantial funding gap
255 and we look to government to fill it, and yet we didn't even have any costings.

256 **Question:**

257 self-financing within six years or something.

258 **Prime Minister:**

259 I'm not sure about that at all. I think if you go back and look at the document
260 they were saying - I'm speaking from memory here, but you will have to go
261 back and have a look at it - that there will be significant, or substantial costs
262 over and above what could be paid for.

263 **Question:**

264 Prime Minister, do you accept the appearance that the government has lost
265 control of this? That it should have seen the writing on the wall much earlier in
266 the year as militant trade union leaders were being elected? That there was
267 quite clearly going to be a battle over pay and that you had no strategy for it
268 and it was completely wrong to put John Prescott in charge of the whole
269 negotiation process?

270 **Prime Minister:**

271 You say that and, again, I've read a lot about this. It was in August that we
272 began the preparations. And I simply point out to you that we have got the 6th
273 day of this strike haven't we now, and the military have coped perfectly well.
274 I'm not saying there won't be great strains on them as they try and cope, but the
275 idea that the first time we started to prepare for this was when the strike got
276 under way. We prepared for it back in August and the military have coped
277 extremely well. They have done absolutely brilliantly. I totally understand the
278 frustration that people have. Why can't you solve this dispute? Well, the
279 answer is because we have been met I am afraid by a claim that is
280 unreasonable, and if we yield to that claim then the consequences to the rest of
281 the economy are absolutely dire. And let me just remind you of something
282 again, because I think it is important the public understands the background to
283 this. The last Fire Service dispute was all about winning the new formula. That
284 was what the dispute was about. And we gave them the new formula, and that
285 effectively index-linked their pay. If you look at the graph of fire-fighters' pay,
286 and average pay in the economy, they have risen together. Now, a couple of

287 years ago even, the fire-fighters union was saying that the pay formula was
288 sacrosanct because it was something they had fought for. They came along
289 earlier this year saying that they don't want that formula anymore. They want a
290 different formula. So what did we do? We said OK well let's sit down and
291 discuss a different formula with you, but they then said no, we want a 40%
292 wage claim, then we want the new formula on the basis of the 40% wage
293 claim. So, I share everyone's frustration that we can't resolve this. But I think
294 most people, when they get into the detail of this, realise that if we were to
295 yield to this claim, what could I say to the nurses, what could I say to the
296 soldiers who after all are doing the fire cover at the moment and are paid
297 substantially less than fire-fighters? We have got difficulty frankly in recruiting
298 nurses, teachers or soldiers, but we have about 40 applicants for every fire-
299 fighter's job. When people say to us, couldn't you just go and settle the thing -
300 just get the thing settled - it would be wonderful if life were like that but you
301 have got to have people being prepared to be reasonable. At the present time
302 we have been faced with a claim that is not reasonable, and I simply ask you
303 again if you go through the changes I have been listing. For example shouldn't
304 full-time fire-fighters work alongside part-time fire-fighters? Now you tell me
305 another walk of life where full-time people and part time people can't work
306 together? In all your offices you will find that happening. So why is it that it
307 cannot happen here? Or, for example, when you have got a shift pattern that is
308 effectively 4 days off in the week, surely it should be free to management to
309 try and alter that in order to provide a better service? To be honest about this,
310 to say look you have your 4% come what may, but if you want more on top of
311 that it has got to be linked to changes in working practices, that yield a benefit,
312 I think that is not an unreasonable position.

313 **Question:**

314 You say that the deal on Thursday and Friday was not acceptable. Why though
315 did John Prescott on Friday just rather grumpily get out of bed and rip it all
316 up? And notwithstanding the fact that no-one can make the Treasury's £500
317 million figure add up, why can't the deal which we nearly got on Friday, be
318 used as a basis for further talks instead of all this macho posturing and a stand-
319 off and three days into the second strike?

320 **Prime Minister:**

321 I think the Treasury can make their figures add up. They have got quite a lot of
322 practice of doing that. There is nothing macho about this. Let's be serious
323 about this. The idea that there was a fantastic deal on offer but nobody could
324 be bothered to get out of bed in order to address it. Come on. There were
325 negotiations going through the night. Effectively what happened was you got
326 an agreement on the Friday morning that incidentally was significantly
327 different to what was being talked about on the Thursday night. Then we were
328 told: here it is, what's more there's a paragraph at the end that says there are big
329 costs over and above the modernisation, and we want the money.

330 **Question:**

331 Why didn't you use it as the basis for the talks?

332 **Prime Minister:**

333 The basis of the talks is the basis I have set out. They can use whatever they
334 want to talk about but in the end it has got to be done on the basis we have
335 described, because otherwise the taxpayer is going to have to fund additional
336 sums of money for the fire-fighters in circumstances where we then breach the
337 government's spending limits, with all the damage to the economy. And I am
338 still waiting for this Question to be answered. If the fire-fighters were to get
339 this type of pay claim, without it being paid for by efficiency or modernisation,
340 tell me what I say to the nurses, or indeed to local government workers who
341 settled for less than 4% and who are being paid far less than fire-fighters? In
342 the end, we are all familiar with this. Everybody who makes a pay claim will
343 always say mine's a special case. You could tell me it wouldn't have on knock-
344 on consequences for the rest. But it would. It plainly would and I think most
345 people, as I say as they get into this, understand that.

346 **Question:**

347 Prime Minister, you said today that you are standing firm. But only week ago
348 Ministers said that 11% maximum was on offer and that would be a real
349 struggle because the unions would resist the changes. This weekend, John
350 Prescott says that 16% is worth talking about. Isn't it the case that far from
351 standing firm that you are actually drifting on this? And if I could put a
352 supplementary to you: you've praised the Army for coping with a third of the
353 workforce perfectly well, are you saying that the Army are actually proving
354 that we could have a far cheaper, far better, more efficient Fire Service than the
355 one that we have got?

356 **Prime Minister:**

357 To deal with the first point first, that's why I understand why people, if they are
358 not following the absolute minute detail of all this say where there are all these
359 different figures being bandied about - there's 11%, there's a 15% or 16%. The
360 point is this, what George Bain was saying was that you could have your 4%,
361 plus another I think another 7.5%, paid for by modernisation in 2 years. Now
362 there will then be continuing modernisation over the years to come. So
363 obviously if you extend the number of years, you will extend the overall
364 settlement, but it has all got to be paid for by modernisation. And George Bain
365 specified modernisation in Year 1, but then said you could have modernisation
366 carrying on for Year 2 or 3.

367 **Question:**

368 Just to be absolutely clear about that, any idea therefore that 16% in a year,
369 which was the basis after all of the first deal, before John Prescott got into his
370 bed, any idea that that is affordable is out, there's no way?

371 **Prime Minister:**

372 Absolutely there is no way. With the greatest respect, John Prescott has never

373 said anything different from that. What he did say was that the original
374 discussions that were taking place on the Thursday night, where the original
375 employers' document - and again if you want I think you can go and refer back
376 to this - specifically mentioned Bain, and the importance of Bain, I think you
377 will find that the Friday morning document by the time that was issued had
378 taken out all references to Bain altogether. So that was obviously a different
379 type of discussion that was on offer. Your second point about the Fire Service.
380 I'm not saying that, but I am saying it is interesting. I have given you two
381 examples of where the Army is already changing effectively the working
382 practices and to what ill effect I ask. Now, of course the Army can't provide the
383 full Fire Service cover, that is why this is a strike that is dangerous for the
384 public, and the best people to provide this service are the trained fire-fighters.
385 There's no doubt about that. But I am simply saying that at some point we
386 should sit down and have a proper debate about the changes in working
387 practices because I think you can already see from the way the dispute is being
388 conducted that it is perfectly possible for some of those working practices to be
389 changed without any great problems.

390 **Question:**

391 Prime Minister, do you see this primarily as a dispute between a particular set
392 of employers and employees, or are you now saying it in a broader context of a
393 particular challenge between the unions and New Labour with a direct
394 challenge to your political authority?

