

Chapter two

Roads to freedom in the 1920s

2.1 THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM

By 1921, the combative spirit on which syndicalism had thrived was weakening. 'Black Friday' – the collapse that April of the triple industrial alliance of miners, railwaymen and dockers – proved the signal for a general industrial retreat. As Purcell wrote to Mann a few weeks afterwards, 'I am up to my eyes in the vile business of urging the giving of ground in the shape of reduced wages and unfortunately there [is] a ready response'.¹ In the search for alternative ways forward G.D.H. Cole in the *New Statesman* discerned a 'swing of the pendulum' between industrial and political action.² A widely held notion at the time, the idea of such a swing was seemingly borne out in the few years that followed. The ebbing of militant industrialism was succeeded by a cluster of general elections, Sidney Webb's heralding of the inevitability of gradualness and the corroboration in 1924 of a first Labour government. Lasting less than a year, this was followed by a revival of direct action as the antidote to a flaccid and accommodating parliamentarism. Culminating in the 1926 General Strike and miners' lockout, this in turn gave way to a more emphatic reassertion of parliamentary ascendancy and a second Labour government in 1929-31. When this too collapsed in disarray, there was no corresponding prospect of an industrial upsurge. For some like the Webbs, the failing of the pendulum meant the turn to communism as *deus ex machina*.

Purcell at first glance epitomises the pendulum swing. For a time after Black Friday he diverted his energies into more political channels. Though he then swung back to union action, the failure of the General Strike proved the prelude to his permanent departure from the national scene in the late 1920s. Whatever its wider justification, at the level of the individual biography the idea of an oscillation between political and industrial action is nevertheless inadequate. For the dealer in ideas, dramatic transitions were possible without getting up from the typewriter. Beatrice Webb, who immediately took up Cole's pendulum metaphor, is an obvious example. In Cole's case, even more than the Webbs', a series of such transitions and recantations were accommodated within a relatively conven-

tional professional career. For their immediate practitioners, on the other hand, politics and direct action did not just present strategic choices but were issues of leadership, recognition and entitlement. If syndicalists looked warily on politicians, and politicians warily back, it was because these represented alternative claims to the movement's direction and the social and professional basis on which it should rest. In any case, the simple categories of 'industrial' and 'political' concealed both persisting political ambitions on the part of trade unions and the diverse forms in which both political and industrial action could be envisaged.

Three years earlier, Bertrand Russell had employed the less mechanistic metaphor of roads to freedom, or workers' emancipation, in discussing the rival claims of socialism, anarchism and syndicalism.³ In 1920, the year he travelled to Russia with Purcell, Russell extended the discussion to Bolshevism and its attempted realisation of the communist ideal.⁴ The idea of different roads, down which one might either lead the way or else turn off, seems closer in spirit to the pegs on which Purcell looked to 'hang his advocacy'.⁵ Purcell was at one with Mann in expressing indifference to terms like 'Socialist, Spartacist, Bolshevik or Syndicalist' as long as they signified the rejection of capitalism.⁶ Already at the CPGB's founding congress he deprecated differences over 'mere phraseology' and urged 'the working-class itself to rally for the purpose of ... owning and controlling the means of production'.⁷ He returned to the theme in the *Labour Monthly* contribution that so exasperated Dutt:

Policies, programmes, platforms and what not have the knack of nosing forward, and shifting either sideways or to the rear a little or much, just according to the bleat of those behind or the blast of those in the front line of advocacy. ... I have been in at the drafting and distribution of millions of them, but never once did I believe they would do the thing the chief enthusiasts desired. My view has always been that I regarded this literature attack as an effort to get the working class to know itself.⁸

Bolshevism, in the form of the CPGB, was one of these platforms. Guild socialism, in the form of the Furniture and Furnishing Guild (FFG), was another. Parliamentary socialism, during Purcell's two stints as MP, was a third. Running concurrently with all of them was the TUC general council, which for a time was presented as legatee to the syndicalist agitations of the previous decade. There was therefore no simple progression from one road to another. For simplicity's sake, however, the following sections describe each of these key political commitments of the 1920s in turn.

Purcell's innocent phrase, the working class itself, conveys a certain consistency of outlook underlying these diverse forms of activity. At the same time it obscures a more basic shift in the

conditions on which they were performed. For Purcell, it implied a continuing orientation to the labour movement structures through which the working class was animated, and a belief that the movement's *raison d'être* was precisely this ethos and practice of self-representation. Inasmuch as this was exercised by and through the trade unions, Labour's emergence as a national political force offered greater opportunities for political intervention than ever before or since. With proliferating functions of representation, publicity and research, Purcell had a direct hand in all of them: as union-sponsored MP, nominal editor of a short-lived journal and three times a TUC signatory to international fact-finding reports. From *Hansard* to the flourishing left-wing press, the wider documentation of his views is suggestive in itself of the new public profile of the trade unionist-politician.