395 **Prime Minister:**

396 I think this is essentially an industrial dispute. Let me choose my words
397 carefully. I think it would be extremely unfortunate if it was seen by any part
398 of the Union movement in a broader context because they have got to realise
399 that in the year 2002 - it's not 1978/79, it's not 1984 - it's different. Life has
400 changed and this is not the way to resolve these things nowadays. It's
401 important again - and this is the point I think people haven't quite got the
402 measure of - the whole basis of the strike in the 1970's by the fire-fighters was
403 to get a formula which meant that they never had to strike because they would
404 have a formula. Now the only point that I make, which is a perfectly simple
405 point, is that if you want to change the formula you do that by agreement. You
406 don't come along and say, we don't want that formula, here's our 40% wage
407 claim and we'll see how we go after that.

408 **Question:**

409 But isn't it fundamentally a political test because ultimately the buck stops at
410 the Treasury who says to local government employers, you can't afford that
411 and we're not going to pick up the tab?

412 **Prime Minister:**

413 In that sense everything is political I guess. But I thought you meant it in a
414 slightly different way actually. The Treasury position is a position you would
415 expect them to take. Again, let's be clear about this we are putting the largest

416 sum of money into our public services this country has every seen. Massive
417 rises in health and education spending. Now we can afford that expenditure,
418 even in a difficult set of economic circumstances, but we can't take risks with
419 it. The local government settlement is extremely generous.

420 **Question:**

421 Is the Scargillite word ...

422 **Prime Minister:**

423 Well, all I say about that is that I hope people realise that the days of
424 unreasonable strike action as the way to pursue your claim, those days are
425 over.

426 **Question:**

427 Prime Minister you talk about the military having all the equipment that they
428 would need. Does that mean that it is still an option for the Army or the police
429 to cross picket lines to go and get those red fire engines?

430 **Prime Minister:**

431 It is not a Question of them crossing picket lines. They will have whatever red
432 fire engines they need.

433 **Question:**

434 But they have got to cross the picket lines to get them.

435 **Prime Minister:**

436 Well, I don't think they will have to but the fact is that we actually have the red
437 fire engines that they want. Now if they come back to us and say that they need
438 more we can give them more.

439 **Question:**

440 By crossing the picket lines?

441 **Prime Minister:**

442 Well, it's not the only way, actually. Because you have got some of those that
443 are already outside the fire stations and they are the ones that are being used at
444 the moment. And insofar as they need any more red fire engines, they will
445 have them. But the way this works, so that you will understand it, is that the
446 military are in charge of the logistics of this. What they ask for we give them.
447 What they don't ask for we don't run around trying to do. Now what the
448 military are saying at the moment is look we have the resources and equipment
449 that we need. Let us get on with it. We're coping perfectly well. If they make a
450 request for anything more then we will give it to them, and we will do that as I
451 have said constantly without any regard to picket lines or anything else.

452 **Question:**

453 Prime Minister you've talked a lot about affordability, but just to change the
454 pace slightly, I come back from being away a few days and read that you are

455 still in favour of top-up fees for University students whereas the Chancellor
456 isn't. I wondered how you could reconcile that apparent difference and also
457 reconcile top-up fees of up to £30,000 with a government target of - what is it
458 -50% of young people going to University?

459 **Prime Minister:**

460 Well, first of all I'd wait for the outcome of the review and then you will see I
461 think that the government's position is ...

462 **Question:**

463 Your position?

464 **Prime Minister:**

465 Well, my position would be the government's too, wouldn't it, but

466 **Question:**

467 Are you sure about that?

468 **Prime Minister:**

469 I think so Michael, yes. Secondly, I wouldn't believe a lot of the stories that
470 you are reading. Wait for the outcome of the review, but I've got absolutely no
471 intention of doing anything that is going to put off people going to University.
472 But the problem when you have got a review is that everyone speculates like
473 mad and then if you deny this, and deny that, then you end announcing the
474 review before it's done.

475 **Question:**

476 You have been critical of the employers side of the negotiations. You say they
477 have got to be more effective, they have got to be streamlined. But isn't the real
478 inefficiency the fact that there isn't a government minister directly involved,
479 the fact that they have to go back the whole time to somebody standing over
480 their shoulder slows down the negotiations?

481 **Prime Minister:**

482 The point is this, we aren't the employers and we have got to be careful of
483 setting a precedent whereby we come into every negotiation and effectively
484 negotiate direct. The employers in the end have got to cut the deal. We remain
485 there, available to be talked at and consulted and, as I say, we couldn't have
486 made our position clearer. We set up the Bain review with the specific consent
487 of the employers in order to say to them, look if you want to pay more than 4%
488 that's the way to do it. But if we start conducting every single piece of
489 negotiation ourselves, this is not the only negotiation that can lead to difficulty.
490 What I think is important, I understand it's a difficult situation where you have
491 got I think a Joint Negotiating Council of the employers that has over 40
492 people on it. Now I think it is intelligent and sensible that they streamline that
493 and get a bit of rigour into the proceedings. Then we will avoid a situation
494 where they approach deals through the night and then hand the bill over to the

495 government, which is not really a proper way of proceeding.

496 **Question:**

497 Prime Minister as a result of your answers, and could you correct me if I am
498 wrong, it seems that you have thrown out completely the Friday morning offer
499 of 16% effectively paid over one year? And from your answers you seem to
500 say it is 4% now that is on the table, and then 7.5% paid for by modernisation
501 over Bain over the next 2 years so we are back to 11.5% over 2 years. Is that
502 right? Otherwise it seems that figures just swill around without any clear ...

503 **Prime Minister:**

504 I understand that. But first of all I don't think that anybody has ever said that
505 the Friday morning deal was acceptable. I don't think there has been any doubt
506 about that from the very beginning for the reason I gave you that at the end of
507 the deal it says we can't meet this through modernisation, here's the bill for you
508 - government. Now all I am saying, and I am not going to get into percentages
509 in the sense of the final settlement, but what I am simply pointing out to you is
510 that Bain, if you want it over 2 years, said you could pay for 7.5% through
511 modernisation. He then said without specifying figures that there would be
512 further modernisation that could be done that could yield more money in the
513 longer term. That is precisely what they can sit down and negotiate on. But
514 they have got to negotiate within the parameters that have been set because
515 otherwise, as I say, they simply come back to us and say here's the bill, we
516 want the money.

517 **Question:**

518 Prime Minister, do you think it is now time to ban fire-fighters from striking?

519 **Prime Minister:**

520 I've never taken the view, I have to say ... as John Prescott said the other day
521 we keep all the legal positions that the government could take under review,
522 but I've never thought the right way to deal with these strikes is to try and ban
523 them. You I think you probably get into more problems than you solve. But I
524 do hope the fire-fighters realise that this is a strike that they simply cannot
525 succeed in because the consequences of succeeding is - it's not the defeat of the
526 government, that's not the point - it would be a defeat for the country because
527 the country would end up, after winning this economic stability, after doing so
528 well as an economy. Heaven's above we are probably better placed as an
529 economy than any major industrialised country in the world at the moment in
530 terms of unemployment and issues like that. We would be saying, after doing
531 all that, we are just going to throw it all away. I think someone said to me
532 earlier this is a sort of machismo. I've never taken that view of it. That's not the
533 way I operate. I try to operate in a consensual and reasonable way, but if
534 somebody makes an entirely unreasonable demand, I'm afraid you have simply
535 got to stand firm on it. It's as simple as that.

536 **Question:**

537 I don't know if you are aware that in the West Country this morning, in
538 Plymstock, a group of fire-fighters did actually cross the picket line, they were
539 full-time as we understand non-FBU fire-fighters. Presumably you welcome
540 this, but is the first time do you think of a weakening in resolve?

541 **Prime Minister:**

542 I don't know, to be honest and of course I hope that people do work normally
543 and go back to work. That's what we would want. But I think the fire-fighters
544 are in the position at the moment that they are being told by their leadership
545 that all you have to do is carry on striking, the government will give into this
546 claim, and I just urge them to understand that we can't. We won't and we can't.
547 Not because we are not reasonable people or because we've got something
548 against the fire-fighters but for the reasons that I have already given. I don't
549 know enough about the particular situation that you are talking of, but
550 obviously I hope that more and more people realise that this is a strike that
551 simply cannot succeed.

552 **Question:**

553 I wasn't quite clear that you were admitting that you did use the word
554 Scargillite about the fire-fighters leaders, and were you flattered or worried
555 when one newspaper said that you were doing a Maggie.

556 **Prime Minister:**

557 In the end, I have said all I have to say on the first point. In the end I think I
558 will do it my own way, thank you very much. But my own way is to be
559 perfectly reasonable with people, but also firm and whether that's a Maggie or
560 not, I'll leave to speculate on rather than me.

561 **Question:**

562 Is this a political strike?

563 **Prime Minister:**

564 Well, again I think I answered this earlier. I hope very much that people do not
565 think they can pursue political ends by industrial means. I was saying this to
566 somebody the other day that the big change that has come about for the Labour
567 Party as the governing party is this. We went through the 1970's. We went
568 through 18 years of Opposition with people saying we could use industrial
569 action to gain political ends. I'm not accusing the fire-fighters of that. I'm not
570 actually. But you have got to realise that the Labour Party has been through all
571 that. We are in government. This is a different Labour Government from any
572 previous Labour Government and as I say not for reasons of machismo, but for
573 reasons of common sense and moderation. We are never going back to those
574 days, and I will simply not tolerate a return to them.

575 **Question:**

576 The possibility of a war is at the front our minds at the moment in
577 January/February and of course that war would cost a lot of money. Does that

578 consideration limit your freedom?

579 **Prime Minister:**

580 It doesn't alter our policy on the fire dispute if that is what you mean. And let
581 us hope we can avoid conflict but we can only voice it on the basis of Saddam
582 Hussein disarming Iraq of all chemical and biological potentially nuclear
583 weapons programmes and that remains the position.

584 **Question:**

585 For the sake of clarity when talking about the unions have you ever uttered the
586 word Scargillite?

587 **Prime Minister:**

588 What I have said - and I am not going into details of conversations - but what I
589 have said is this, industrial militancy to pursue political ends which I guess
590 what people would think of as Scargillism is not on. Now I hope and believe
591 that the fire-fighters are not trying to do that, but we have got to be very, very
592 clear about that indeed. Those days are over in the country. Not under any
593 government and certainly not under this one.

594 **Question:**

595 Are you concerned as the strike goes on that the costs of dealing with it in
596 terms of police overtime and so forth could end up actually exceeding the costs
597 of settling the dispute?

598 **Prime Minister:**

599 Well they won't because the costs of settling the dispute, if we settled them on
600 the wrong terms, are "ginormous", they go right across the whole of the public
601 sector. So I don't think we are ever in that situation.

602 **Question:**

603 But in terms of settling the dispute with the fire-fighters you could end up with
604 spiralling costs if this dispute continues which you could actually offset by
605 settling?

606 **Prime Minister:**

607 Yes, but it is not like that, is it? First of all I don't either know or want to
608 speculate on what the precise costs of any police overtime and so on is, and of
609 course the fire-fighters for all the days they are on strike are not being paid.
610 But you can't look at the dispute in isolation, that is the point that I am making.
611 If I could get any point across to the fire-fighters today it is to say to them no
612 government could ever be in a situation where they say we are going to settle
613 this public sector dispute without any reference to the consequences and
614 knock-on effects of other public sector pay. We have got a negotiation that is
615 on its way at the moment with the nurses, now the nurses are paid less than
616 fire-fighters, significantly less than fire-fighters, nurses do a great job, they
617 work extremely hard, they save people's lives, they are under a lot of pressure.

618 Now how do I say to the fire-fighters you can have this pay settlement, and
619 then say to the nurses, am I going to stand up and say the nurses aren't a
620 special case, there is nothing special about nurses? What am I going to say the
621 Army? The guys who are out there actually doing the work at the moment, the
622 people who, heaven forbid it won't come to conflict, but supposing there is a
623 conflict are going to go out and actually risk their lives fighting for this
624 country and are paid less. It would be a lovely world if we could all pay
625 whatever we wanted, but we can't, and in the end we are the government.
626 Sometimes I hear people talk about why doesn't the government put the money
627 forward. It is not government money, it doesn't come out of my pocket, it is
628 you, it is the taxpayers' pocket, and any money that is not funded through
629 changes in working practice has to come either through additional borrowing
630 or higher taxes, it can't come in any other way.

631 **Question:**

632 Are you seriously concerned, like the Chief of Staff, about the effect on morale
633 of the Armed Forces caused by the fire dispute, and if the strike continues is it
634 not likely to have an impact on preparations for the war against Iraq?

635 **Prime Minister:**

636 Well I think the Chief of Defence Staff, I know what he was reported as
637 saying, but frankly I think he was only making a statement of the obvious.
638 Soldiers would prefer to be doing work as soldiers, not fire-fighters, that is
639 pretty obvious; and secondly, if you have got 19,000 people tied up in the fire
640 dispute those are 19,000 people at least that you can't use for something else.
641 But he also went on to say that he thought that we would have the ability to
642 meet fully any operational requirement we might have in respect of Iraq, and
643 that is the position, and that is precisely what he said.

644 **Question:**

645 You said earlier nurses, teachers, police officers, Armed Forces are paid less
646 than fire-fighters. Do you believe they are paid a decent wage, a moral wage?

647 **Prime Minister:**

648 Well what is a moral wage? As I said a moment or two ago, it would be nice to
649 pay everybody more, but you have got to try and manage these things on the
650 basis of the money that you have. And let's be clear again, public sector pay, I
651 think I am right in saying, not just for this last year but for the last two years,
652 has for the first time outstripped private sector pay, for the first time in a long
653 time. Now of course you can always go on. You know if you are a hard pressed
654 nurse working on an emergency ward through the night on a difficult shift,
655 how do you say what a moral or decent wage is for that person? I am afraid
656 just in practical terms it has got to come back to the negotiating machinery and
657 you have got to say to people look in the end this is the most that we can afford
658 given the government's budget, given the effect on other public sector workers.
659 And I do point out to you that the 5% is there for the firemen in any event.
660 Now 4% is roughly what the other public services have settled for, so you

661 would have to say well why is this different.

662 **Question:**

663 It is not simply the firemen obviously at the moment, we have got London
664 teachers, we have got airport workers, we have got many, many other groups.
665 Do you feel that you are facing a wave of industrial militancy at the moment
666 and do you think that this is particularly worrying given the state of the
667 international economy?

668 **Prime Minister:**

669 What I feel is that you can't look at this claim in isolation, and I think people
670 are sensible enough to know there is no return to the old days, but I think
671 people, if we were to give into this claim, might start thinking well we should
672 go and do the same and we will get the way above inflation pay increases not
673 linked to productivity and so on. That is why I say there are risks, if we give
674 into this type of claim mounted in this way, there are risks right across the
675 public sector and that is really what we are all trying to stress. We are not
676 saying to the fire-fighters look we don't understand you. We are simply saying
677 that if you go back to these types of claims being pursued in this way and it
678 starts to spread right across the public or private sector. Well you will end up
679 with an economic disaster frankly and we can't afford that as a country and we
680 are not going to do that. We as a country can take enormous pride in the fact
681 that our inflation, our mortgage rates, our unemployment is the lowest, all of
682 them, the lowest they have been for decades and decades. This country is the
683 country with the lowest unemployment at the moment of any major
684 industrialised country anywhere in the world, better than America, better than
685 Japan, better than Germany, better than France. We don't give that up lightly,
686 not if you are sensible.

687 **Question:**

688 The people that are being most inconvenienced are the public and particularly
689 the travelling public, not the government, not the fire-fighters. Are you saying
690 to them today that these strikes may carry on indefinitely but you are not going
691 to be able, if you can't beat the fire-fighters, if you can't bring them to the
692 table?