Nevertheless, Labour's coming of age turned out in this respect to have been its swansong. Even into the 1930s, as Ben Pimlott observed, the labour movement remained 'a network of industrial, social and cultural organisations, with the "political wing" as merely one feature'.⁹ Even so, the establishment by this time of a *modus vivendi* between party and unions meant a far clearer sense of hierarchy, function and prerogative. Proliferating functions came to mean specialisation and professionalisation. Not infrequently this also meant the recognition of traditional forms of qualification embodying class and educational privilege. Already in the 1920s Purcell depended on editorial professionals for his magazine *Trade Union Unity*. He also relied on the reputed business skills of Samuel Hobson for the Furnishing Guild and on former career professionals from the military or diplomatic service for Labour's Russian delegations. Allegations quickly surfaced that theirs was in fact the controlling hand, and Purcell little more than a figurehead. As yet the role of such figures was nevertheless accommodated within the labour movement's traditional authority structures through the Webbian notion of 'clerks' or 'civil servants'. In any case their contribution was largely *ad hoc* and lacked the constraining solidity of a formal bureaucratic apparatus. For a few years at least, Purcell's career showed what room for manoeuvre there was between the Labour and communist parties, and what moral and material resources were to be derived from the rivalry between them. In retrospect it proved barely a moment, and his falling was as meteor-like as his sudden appearance on the national stage.

2.2 NON-PARTY COMMUNISM

In the spring of 1920 the British Socialist Party, successor to the SDF, set out its philosophy of political action within the context of the newly established Comintern. 'The British working class will move – have no fear of that', it insisted:

But it will move through its own institutions and impelled by the accumulated experience of its own historic past ... For ourselves, we shall continue to be with the mass of the workers wherever they are – even in the Labour Party, helping them in their struggles, pointing out their mistakes, opposing the influence of their opportunist leaders and seeking always to inspire them with our communist ideals.¹⁰

Numerically at least, the BSP provided the dominant component within the CPGB on its foundation a few weeks later. Its ambition, to remain true at once to Labour institutions and to communist ideals, was to prove an impossible balancing act. Nevertheless, Purcell at first found it plausible enough, not only to have joined the CPGB but to have moved the resolution that brought the party into being.

Other trade unionists drawn this way included Cook, Robert Williams and the syndicalist Jack Tanner. None, however, succeeded in combining union office with communist party discipline. If Mann proved a communist catch, it was possible only because of his retirement from union responsibilities. If Pollitt proved another, it was at the cost, in practice, of renouncing such ambitions. If Gossip remained the union leader closest to the CPGB, it was because he never took the step of actually joining the party. Within two years of its foundation, all of the others, including Purcell, were once more outside the party's ranks. Not until the years of the popular front was a British communist again to hold prominent union office.¹¹

Potential difficulties were discernible from the start. Representing the South Salford BSP at the CPGB's foundation congress, Purcell moved the party's establishment on the basis of Soviets or workers' councils and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Already, however, he described the party as the movement's 'guide' rather than its leader; not 'prodding and pinpricking the working-class' but recognising the 'hard concrete facts of industrial organisation'.¹² For a time he appeared on communist platforms, and with Williams beside him put the case for a 'strongly organised Communist Party'.¹³ One may doubt that he ever intended being strongly organised by it. In April 1921, Williams became the CPGB's first prominent expellee on account of his role in Black Friday. Cook left, or was expelled, shortly afterwards, jibbing at the outside direction of a 'small clique'.¹⁴ For Purcell, their senior by a decade, the idea of being held to account by industrial neophytes was more implausible still. According to a list of 'renegades' in the Comintern archives, he 'ceased to take active part in [the] Party and finally dropped out' – also, according to this source, in 1921.¹⁵ Still in February 1922 he 'fired up' and announced he had a party card when the presence of a communist translator was challenged at a conference of socialist parties in Frankfurt.¹⁶ One wonders whether the card was still paid up. The incompatibility of the new party disciplines with the holding of high union office was in any case settled later that year

by the CPGB's endorsement of the famous Dutt-Pollitt organisation report, with its central rationale of 'leading and concentrating the members' activities the whole time'.¹⁷