693 **Prime Minister:**

694 Look, I totally understand the inconvenience to people, and it is not just
695 inconvenience incidentally, there is a risk, there is a threat to people's lives if
696 this strike goes on, but you can't resolve it unless people are prepared to be
697 reasonable. If you just go back to Thursday night, Friday morning, here is a
698 situation where negotiations continue through the night and then the
699 government is literally then just handed a document, I don't even think we
700 were handed the full document, and told well you have got to agree this, there
701 are no costings, you don't know how much money you might be asked to fund,
702 and what's more we are going on strike within the hour unless it is all agreed.
703 Now I agree there is a lot of inconvenience and there is danger to people, but

704 there would be a lot more inconvenience and a lot more danger if we were to
705 yield to those types of tactics. We simply can't do it.

706 **Question:**

707 Do you believe that the Fire Brigades Union is sensible enough not to go back
708 to the '70s, but by the nature of every reply you seem to be suggesting you
709 think there are elements within the FBU who do precisely want to do that and
710 are politically motivated?

711 **Prime Minister:**

712 Well you could speculate on that or not. All I am saying is what I have said
713 today, I have just laid out the case for you. And I have tried to say to the fire-
714 fighters and to the public, look understand this because what happens when
715 these things are reported, for perfectly understandable reasons, is that you get
716 the headlines about fury here, and this there and all the rest of it. I am not, I
717 hope, being anything other than completely straight and reasonable with
718 people. I understand the claim but you cannot have a claim such as this based
719 on a completely different formula unless you agree the formula and that
720 formula has got to be about changes in working practices.

721 **Question:**

722 If the FBU come back to the negotiating table, is the most that they can hope
723 for what was offered under Bain, ie 11.5% over two years, in which case how
724 do you square that with what John Prescott said yesterday suggesting that if
725 they went back to the table the deal that was on offer on the Thursday night,
726 not the Friday morning, was offered the possibility for negotiation?

727 **Prime Minister:**

728 The answer to this is to realise that the Bain Report set out figures for year one
729 and year two, but they then said there might be over and above that 11.5%,
730 further money available for further modernisation. Now that is where the
731 differences in these figures come in and that is precisely what they should sit
732 down and talk about, but the point is they should talk about it on the basis of
733 the modernisation. And that is why, I hope that Jeremy Beecham can get his
734 local government colleagues to do this, but if they come and sit down and we
735 can do some agreed costings on what the modernisation is, then that should
736 allow them to make a slightly more structured progress on this. But the basic
737 position has not altered from day one, which is you can have your 4% but
738 anything above that has got to be paid for by modernisation, whether it is over
739 two, three years or so on.

740 **Question:**

741 I think why people are coming back to this again and again is because some
742 people say there is a pattern here, that it is like the fuel strike, the government
743 gets in a mess, you take charge, you talk tough and then the government gives
744 in. Are you sure you are not going to do that again?

745 **Prime Minister:**

746 I am sorry, just forgive me on the fuel strike, we gave in?

747 **Question:**

748 You did partially, yes, ... tax on petrol.

749 **Prime Minister:**

750 I think not, I think we ended the fuel strike without anything being done
751 whatever. We took into account the concerns people had at a later time, but I
752 think you will find the fuel strike ended without any concession on the
753 government's part at all.

754 **Question:**

755 And this will be a model?

756 **Prime Minister:**

757 I think that it is a different situation altogether, but I couldn't have been firmer
758 than I am being with you this morning, that above 4% has got to be paid for by
759 modernisation.

760 **Question:**

761 Just to clarify your clarification that could theoretically be a 16% increase
762 provided that it was all paid for by modernisation?

763 **Prime Minister:**

764 Yes, but the important point to realise is that it is not just the percentage, it is
765 the years over which it could be paid that is important, so you have got to take
766 both of those things into account. But I am not going to stand here and
767 negotiate it for you. What the negotiation has to proceed on is the basis that
768 anything above the 4% is paid for by modernisation. Now what they then sit
769 down and talk about, fine, they can sit down and talk about it, but that is the
770 basis on which they talk about it.

771 **Question:**

772 Are you saying that all pay in the public sector from now on will be on this
773 principle where there is the going rate, which in this case is 4%, but anything
774 over that would always have to be paid for by their own productivity, their own
775 savings in their particular sector, because if so that takes no account of the fact
776 that some people may be in genuinely much greater hardship than say the
777 fireman or the consultant, there are people right at the bottom who have fallen
778 back really badly over the last 20 years and who desperately need and deserve
779 more money? Are you saying that will never be taken into account, everybody
780 is where they are now and all extra money is only in productivity?

781 **Prime Minister:**

782 No emphatically I am not saying that. But again I think this arises from the
783 central misunderstanding about how this dispute began. Many of these other
784 public sector workers have Pay Review Boards that go and recommend pay,
785 and those Pay Review Boards will take all sorts of things into account. That is

786 the formula under which many of those people, like the teachers, or the
787 doctors, or whoever, operate under, the Armed Forces have got their own Pay
788 Review Board, it is a formula that the Pay Review Board then determines on.
789 Right. There is a formula existing for the fire-fighters, it is the one they went
790 on strike for 25 years ago. Now all I am saying is that if you change that you
791 have got to have a new formula. What is that new formula? That is why we set
792 up Bain to look at what would be reasonable as a new formula for pay. I do
793 commend people to read his report because it is the work, as you would expect
794 from him, of a completely reasonable person who has been long associated
795 with the Trade Union Movement and who had the presence of the TUC as one
796 of his two wing members. What he came back and said was - yes you could
797 actually justify above inflation increases, but here is this long list of working
798 practices, which for 25 years have never been changed, which are plainly out
799 of date in the modern world, and if you change those you will generate savings
800 that could be given in more pay. So I am not saying that means that you scrap
801 all the Pay Review Boards for everybody else or the negotiating machinery.

802 **Question:**

803 ... on the minimum wage who don't have Pay Review Bodies at all, would you
804 see a case why they might perhaps catch up much faster than other groups
805 higher up the scale - impossible?

806 **Prime Minister:**

807 Of course some of those people have caught up very significantly as a result of
808 the Working Families Tax Credit for example, in different situations, but their
809 actual disposable income has gone up. No I am not saying, I don't disturb any
810 of the other negotiating machinery there is for people, I am not going to chop
811 and change that, the point that I am making to you is that in each area of the
812 public sector there is a negotiating framework, a mechanism. Now if you want
813 to change that mechanism, supposing the teachers came along to us and said
814 we want to scrap the Teachers' Pay Review Board and we want a different type
815 of Pay Review Board. Now you might think the reasonable way of proceeding
816 was to sit down and agree the new formula, the mechanism. But what the fire-
817 fighters did was when the employers said OK if you don't want the existing
818 formula let's agree a new one, they said no, we want the 40% first and then we
819 will agree a new formula on top of it. So I simply say to you how on earth
820 could you agree to that? And to be fair to the employers, they didn't agree to it.

821 **Question:**

822 There is a launch in Manchester today urging companies to relocate from the
823 overheated south east to the north west. As a Northern MP do you believe that
824 in many respects it is becoming grim down south?

825 **Prime Minister:**

826 I think that goes in the category of late on in the press conference Questions
827 that you should answer with care. Obviously I hope that you get excellent
828 inward investment and location in the north west, and indeed in the north east

829 where my constituency is. I think a lot of people will look at the north-east and
830 north west and say you have got a fantastic workforce there, you have got a
831 high quality of life, it is well worth working and living there, but I am actually
832 very pleased that the southern economy is going extremely well. Sorry, that is
833 the diplomatic answer for you but I think it is the right one to give.

834 **Question:**

835 Prime Minister, your government is about to publish amendments to the
836 Northern Ireland policing legislation, how confident are you that the new
837 arrangements will be enough to get all the political parties, particularly Sinn
838 Fein, to support the policing structures in Northern Ireland?

839 **Prime Minister:**

840 Well we have to wait and see. I hope that these amendments, which are really
841 to fill the original Patten mandate, will command broad support. But it is also
842 the case that we have to be very clear that policing can only be done on the
843 basis that everyone is committed to exclusively democratic and peaceful
844 means and that the policing takes place on that basis. Now there are
845 discussions going on to try and take the Northern Ireland peace process
846 forward, I think there is room for taking them forward, but I set out in my
847 speech some time ago the basis of that, and obviously policing is one
848 important aspect. I think the great thing about the new Chief Constable and the
849 police service in Northern Ireland at the moment is they are making it clear
850 that those people engaged in so-called political violence are simply going to be
851 characterised as ordinary criminals. The police are operating on that basis and I
852 think that is right.

853 **Question:**

854 But in the problem of policing, is the problem of policing made more difficult
855 by the fact that the suspension is in place at the moment?

856 **Prime Minister:**

857 Well I think it is less to do with that than to do with the fact that you want to
858 get to the stage where everyone accepts the new police service of Northern
859 Ireland, where any disincentive for people to join up to that police service is
860 being diminished, resolved, and that in the end therefore it is commanding the
861 confidence right across the community. Now I think you can see, one of the
862 things that has often been said by some of the paramilitaries on the Republican
863 side for example is well you can't rely on the police service to police our areas
864 properly, that they somehow make an accommodation with Loyalist terrorism.
865 You are not finding that in the police service in Northern Ireland today, they
866 have been lifting literally scores of these so-called Loyalists and they will find
867 the full weight of the law being brought down to bear on them. And it really is
868 time, because I think this is what upsets the Unionist population as much as the
869 Nationalist population, to see these people connected with so-called
870 paramilitary organisations swaggering about in their local community, engaged
871 in organised crime and drug dealing and the law powerless to do anything

872 about it. Now that is precisely what the new Chief Constable is changing and I
873 am 100% behind him on it.

874 **Question:**

875 In your talks with President Bush in Prague last week, did you make any
876 further progress in terms of pushing ahead the Middle East peace process and
877 can you tell us anything else about your conversation with him about which we
878 have heard quite little?

879 **Prime Minister:**

880 Once again I have expressed to him, and I believe that he agrees from the
881 comments that he made as you know in the short press conference that we did,
882 that progress on the Middle East is vital. I continue to think that it is the single
883 most important thing, making progress, that we can do in terms of our
884 relationship with the Arab and Muslim world and that should be, as President
885 Bush himself said on the two state solution. The great possibility we have is
886 now everybody talks of the two state solution: Israel has got to be confident on
887 security; a viable Palestinian state. Now I hope we can make progress as soon
888 as possible, we are working very hard behind the scenes to achieve that and
889 when we have something to say on it I will say it.

890 **Question:**

891 On Iraq, if Saddam Hussein by the 8 December deadline states that he doesn't
892 have any weapons of mass destruction, would Britain understand him to be in
893 material breach of the UN Resolution, as President Bush appears to believe?

894 **Prime Minister:**

895 We have no doubt that he does have weapons of mass destruction, so let's wait
896 and see what he actually says. But I have made it clear throughout, this has got
897 to be a situation in which there is an honest declaration by Saddam and should
898 it be found that that declaration was dishonest, then that most certainly would
899 be a material breach. And again I have emphasised, and the way I have put it is
900 to say it is not a game of hide and seek, it is not a game of where the inspectors
901 go in and see if they can find the stuff and he sees if he can conceal it. If he
902 makes a false declaration, that is a breach and that is very clear.

903 **Question:**

904 ... or would you immediately take it as a false declaration?

905 **Prime Minister:**

906 Well you have the inspectors in there and the inspectors are the people who
907 will declare what the position is and the order to what they have found.

908 **Question:**

909 You met with Hans Blix a couple of days ago and had him brief you on how he
910 was planning to proceed with weapons inspections mandated by the United
911 Nations. Can you tell me if he had any particular plans to go in any site that

912 used to be off limit to UN inspectors, like the Presidential Palace?

913 **Prime Minister:**

914 How he conducts the inspections is up to Dr Blix and I was fully confident
915 after my meeting with him that he will conduct them in an extremely rigorous
916 manner and there will be no off-limits places. So if Saddam is refusing access
917 to sites that the inspectors want access to, then that is plainly a breach, there is
918 no doubt about that at all.

919 **Question:**

920 You said earlier that you believed the army was coping well with the fire-
921 fighters' strike. In the West Midlands we have had several devastating fires
922 since the strike began, including one where a gentleman who lived just 2
923 minutes away from a regular fire station died because it took 20 minutes, well I
924 am not sure if it was because of that, but it took 20 minutes for the Green
925 Goddesses to get there. What would you say to the people of the West
926 Midlands who might disagree with your assessment that they are coping well?

927 **Prime Minister:**

928 Well it is not my assessment, I think that is the military assessment, that so far
929 the deaths that there have been during the fire strike - and I stress that it is so
930 far, as I said in my statement earlier - have not been attributable to the strike.
931 But there is no doubt at all that it is not the same service as the service
932 normally provided. But I think you will find in each of these cases when you
933 look into the detail of it, that what the military are saying about this is correct.

934 **Question:**

935 May I ask your view on North Korea and when are you sending your
936 Ambassador to Pyongyang?

937 **Prime Minister:**

938 My view on North Korea very simply is this, that I think that there are real
939 dangers with the way they are conducting their nuclear and ballistic missile
940 programmes, they made a very clear set of promises to the United States some
941 time ago, they have to fulfil those promises, they have subsequently admitted
942 that they are not fulfilling them, and I think the threat from North Korea of
943 proliferation is very real indeed and that is what is making it extremely
944 difficult for countries to have normal diplomatic relations with them.

945 **Question:**

946 You explained in great detail today why breaching the spending limits on
947 public sector pay would be so damaging for the economy. Is it not equally
948 damaging that the Chancellor is going to have to raise borrowing on
949 Wednesday?

950 **Prime Minister:**

951 Well I would wait for his pre-budget report, if you don't mind I won't pre-

952 announce that for him. But I think you will find that given the difficult world
953 economic situation as it is, as you know, Britain has fared a great deal better
954 than most. And the reason we have done so, and I believe will continue to do
955 so, is precisely because of the tough decisions that were taken and because of
956 the way that the Chancellor has managed the economy. That is why we would
957 be very foolish to put this at risk. That is why I said to you today that it is
958 important to realise the broader context in which disputes like this take place
959 because as a government we can't look simply at the narrow confines of one
960 dispute with one group of workers, we have got to look at the whole thing in
961 the round, which is what we have done.
962

Speech by the Prime Minister Gordon Brown to TUC Congress - Monday 10 September 2007

Position for 'prime Minister Gordon brown delivers his speech to congress'
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1 Can I, first of all, at this the 139th Congress of the TUC, thank you, Alison, as
2 President of the Congress, and Brendan and the General Council for your
3 leadership week in and week out of the trade union movement of this country.
4 I will never forget that the trade union movement of this country was built over
5 two centuries by hard work and by the struggles and sacrifices of men and
6 women who had a vision of a better and fairer future, free of poverty and free
7 of injustice. Today the work of the trades unions of this country is possible
8 only because of men and women who year in, year out, give their energy,
9 devotion and commitment to sustain and in every generation to revitalise the
10 trade union Movement. As they step down from service to the General Council
11 this year, let me this morning on your behalf and on behalf of unions around
12 the country thank all those who have served the General Council and who are
13 now stepping down: Paul Mackney, Sofi Taylor, Pauline Foulkes, Barry
14 Camfield and Jimmy Kelly. Thank you for the work you have done not just
15 for the trade union movement but for our country.

16 Let me thank Ed Sweeney, who is also stepping down from the General
17 Council, and congratulate him on his appointment, which I believe will be
18 warmly welcomed around the movement and across industry when it is
19 announced today, as the new Chair of ACAS. I know you will want to wish
20 Ed the best in his new role.