To maintain contact with such figures without compromising internal discipline, the Comintern quickly learnt the value of so-called front organisations. The first and arguably most important of these was the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), also known as the Profintern.¹⁸ Purcell himself played some part in its launching. While in Russia with the British Labour delegation in May-June 1920, he and Williams joined in discussions with Russian and Italian trade unionists regarding such an initiative, envisaged by the Russians as a mere industrial section of the Comintern. Alexander Losovsky, secretary of key Russian unions in the period of war communism, was to be the dominant figure in the Profintern throughout its sixteen-year existence. His position at this stage was that the Comintern itself was 'a fighting revolutionary class centre ... accessible to all proletarian, political, trade union and co-operative organisations', and that a separate trade-union international was at best a dispersal of forces and at worst a 'bad edition of the Second International'.¹⁹

Despite his background in revolutionary syndicalism, Losovsky's career was to be one of repeated collisions with western trade-union conceptions, including the deep-rooted syndicalist suspicion of party ties. When Zinoviev on 16 June announced a new 'Red Industrial International' this therefore had the appearance of a significant concession on the Bolsheviks' part. The Italians still had concerns about the proposed manifesto, and on returning to Britain with discussions still ongoing, Purcell and Williams were said to have 'given their names to any agreement that might be arrived at' in their absence.²⁰ Already the resolution of 'representatives of Russian, English and Italian labour organizations assembled under the auspices of the Executive Committee of the Communist International' stated that the proposed 'militant international committee' of trade unionists would act 'in accordance' with the Comintern.²¹ Williams in any case had no hesitation on this score. Although a member of the Labour Party executive, who was due to attend the Geneva congress of the Second International, he announced on his return that he intended working instead towards the extension of the Third.²²

In later years, the episode was resurrected both by supporters of the Profintern and by critics of Purcell who saw such associations as deeply compromising. There is little evidence, however, that Purcell took the commitment any further. When a British bureau of the RILU was established under Mann's chairmanship in early 1921, Purcell apparently declined to move the resolutions at its first London conference.²³ Attempts through Mann to involve him in an emergency conference on the German crisis in 1923 again proved unavailing.²⁴ In August 1924, the more ambitious National Minority Movement

(NMM) was formed as successor body to the bureau. Mann, who as chairman once more provided a self-conscious claim to continuity, described the movement as 'exactly analogous' with the syndicalism of the ISEL.²⁵ When later that year Purcell reaffirmed his support for the Soviets as head of the TUC's Russian delegation, hopes were revived of an 'organic connection' with the delegates on their return.²⁶ Pollitt, the NMM's secretary, nevertheless recalled the 'bitter experience' of promises made in Moscow and promptly forgotten, and once more Purcell could not be persuaded to appear on a Minority Movement platform. After further unavailing interviews, Pollitt concluded with some acerbity that it was 'one thing to be revolutionary in Soviet Russia and another thing to be openly identified with the revolutionary movement in England'.²⁷

There was greater consistency in Purcell's stance than Pollitt appreciated. The guiding precept of his career, and the explanation of much within it that might otherwise be inexplicable, was the pursuit of working-class unity as expressed through its recognised institutions. The mineworker Nat Watkins, also active in the Minority Movement, was a figure more of Purcell's own generation. Though in one sense echoing Pollitt, Watkins also registered the pressures to which Purcell and those around him conformed in describing them as 'quite another thing when they come back here amongst friends of their own kidney'.²⁸ Critics of the TUC's laxity towards communism ascribed it to the lack of any serious internal communist challenge. From a TUC perspective, on the other hand, it was by involving the 'militant section' in their 'share in the work of the movement' that the possibilities of splitting and disorganisation had been successfully headed off.²⁹ On this basis it seemed quite plausible to embrace the Russian unions, and the achievements of the Russian revolution, while resisting any tendency to divide the British labour movement. One of the premises of the TUC's understanding with the Russians was that they were the only major trade-union movements enjoying 'full national unity', undisturbed by religious or political cleavages.³⁰ Repeatedly Purcell contrasted their undivided nature with the 'almost indescribable' rivalries which elsewhere split the unions into as many as (he claimed) six contending sections.³¹ Just the same moral applied internationally, and when Purcell defended his communist attachments in Frankfurt, he also upheld the perspective of a 'great united working class international' against 'internecine squabbling'.³² To be 'revolutionary' in Russia but not necessarily in Britain was the logic of unity as he conceived of it.