21 Before I had this job and actually before I was a Member of Parliament, I
22 worked in education. I was for some time part-time as a Workers Education
23 Association tutor, and with the Open University and as a tutor in trade union
24 learning. When I and others taught trades union education at Loader College
25 in Scotland and when, as a result of numbers signing up, the Department of
26 Employment under Norman Tebbit cut back the trade union learning budget, I
27 do not think he had any idea of the unstoppable momentum of trade union
28 learning in Britain which has grown from strength to strength. So you will
29 understand why I am pleased to offer my personal congratulations to all those
30 TUC award winners today for their work in trade union learning and in trade
31 union organisation -- Lorene, Patrick, Irene, Lisa, Linda, Peter and Russell --
32 and the struggles that they have had and their aspirations and commitment
33 show how graphically we in Britain can respond and are responding to all the
34 new challenges of the restructuring of today's global economy. Thousands of
35 people are now obtaining new skills needed to succeed in the future.

36 For all its two centuries, the trade union movement of this country has been
37 about enhancing the dignity and the work of labour. Today we are finding a

38 new role which makes the task we undertake more relevant, more urgent and
39 more demanding than ever. To enhance the dignity and value of labour in the
40 21st Century it is undeniable that we need to enhance the skills of every
41 worker in this country.

42 So the new role for trade unions is to bargain for skills, to campaign for skills,
43 to invest for skills and for the fair rewards of skills. It is this challenge how all
44 of us in Britain raise our game, to meet and master the new forces of
45 globalisation in the interests of working people in this country, and that is what
46 I want to speak about this morning: the task of the future.

47 As I have believed all my life, from part-time trades union tutor to MP, by
48 enhancing the dignity and value of labour we will make Britain the best
49 educated, best trained and best skilled country in the world and the most
50 prosperous as a result.

51 This is my central message today. All of us must prepare and equip ourselves
52 for this global era. We must maximise its opportunities for working people and
53 seek to minimise its insecurities. Nothing should stand in the way of us
54 building jobs and prosperity not just for some but for all British working
55 people. If we do so and mobilise the talents of all our people, then I believe
56 that Great Britain can be the great success story of this new global age.

57 When the Leader of the Labour Party comes to the TUC he always brings with
58 him the greetings of the Labour Party and of Labour Members of Parliament.
59 This year I have a particularly joyous task additional to that, which is to offer
60 not just the good wishes of Labour MPs but to pass on to you the words of the
61 man whose statue I had the privilege of unveiling a few days ago in
62 Parliament Square – Nelson Mandela. He asked to send his heartfelt thanks to
63 the labour movement in Britain as a whole, for the ceaseless commitment and
64 the shared support sustained over many years in the struggle that defeated the
65 evil of apartheid. I hope from here that we can send him our best wishes as he
66 prepares for his 90th birthday next year.

67 I said at that ceremony in Parliament Square, and I know many of you here
68 were there that day, that Nelson Mandela's statue is not a monument to the past
69 but a beacon of hope for the future. It sends a signal that no injustice can last
70 for ever, that suffering in the cause of liberty is never in vain, that there is
71 nothing that those in the cause of justice cannot achieve if they stand together
72 and work for common purposes. I say to you today, from the *Make Poverty*
73 *History Campaign* internationally to campaigning for justice as you have been
74 talking about in the last debate on child poverty at home, that as long as there
75 is poverty and unfairness, wherever discrimination and injustice exists, there
76 we must be also working for change.

77 Of the great struggles of the last century, against the dark night of fascism,
78 Nazi-ism and anti-semitism, against the shame of apartheid and for the victory
79 of democracy and equal rights at home and abroad, British working people
80 have always played a decisive role. In this century, the 21st Century, we have
81 injustice to fight, too. I promise you that our voice as a Labour Government

82 will be heard, demanding an end to the denial of democracy and human rights
83 in Burma, supporting a ceasefire with justice for the two million displaced in
84 Darfur and supporting peace with justice in the Middle East.

85 We have terrorist extremism to fight whether in Afghanistan or in the twenty
86 countries, including Iraq, in which Al Qaeda have bombed and maimed
87 innocent people. It is important to say today that we will do our duty and keep
88 our promises and honour and discharge our obligations to the international
89 community and to the new democracy of peoples in Iraq.

90 Also we have just to build in Africa, so just as we stood side by side with
91 Nelson Mandela to defeat apartheid, I now join Nelson Mandela in asking you
92 to be part of the *Education for All Campaign* so that the day will dawn soon
93 when 80 million children who do not go to school today because there are no
94 schools for them to go to, will have the basic human right of education. Like
95 people here, I have been in Africa. I have met children who, if given the
96 chance, could be the next Mandela, or the doctor who saves lives, or a teacher
97 who inspires children or a public service worker who cares for people in need.
98 Let us by raising international development aid and by mobilising the world's
99 resources work together not only to eradicate illiteracy in the coming decade
100 but use the medical knowledge and science that we have to eradicate the killer
101 diseases.

102 And even as we together face the forces of globalisation, let us make it our
103 mission to ensure that in rich and poor countries alike, all children and all
104 families are not the victims but the beneficiaries of globalisation, not the losers
105 but the winners from global change.

106 In the last 20 years with a trebling of world trade, with two billion workers
107 joining the industrial economy in Asia, this global economy has been
108 transformed as everybody here knows at a speed and on a scale which has not
109 been seen since the industrial revolution.

110 Let us face the facts: soon 25% of the world's output could come from just two
111 countries – China and India. Europe is now exporting less manufactured
112 goods than Asia. In Britain famous household names from GEC to BTR have
113 virtually disappeared. Already an Indian company has bought British Steel, an
114 Egyptian company has taken over the third largest Italian telecommunications
115 firm and a Brazilian company is now the second largest mining enterprise in
116 the world.

117 We cannot dismiss these changes, as it is sometimes said, as China and India
118 take over the low tech industries, as a race to the bottom where the answer is
119 simply protecting home industries, shutting foreign goods out and sheltering
120 from change. Already India's biggest export earnings are not tea or clothing
121 but computer software and management services. China is today producing
122 half the world's textiles, half the world's computers, 60% of all mobile phones,
123 60% of digital cameras and 80% of some of the most sophisticated electronic
124 goods that we use every day. Already China and India are turning out more
125 engineers, more computer scientists and more university graduates than the

126 whole of Europe and America combined.

127 When it comes to our members' jobs, the most important fact is that the world
128 has seen a 400% rise in the numbers of unskilled workers. Just think about
129 what that means about our need for our workers to acquire skills. In Asia a
130 worker is doing a week's unskilled work for £20 a week rather than the
131 average £300 here. So the answer is clear. It is a new role for trade unionism
132 in Britain and in the world – our workers given the power to acquire the skills
133 that give us the bargaining power, the higher wages and then the prosperity.

134 It is a point of principle for me as it will be for you: the answer is not to
135 compete on low skills with ever lowering standards but to compete on ever
136 higher skills – most of all ensuring that our children and our young people
137 have the training, the skills and the qualifications to get secure, well paid, high
138 quality jobs in Britain in the future.

139 So the sheer scale, scope and size of the global change is a wake-up call to all
140 of us. We all must rise to the challenges of global change: businesses,
141 teachers, politicians, trade unionists, all of us. We will only meet the new
142 challenges ahead which are to finance education for all our children, provide
143 the best work life balance with more child care for all, ensuring dignity and
144 security for all in retirement, creating the best of standards for people in the
145 workplace, if we can meet and master the huge global challenges ahead.

146 Some people think that the 21st Century will be China's century. But I think
147 that if we show the skills, the inventiveness, the creativity and the spirit of
148 enterprise, we can make it a British century. Some people argue that in this
149 fast moving world of change we have to sacrifice our enduring values and give
150 up on full employment and universal public services. But when people ask me
151 about this world of fast moving change, of greater opportunity and yet greater
152 unsecurity, and they ask: can we, the British people, in this generation, meet
153 and master the new challenges and still achieve our goals of full employment,
154 defending and strengthening public services, ensuring hard working people in
155 Britain are better off in living standards, in pensions and in services, my
156 answer is that if we work together and raise our game, if we do not resist
157 change but embrace it as a force for progress and if we equip ourselves with
158 investment, science, enterprise and flexibility, and most of all if we upgrade
159 our education and skills, then we can not only meet and master these realities
160 of global change but also ensure more British jobs, higher standards of living,
161 and better public services, including an NHS that improves every year, free at
162 the point of need.