It is sometimes suggested that British Labour was hostile to communism in both its Russian and British manifestations.³³ Alternatively, its singularity is seen to lie in its dissociation of the Russians from the ineffectual nuisance of home-grown Bolshevism.³⁴ Purcell's approach was more discriminating. Within Britain, he was certainly hostile to

any activity seen as threatening the labour movement's 'institutions and ... accumulated experience'. Equally, and according to the same logic of unity, he had no intrinsic objection to communists performing roles which respected these. When Bromley, Cook and Hicks sent fraternal greetings to the CPGB's 1924 party congress, Purcell for some reason was not among them.³⁵ As Mann observed of his wariness of the Minority Movement, he was 'anxious to carry the General Council along with him and I expect he feels the closer he is connected with us the less likely he is to carry the majority along with him at present'.³⁶ His support for the twelve communist leaders convicted in 1925 again demonstrated this basic ambivalence. Purcell readily joined a Free Speech Defence and Maintenance Committee and visited Pollitt in Wandsworth prison. At public rallies he revived his caustic assessment of a politically motivated legal process, and he defended the communists as part of a 'great united front' against the capitalist order.³⁷ Though initiated as a 'Fund' of the communist-sponsored International Class War Prisoners' Aid (ICWPA), the Free Speech committee was nevertheless reconstituted as an independent body sharing only a secretary with its progenitor, and according to communist reports it enjoyed a 'somewhat delicate' relationship with it.³⁸

Communists were valued most of all as labour movement clerks, or in roles in which the official movement was deficient. The Labour Research Department (LRD) epitomised such a role, and in April 1925 there was launched from its offices a monthly journal, *Trade Union Unity*, under the nominal direction of Purcell, Hicks and the Dutchman Edo Fimmen.³⁹ When 'people associated with the left wing movement in the trade unions' had first pressed the Russians for assistance with such a venture, the CPGB had expressed strong opposition unless a party member was put in charge.⁴⁰ In a sense, this is what transpired: the journal assumed the specialised character of an 'international journal to promote unity', and its editor, 'in fact if not in name', was the Cambridge-educated Allen Hutt, who also worked in TASS's London office and who in Dutt's absence put together the *Labour Monthly*.⁴¹ The frequent inclusion of communist contributors was hardly concealed by their use of union affiliations.⁴² Nevertheless, it was Purcell who wrote (or signed) the main editorial and who secured the co-operation of his TUC colleagues, without whose regular input the journal would scarcely have merited its Russian subsidy. Though it was originally envisaged as an LRD supplement, and for five issues was freely distributed from the LRD offices, *Trade Union Unity* was therefore like the Free Speech committee in assuming an independent status.⁴³ As if resignedly, Hutt described himself as its editorial 'factotum'.⁴⁴

This was indeed a characteristic arrangement at this time. When the then TUC chairman Alonzo Swales needed a speech for the first Commonwealth Labour Conference, he approached the LRD secre-

tary Arnot, who in turn approached the CPGB's representative in Moscow.⁴⁵ A.J. Cook was widely known to enjoy similar support, in particular that of his 'CP private secretary' Glyn Evans.⁴⁶ Purcell doubtless drew on similar forms of assistance, though possibly with his usual sense of caution. His most durable relationship was with the Irishman W.P. Coates, a sometime BSPer and union activist who was secretary of the original Hands Off Russia committee and of its successor the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee, both of which were chaired by Purcell. Already at the CPGB's founding congress, Coates had expressed a strong commitment to work within the Labour Party.⁴⁷ According to his wife and collaborator Zelda Kahan Coates, once a well-known figure on the BSP's internationalist wing, the couple by 1925 were actually Labour Party members, considering that 'a socialist party without the masses behind it is doomed to work ineffectually'.⁴⁸ Whatever his party status, it was Coates who, according to the communist defector Newbold, was entrusted with 'the Chesham House subsidy' once the Soviet embassy was re-established there in 1924. Again according to Newbold, Coates used it to grease those members of his committee who could be found 'washing necks' in the smoke room of the House of Commons.⁴⁹

As Pollitt certainly appreciated, it was not only from the British side that there was a tendency to bypass 'the revolutionary movement in England'. As initially projected as a rationale for the Minority Movement, Mikhail Borodin's conception of union leaders as banners deserving 'persistent advertisement' was strongly resisted by Pollitt and Dutt.⁵⁰ When Purcell as congress chairman set the tone for the 1924 TUC, the fraternal delegation from the Russian unions was well-contented with the ovation it received. Petrovsky, Borodin's successor as Comintern representative, nevertheless commented privately on the 'treachery' of the lefts, and the *Workers' Weekly* even used Purcell's address to document their well-intentioned 'bankruptcy'.⁵¹ The Russian union leader Mikhail Tomsy assured Purcell that the CPGB were just 'babes'.⁵² Not only did Purcell and his colleagues decline to attend a Minority Movement conference on returning from Russia at the end of 1924. So, it was said, did any representative of the Russian unions, for fear of offending them.⁵³ When some months later Herbert Morrison attended a 'highly respectable' Chesham House reception on the anniversary of the revolution, the courses of food were plentiful and 'proletarian garb' little in evidence: 'I had great difficulty in finding any – I am not sure that I did find any – of the more working class leaders of British Communism present.'⁵⁴ Willie Gallacher, whose absence on this occasion one may perhaps infer, complained around this time that nobody ever knew what Coates was up to and that if there were 'many more Party members who give such little thought to the Party we would very soon be without a Party altogether'.⁵⁵ Between the Comintern, the Profintern, the Russian unions

and the Soviet embassy, these very different ways of identifying with the Russian revolution help explain both the scope of the phenomenon and its politically ambiguous character. The CPGB may have held the Comintern franchise, but attempts by some historians to project the Russian connection onto this alone lack any real plausibility.

Purcell's commitment to the 'institutions ... [and] accumulated experience' of the British working class meant that association with the communists was possible only to the extent that they also respected these. In the spring of 1925 he willingly supported the new *Sunday Worker*, which disclaimed any pretensions as an official 'Left Wing' organ and described the left as Lansbury might have, as unofficial and heterodox by its very nature.⁵⁶ When the communists nevertheless proceeded towards a formally constituted National Left Wing Movement, rather after the fashion of the Minority Movement, Purcell's opposition was absolute:

It was he who, from three accounts ... made the most savage and vindictive attack on the Party; he said that this could not stop at a resolution, they would have to go on to organisation, and he and Hicks could not countenance any split in the Labour Party, this is the sort of thing that has disrupted the Continental movement, the Communists could do nothing but disrupt and make trouble, etc.⁵⁷

It was only after the General Strike that Purcell, like Lansbury, broke off significant association with communists in Britain. Insofar as they functioned as a repackaged BSP, he had recognised their contribution as a necessary element of the 'working-class mosaic'. The communists after 1926, however, had greater ambitions than this. Purcell took his stand with Labour's own institutions – at what cost to his own political effectiveness remained to be seen.

2.3 GUILD SOCIALIST

As Purcell was making his exit from the CPGB, the party itself was seeking to systematise its controls over the broader range of communist activities. Some organisations, like the LRD, became the focus of communist fraction work. Others were effectively abandoned. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the National Guilds League (NGL), which, as Leslie Macfarlane observed, the CPGB 'quietly dropped' over the winter of 1921-2 – though not so quietly as to prevent William Mellor from delivering an autopsy in the *Labour Monthly*.⁵⁸ Individual communists remained active in guilds circles, including the *Labour Monthly's* own secretary and business manager Joan Beauchamp.⁵⁹ Mellor even suggested that S.G. Hobson, the founder of guild socialism, 'apart from his practical activities as an exponent of the Building Guild, is a Communist'.⁶⁰ Despite the

continuing room for manoeuvre, Purcell's brief involvement with the guilds is indicative of a fluidity of association and forms of activity which party disciplines were beginning to undermine. There is nothing to suggest a direct link between his involvement with the guilds and his departure from the communist party. They did however take place almost simultaneously.

As a body of ideas, guild socialism can be traced from Hobson's essays on *National Guilds*, published in 1912-13.⁶¹ As a movement it can be traced from the NGL's foundation in 1915. Subsequently it has become synonymous with Cole, its most lucid expositor, whose advocacy and relinquishment of the guild idea represented his own cerebral pendulum swing between workers' self-government and collectivism.⁶² Cole, however, had little direct contact with provincial proletarianism and the likes of Purcell. For these, the more immediate public face of guild socialism bore Hobson's features, not so much as its intellectual progenitor as through his ill-fated attempt to put into practice the guild ideal and secure it organisationally within the labour movement. Hobson's qualifications for such an enterprise were two. As a travelling lecturer, journalist and parliamentary candidate, variously active in the ILP, Labour Church, Fabian Society and socialist representation committees, he had a wealth of labour movement contacts and had shared a Manchester platform with Purcell as far back as 1905.⁶³ More distinctively, he also had extensive if somewhat questionable business experience that may or may not have merited the sobriquet Soapy Sam.