163 That means to achieve it we must embrace a new mission for this generation:
164 to unlock all the talent of all the people of this country of Britain.

165 In the next few days as a Government we will announce plans to make us
166 world class in science, in innovation and in the creative industries, and we
167 want to make sure that inventions created here are developed here, produced
168 and manufactured here and provide jobs to men and women in Britain.

169 In the next two weeks, too, we will show with our announcements in the
170 Spending Review that we will invest in the infrastructure, the transport of the
171 future, and we will show how the issue for the British economy moving
172 forward is not manufacturing giving way to services, but building modern
173 manufacturing strength and service strength in all regions of our country.

174 I tell all those who, like me, have faith in the future of British manufacturing
175 from aerospace and vehicles, to IT and pharmaceuticals, that Britain can and
176 we will lead in the high technology, high value, high quality, manufacturing
177 and services of the future.

178 And while demanding a level playing field in Europe and demanding also right
179 through the negotiations on the amended European Treaty that the red lines
180 that we have set are guaranteed, we will at all times continue to stand up for
181 British interests in Europe.

182 In the next few days we will also show how as we prepare for a low carbon
183 future for our environment thousands of jobs will come for investing in energy
184 efficiency and in environmental technology products and processes, from
185 carbon capture to innovative low-carbon fuels, where Britain can be a world
186 leader creating new jobs for the future, and with the conclusion of our
187 spending review in the autumn we will show British people how we will
188 expand the National Health Service, free when you need it, access founded not
189 on wealth but on need, and with the same ethic of public services that is
190 important to all of us, we will also build more houses to buy and to let with a
191 50% increase in social housing.

192 Now today I want to show you how we can respond to globalisation by
193 creating more jobs for British men and women and young people throughout
194 our economy. After I took over this job a few months ago I asked for a study
195 to be done on where the jobs are going to come from in future years. I found
196 that while in the next decade we will need less unskilled jobs, we will need 5
197 million more skilled jobs.

198 I want us to be ready and prepared for what is the biggest economic
199 transformation in employment our country will have seen for a 100 years.

200 Even now today there are greater opportunities. In addition to 29 million jobs
201 in our economy, which is already the highest level of employment in our
202 history, there are even today two-thirds of a million vacancies waiting to be
203 filled, 654,000 in all.

204 Because the vacancies go right across the board in manufacturing, finance,
205 hospitality, healthcare, because the vacancies exist in every region and nation
206 of the country, and because they range across all our skills, our task in the
207 coming months and years is to rapidly match workers needing jobs to the jobs
208 that need workers.

209 One of the benefits of globalisation is, of course, the benefits we receive in
210 many industries from the skills of workers from around the world, but it is
211 absolutely essential also that British workers receive all the support, the

212 training, and the skills, so that they can share in the benefits of globalisation
213 too.

214 The new jobs that are coming and the vacancies that exist represent a great
215 new opportunity for not just British adults but for British young people as
216 never before. It is a huge opportunity for British trades unions to recruit, to
217 expand union membership, expand union learning, and grow your numbers in
218 the years to come.

219 Now, I want to thank all of you because I was there with you as you
220 campaigned in the 1980s and the 1990s for jobs, when you lobbied for jobs,
221 demonstrated for jobs, petitioned for jobs on these marches for jobs, and as a
222 result of what was achieved by your campaigns the number of jobs in our
223 economy has risen by almost 3 million in the last 10 years, that is 3 million
224 men and women who otherwise would have been without work, who thanks to
225 the campaigns that have been mounted are in work today.

226 We are now ready to take the next big step forward as a country. There are
227 jobs available today for in total 30 million men and women for the first time in
228 our history. If we make the right decisions, we can advance even further and
229 faster to full employment than ever before, with a British job on offer for every
230 British worker.

231 Today I am proposing, and I have written to Brendan, the General Secretary,
232 about this, that we work together to fast-track British workers into jobs we
233 know exist and we work together to implement radically five practical changes
234 that between them will yield half a million jobs.

235 The first is for decades, as you know, the barrier to work was the lack of jobs.
236 Today with two-thirds of a million vacancies the biggest barrier is not lack of
237 jobs but lack of skills and lack of links between employers who need workers
238 and workers who need jobs.

239 I want you to work with us as we talk to the 200 largest companies in Britain
240 and 64 of the best known – from Sainsburys in retail, HBOS, and RBS in
241 banking and finance, Travelodge, Compass in hospitality, Corillian, Mowlem,
242 Diagio in manufacturing and construction - have already committed to take on,
243 train up, and offer jobs opportunity to men and women who today are inactive
244 or unemployed. Between now and 2010 by this measure alone a total of
245 250,000 extra job opportunities will come to British workers.

246 Just take one big national project, as we build the Olympic facilities we should
247 train up local young people in our construction industry. Our plan is to start by
248 helping 5,000 young people into jobs in London and ensure that jobs in the
249 Olympics should and can go to local young men and women.

250 Let me say also that we can only create thousands more jobs and move faster
251 to full employment if having defeated inflation in the last 10 years we continue
252 to defeat inflation in the next 10.

253 This week will see the 15th anniversary of the most humiliating day for British

254 economic policy in modern history, the Black Wednesday, of 15% interest
255 rates, the exit from the ERM, the mortgage misery, the record repossessions,
256 the negative equity, the 3 million unemployed, all the disasters that befell us 15
257 years ago.

258 The current Conservative leader was the principal economic adviser to the
259 Chancellor of Black Wednesday and he stood alongside Norman Lamont as he
260 announced the shame of the ERM exit and 15% interest rates.

261 If we were again to allow, as they did, inflation to get out of control by
262 repeating as some would the same mistakes of 15 years ago, we would be back
263 to Britain's same old familiar Conservative pattern of spiralling prices, high
264 unemployment, a mortgage crisis, and public spending cuts.

265 It is because we must never return again to those days when reckless promises
266 that you could simultaneously cut taxes, raise spending, cut borrowing, were
267 made and then inflation was allowed to get out of control causing 3 million
268 unemployed, £16 billion public spending cuts, half a million repossessions,
269 that we the Labour Government will always put stability first; no loss of
270 discipline, no resort to the easy options, no unaffordable promises, no taking
271 risks with inflation.

272 So let me be straightforward with you, pay discipline is essential to prevent
273 inflation, to maintain growth and to create more jobs, so that we never return
274 to the Conservative pattern of boom and bust ever again, and because this
275 Government will take no risk with the economy we will only make promises
276 we can afford.

277 For me it will be stability first, now and into the future, and that is stability not
278 just yesterday but today, and tomorrow, and in my view that will bring us more
279 jobs. I can also announce further measures to fast-track thousands more into
280 jobs that are vacant, to guarantee for the first time in our country's history a
281 job interview for every lone parent who is looking for work and ready for
282 work, a new deal whereby prospective employees are invited into the
283 workplace for onsite discussions, a new financial offer guaranteeing up to six
284 weeks benefits during a work trial for lone parents, where training is required a
285 training allowance of up to £400, for the lone parent taking a job for the first
286 year £40 a week extra, £60 a week in London, ensuring that work always pays.

287 Let me add for those who come to Britain to do skilled work we will first
288 require you to learn English, a requirement we are prepared to extend to lower
289 skilled workers as well. Fast-track means more jobs by offering better routes
290 for young people. There are 85,000 more young people in college than in
291 1997, there are 340,000 more young people in work, but we know there are
292 still too many teenagers after 16 who are not in education, training, or work at
293 all. Let me also announce a fast-track for out of work teenagers: all this
294 summer's school leavers guaranteed a place on a pre-apprenticeship course or
295 at college, a pathway to jobs for hundreds and thousands of young men and
296 women who too often in the past would have fallen through the net. Let all of
297 us work together to improve what are the keys we know to our future, the

298 apprenticeships.