Once more in Manchester as a government demobilisation officer, Hobson was quick to see the possibilities of the post-war Addison housing act and the direct subsidies to builders that were introduced at the end of 1919.⁶⁴ Among his union contacts was Dick Coppock, the Manchester-based organiser of the Operative Bricklayers who a decade earlier had been among the delegates at the founding conference of the ISEL. In January 1920 the collaboration between Hobson and Coppock saw the establishment of a Manchester Building Guild.⁶⁵ Seven months later its first housing contracts were secured, and the following June Hobson arranged its merger with its London counterpart to produce what was grandly described as the 'first National Building Guild in the history of the world', with offices in Upper Brook Street, Manchester.⁶⁶ Initially Hobson had enjoyed the assistance of sympathetic contacts at the new Ministry of Health. However, the national guild was confronted from the start with a de facto government embargo on further guild contracts on any other than an undercutting 'maximum sum' basis.⁶⁷ One response was to seek to raise a loan with which to negotiate the more difficult times ahead. Another was to extend the movement into other industries. The Furniture and Furnishing Guild (FFG), with Purcell as its secretary, was the result.

Immediately Hobson began canvassing support for a Building Guild, Purcell had become involved. In December 1919 he presided over a Manchester meeting of the NGL that was well attended by union representatives.⁶⁸ His first intimation of a possible furniture guild followed swiftly on the formation of the Manchester Building Guild the following month.⁶⁹ It nevertheless took the ebbing away of strike activity for this to become the focus for his activities; indeed, the decision to form the Furnishing Guild was taken just a fortnight after Black Friday.⁷⁰ Some weeks later a Trades Union Guild Council was launched in Manchester with the aim of reaching beyond the building industry and establishing the guilds at the heart of the organised labour movement. Its founding premise, the *Manchester Guardian* reported, was that 'in a season of barren wage disputes conventional trade unionism may be led to a knowledge of its limitations', and thus more readily embrace a vision of the promised land where the wage contract was unknown.⁷¹ The Furniture Guild, having commenced work in October, was established as a limited company in February 1922, sharing offices with the Building Guild and operating a workshop rented from the AEU in nearby Plymouth Grove. The following spring a National Guilds Council was established on Hobson's motion, as an umbrella organisation for both working guilds and agitational bodies like the NGL. Several industries were represented, some by leading officers. Among them were the Tailor and Garment Workers' secretary, Andrew Conley, and the editor of the Post Office Workers' journal, George Middleton. However, with the Bricklayers' secretary George Hicks taking the chair, and Purcell and Coppock supporting Hobson's resolution, the unions most conspicuously represented were the building and furnishing trades.⁷²

The two industries had long been closely associated and within the TUC were combined in a trade group also including the other woodworking trades. This certainly accorded with NAFTA's priorities, which in the immediate post-war period included the application to the furnishing trades of building trades agreements, and recognition by appropriate boards and associations on both the workers' and employers' side.⁷³ Though relations between NAFTA and the Building Trades' federation were never straightforward, both Coppock and Hicks shared Purcell's syndicalist background and his readiness to associate with disparate left-wing movements, including the communists.⁷⁴ Furnishing workers also shared with the building trades the late Victorian rediscovery of the ideal craftsman, representing both aspiration for fulfilment in work and indictment of the shoddiness and deceit of modern commercial practice. Even O'Grady had reported effusively on an 'Arts and Crafts Exhibition' of hand-produced work by trade unionists, including a bedroom suite made by NAFTA members in their spare time.⁷⁵ Purcell employed such notions in a more combative and instrumental way. During the 1919 lockout

he excoriated the 'lying and filthy dogs' who dominated the employers' association and who were 'daily fleecing the public with furniture rubbish', including bogus oak and mahogany and the 'great Jacobean and "rub off" furniture swindle'.⁷⁶ One can only imagine the reaction to this of O'Grady, who 'for many years earned his living as a maker of "antique" furniture'.⁷⁷ But furnishing workers, like the building trades, employed a discourse of the 'public' or consumer's interest in avoiding shoddy and undercutting through the recognition of established skills, materials and conditions of employment.⁷⁸ Through his involvement in tenants' activities, Purcell also drew on this from a consumers' perspective, urging low-density building with full amenities against the 'mean little hutches' and tenements by which today's workers were fobbed off with tomorrow's slums.⁷⁹

The disparate features of Purcell's socialism are easier to understand within such a context. Challenged about his absorption in the guild's work, he cited the commitment in NAFTA's rule book to 'the complete control of industry by those who work in it'. Instead of the 'zig-zag' movement of industrial advance and retreat, the guild offered training in the administrative skills the unions would require in assuming that control and the harnessing of energy and enthusiasm to a higher conception of production. Possibly it may therefore be seen as a distinctly industrial response to the pendulum swing. Its claims were reminiscent of the justifications offered for earlier endeavours in co-production, like the Christian Socialists', but with a distinctive emphasis on what in Germany would have been called quality work. As Purcell put it, workers exposed to the 'fine school and workroom of industrial experience' came to see that 'tricks worked off in industry and today known as good and profitable business' were incompatible with any higher social purpose.⁸⁰ As far as possible, consumers would be provided with the best that the guild could manufacture, 'even if the quantity is at the moment less than their needs demand'.⁸¹ The quality of the work was widely commented upon, and was demonstrated at Manchester's May Day rally by its being displayed side by side with that of private manufacturers.⁸²