299 I am announcing today also that we will create a new all round the country
300 service that is to match the apprentices who need training to the companies and
301 the organisations who want young people to train. I say to our trades unions in
302 the public sector, we are ready to work with you now to expand
303 apprenticeships into local government, the NHS, the Civil Service itself, as
304 well as into all sectors of the youth labour market. Our target is to move
305 apprenticeships in this country from today's 250,000, which is more than three
306 times the 70,000 it was in 1997, to expand from 250,000 to 500,000 over the
307 next 10 years to 2020. This is why your work in trade union learning becomes
308 central. It is central to the future not just of your unions but to the country.
309 You understand that to build for the future we must enhance the value of
310 labour and skills. Fifty unions are now engaged in what I believe is the biggest
311 transformation since the growth of the shop steward movement, a total of
312 18,000 trades union learning representatives in workplaces all round the
313 country. Today your learning representatives, and I have congratulated some
314 of them here today, are working in 700 separate workplaces, and they are
315 helping 100,000 of our fellow colleagues at work. To expand union learning in
316 the workplace and to meet our ambition, which is one million adults in
317 learning, we are going to raise the money available from the Union Learning
318 Fund from £12.5 million this year to £15.5 million next, and I call on all
319 employers to join you in signing up to our skills pledge that every employee
320 should have the right to gain basic skills, every employee the right, and I
321 repeat, if we do not make sufficient progress over the next three years we will
322 consider for employees in England who lack a good vocational qualification a
323 legal entitlement to workplace training. We want to stand with you not just to
324 create jobs but to create good jobs, decent jobs, where employees are at all
325 times fairly treated. I am today also talking to the General Secretary about
326 how we work effectively to make sure that today's vulnerable workers are
327 tomorrow's secure workers. Let us be clear, no employer anywhere should be
328 allowed to avoid the minimum wage. No employer should be allowed to
329 impose unsafe or unacceptable conditions. I will stand with you to enforce all
330 the conditions of the minimum wage. Let me say also, it is wrong that in any
331 place, at any time, pizza staff or farm workers could ever take home less than
332 £5 a week because of deductions for their transport, or for loans, practices
333 which I know anger the overwhelming and vast majority of the British people,
334 and the price of a job should never be a substandard wage or a dangerous
335 workplace. We are taking new enforcement powers against people traffickers
336 who buy and sell illegal migrant labour. We remember the tragedy of the
337 cockle-pickers of Morecambe Bay and we have responded to your calls for
338 controls on gangmasters. Let me say we are not only introducing the
339 Gangmaster Licensing Authority, but this winter we will legislate to tighten
340 agency regulation. I applaud also the work that unions here have done to help
341 migrant workers and to combat racism and any bigotry against those who are
342 here perfectly legally but who live in fear from unscrupulous employers who
343 profit from fear, and we will at all times stand up to and expose and seek to

344 eliminate from every council hall in Britain the bigotry of the BNP. We will
345 also continue to support the Portuguese presidency of the European Union as
346 they are pushing this month for an Agency Workers Directive in Europe. At
347 the same time we in Britain will ensure four weeks annual holiday as of a
348 right. Thanks to your campaigning and the Warwick Agreement this will be in
349 addition to bank holidays. For parents of young children and carers there are
350 new rights to seek flexible working hours and, of course, not only the right in
351 law to be represented by your union but after years of campaigning and the
352 dialogue, and after laying the foundation and tackling pensioner poverty,
353 introducing the Pension Protection Fund, there is a new pensions settlement for
354 the future where employers will now contribute by law to the pension of their
355 employee and Britain is now on track to again link the basic pension to
356 earnings. We also want to work with you in every area where workers are
357 vulnerable. We want to reach out to those who are too unaware or too
358 intimidated to complain, we want to increase awareness of their rights among
359 school leavers, and we will now examine with you how by bringing the power
360 of all the enforcement agencies together they can be more effective in
361 advancing basic rights. Let me announce today that we will now increase the
362 maximum penalties for violation of the minimum wage, we will raise the
363 amount of compensation paid to workers who are owed arrears, and we will in
364 future target resources to projects aimed at the safety and security of
365 vulnerable workers who are at risk. Congress, today I am issuing to you an
366 invitation to work side-by-side in a national effort to raise our skills and raise
367 the standards so that together we can meet and master the forces of
368 globalisation. Britain can succeed and lead in the new global economy and
369 achieve full employment. I will settle for nothing less, neither will you, and
370 neither will the British people.

371 Let us in conclusion remember what we can achieve by working together.
372 Two hundred years ago it was the British people who came together and with
373 the biggest mass petition that had ever been mounted in the history of our
374 country the British people brought the trade in slavery to an end. Now in this
375 century working internationally and at home this generation can record proud
376 achievements too. Following the leadership of Nelson Mandela, I strongly
377 believe that we could be the first generation to ensure that every single child in
378 every country in every continent has the basic right to go to school. Let us also
379 be the generation that ensures another fundamental right, that every mother
380 and every child is protected and we eliminate the scourges of tuberculosis,
381 polio, diphtheria, malaria, and then HIV/AIDS from this world. Here at home
382 let us also be the first generation able to show the world that instead of a
383 globalisation which benefits just a few our country is a beacon for justice and
384 fairness to all, the first country that can genuinely say that because of our
385 efforts together we liberate not just some of the talents of some of the people
386 but we liberate all of the talents of all of the people and so together we ensure
387 the objective we all seek, dignity, security, and prosperity for all.

388 Thank you very much.

APPENDIX TWO
Historical Figures

Table 1: Do you agree or disagree that trade unions have too much power in Britain today?

	<i>Agree (%)</i>		<i>Disagree (%)</i>	
	<i>All</i>	<i>Union members</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Union members</i>
October 1975	75	65	16	28
August 1977	79	68	17	27
September 1978	82	73	16	25
September 1979	80	69	16	28
July 1980	72	58	19	31
November 1981	70	58	22	31
August 1982	71	62	21	34
August 1983	68	56	25	39
August 1984	68	55	24	37
August 1989	41	26	42	62
August 1990	38	22	45	66
February 1992	27	14	64	82

Source: Taylor (1993) p.369

Table 2: Changing attitudes to whether trade union are a 'good' or a 'bad' thing.

	<i>Good (%)</i>	<i>Bad (%)</i>	<i>Don't know (%)</i>
December 1952	69	12	19
August 1954	71	12	17
May 1955	64	12	24
August 1956	61	20	19
August 1957	53	21	26
August 1958	61	15	24
August 1959	60	23	17
September 1960	56	17	27
August 1963	62	21	17
August 1964	70	12	18
August 1965	57	25	18
August 1966	63	20	17
August 1967	60	23	12
August 1968	66	18	16
June 1969	57	26	18
August 1970	60	24	17
August 1971	62	21	17
May 1972	56	32	12
August 1972	55	30	16
August 1973	61	25	14
December 1973	57	24	19
February 1974	60	25	14
August 1974	54	27	19
July 1975	43	41	16
August 1975	51	34	16
August 1976	60	25	14
August 1977	53	33	14
August 1978	57	31	12
January 1979	44	44	12
August 1979	58	29	13
August 1980	60	29	11
August 1981	56	28	16
August 1982	59	30	11
August 1983	63	25	12
August 1984	61	30	10
August 1985	65	24	10
August 1986	67	22	12
August 1987	71	17	12
August 1988	68	21	11
August 1989	68	24	8
August 1990	67	21	12
August 1991	70	17	13
August 1992	62	26	13

Source: Taylor (1993) p.371

Table 3: How British trade unionists voted at general elections

	<i>Labour (%)</i>	<i>Conservative (%)</i>	<i>Others (%)</i>
1964	73	22	5
1966	71	25	4
1970	66	28	6
1974 (February)	55	30	15
1974 (October)	55	27	16
1979	51	33	13
1983	39	31	29
1987	42	31	25
1992	46	31	19

389

Source: Taylor (1993) p.373