Purcell conceded that the 'shoddy and deceptive' would be fully cast aside only as the guild outgrew its dependence on the industry's established structures. Unlike the earlier arts-and-craft guilds, it proposed making 'only useful household furniture' on what effectively would have been a mass scale corresponding to the projected public housing programme. A cheaper as well as better article than the capitalist's, it was to undercut it by as much as half – perhaps, it was briefly suggested, through the importation of Soviet timber on 'very advantageous terms'. The synthesis of modernism and the labour movement was a continental European phenomenon, and the guild's published catalogue shows little distinctiveness in design terms from ordinary commercial production.⁸³ The vision held out was neverthe-

less a heady one: 'That all those people between the actual *User* and the *Producer* shall be eliminated, ultimately giving to the Workers *complete control of the Industry* to exploit it for *Use* as against *Profit*.'⁸⁴

As a business proposition, the guild was nevertheless doomed from the start.⁸⁵ By the time of its launch, the guilds movement as a whole was mired in the financial difficulties that were to lead to its collapse. Hobson, through the Building Guild, found £1000 with which to launch the Furnishing Guild; this, however, was a far cry from the larger sums he had urged the unions to divert from the pursuit of unwinnable strikes.⁸⁶ Undercapitalised from the start, the guild after thirteen weeks still boasted thirty workers and a full order book.⁸⁷ Purcell himself was effectively full-time secretary, and temporary arrangements were made for the payment of his NAFTA salary by the guilds themselves.⁸⁸ Working branches were also set up in other localities, although the Manchester guild absorbed most of the funding raised within NAFTA and a London section nominally attached to it claimed to have had no help or recognition despite persistent representations.⁸⁹

Very likely this contributed to the waning enthusiasm of the union's members and executive alike. A 'Furnishing Guild Million Pennies Stamp' did not produce a million pennies.⁹⁰ A requested loan of ten thousand pounds did not materialise.⁹¹ A 'National Guild Building Society', envisaging 100,000 weekly subscriptions for furnished homes to be allotted by ballot, would have taken a hundred years to provide them at the projected rate of completion.⁹² With the rejection in a NAFTA members' ballot of a further financial appeal, a winding-up order was issued at the beginning of 1923. At the second National Guild Conference in December 1922, Hobson insisted that Purcell was doing his utmost to rescue the guild from collapse. Purcell himself, however, neither attended nor submitted a report, and the representative of the London guild complained that he had never succeeded in making contact with him.⁹³ In its year of existence, the guild had actually carried out some £8000 worth of orders.⁹⁴ In the ballot for the National Guilds Council Purcell nevertheless came only eleventh, behind less well-known trade unionists like Middleton and the communist Sam Elsbury.⁹⁵ Though this was still enough to secure him a seat on the council, Purcell appears never to have attended.⁹⁶

It was characteristic of him to offer so little reflection on what had gone wrong. At best, he put it down to external contingencies and lack of finance.⁹⁷ At worst he all but disclaimed responsibility.⁹⁸ More modest schemes proved more durable. The London guild maintained its operations for at least a few months longer; and a Piano Workers' Guild, initially established on a voluntary basis, could five years later boast a hundred guildsmen and eight full-time workers manufacturing 'High Grade Pianos ... under Workers' Control'.⁹⁹ Probably Purcell did not sufficiently esteem such pockets of achievement. He was, as we

shall see, among the advocates of the demonstration strike as a form of declamation by the deed and a means of soldering workers' solidarity. His promotion of the guild may similarly be regarded as a form of demonstration, education or even agit-prop. What it offered was less a way out of capitalism than an expression of alternative production values and social relationships. Symptomatically, Purcell's first report as secretary described the guild's work as if already half-accomplished. Released from a profit-making environment, its workers had exhibited higher skill, greater craftsmanship, cleaner and brighter types of production and a 'keener perception of solidarity' among the varying departments of production.¹⁰⁰ Though its high standards of work appear to have contributed to the guild's demise, Purcell nevertheless saw them as 'a good piece of Guild propaganda'.¹⁰¹

There were some longer-term effects on Purcell's political outlook. Hobson's weekly wage of £15, almost double even Purcell's, perhaps confirms the attachment of socialists from professional backgrounds to differential forms of remuneration.¹⁰² It was nevertheless to their underestimation of the role of clerical and administrative skills that Hobson partly attributed the guilds' difficulties. They had started, he admitted, by seeking 'to carry democratic principles to the fullest extent' of workers' self-government, 'with an absolute minimum of technical assistance'. Having considered and rejected the idea of a strong technical staff overriding local initiative, the lesson they had learnt was that local autonomy had to be modified and technical administration 'stiffen[ed] up'.¹⁰³ It is difficult to miss the parallel between this and the larger experiment of Bolshevism itself. 'Our greatest mistake was to undervalue the importance of the technician', Lenin had told the British delegates in Russia in 1920.¹⁰⁴ Conceivably there were also similar reflections regarding labour discipline, overmanning and slack time-keeping; and one can perhaps imagine the Bolshevik response to the Stockton building guild which granted itself a week's holiday to attend a race meeting.¹⁰⁵ Though Purcell gave little indication of his own conclusions from the episode, he had regarded as one of the guild's central objects that of having 'trained and educated, even if ever so elementarily, a vast body of their own administrators, who will the more readily be able to operate for the true industrial requirements of a workers' community'.¹⁰⁶ These were sentiments which he was later to echo almost word for word, but in the context of the nationalisation of the mines.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps this small-scale failure of workers' self-government made him more responsive to the 'productivist' reading of workers' control which in Soviet Russia supplanted more radical and democratic readings.¹⁰⁸

There was perhaps one other lesson. Hobson had no doubt that changing attitudes within the Ministry of Health played a major part in the National Building Guild's troubles. By implication, a friendlier administration meant a greater chance of success for such ventures.

The Soviets themselves were to be approached to deal preferentially with the guilds. Within Britain too, the formation of a Labour government in 1924 encouraged renewed hopes of government support for such initiatives.¹⁰⁹ Collectivism and self-government might be constructed as alternatives; but as, at the time of writing, a neo-liberal 'big society' project wrecks a multitude of grassroots, non-statist activities, it is easier to see that these were anything but mutually exclusive. During the whole period of his involvement with the CPGB and the Furnishing Guild, Purcell, in any case, already headed the list of NAFTA parliamentary candidates and nurtured expectations of a parliamentary career. In the end, this proved hardly more enduring than his attachment to the communist party or the guilds. But his activities as an MP did play their part in Purcell's international notoriety; and they offer insight into the dilemmas of labour representation at a crucial moment of transition.

2.4 PARLIAMENTARY SOCIALIST

Purcell twice served as a member of parliament – for Coventry in 1923-4 and for the Forest of Dean in 1925-9. Nevertheless, as W.P. Coates rightly observed after his death, 'parliamentary work was not his forte and certainly not to his liking'.¹¹⁰ For an activist of syndicalist disposition, this was the least one would have expected. As generally understood, syndicalism signified not just aversion to but the outright rejection of political ambitions and pursuit of elected office. W.Z. Foster in the States denied the very existence of a 'so-called political "field"', and made much of the 'horde of doctors, lawyers, preachers and other non working-class elements universally infesting and controlling the Socialist Party'.¹¹¹ In France, where syndicalism as anti-politics was originally strongest, there was a marked preponderance of such elements within the socialist movement, whom the CGT defied with the watchword *Le syndicat suffit à tout!* The precepts of the new syndicalist international established in 1922 were unambiguous: 'Revolutionary syndicalism repudiates all parliamentary activity and all collaboration in legislative bodies.'¹¹²

In Britain, there was a far more ambivalent attitude. Initially the predominant form of labour representation was that of direct sponsorship of candidates by the very unions in which the syndicalists aimed at boring from within. Keir Hardie himself expressed pride in the PLP's exclusively plebeian composition.¹¹³ IFTU as late as 1924 cited the high political representation of union officials as a distinctive, often misunderstood feature of British Labour politics.¹¹⁴ At the 1913 international syndicalist congress the London building worker Jack Wills was removed as co-president on the discovery that he served not as MP but as a mere borough councillor.¹¹⁵ Tom Mann's *Syndicalist*,

on the other hand, had no fundamental objection to such activities; it urged the positive value of a 'group of revolutionary Socialists in Parliament' and welcomed the middle-class politician Lansbury as the ISEL's first applicant for membership.¹¹⁶

Purcell in embracing syndicalism had decried over-dependence on political action, and in 1913 he had stood down at the end of his second stint as a Salford councillor. Even so, the adjustment of his personal priorities did not imply the outright repudiation of such roles. When the emergent CPGB divided over the issue, Purcell was among those supporting parliamentary activity as 'a valuable means of propaganda and agitation', though not of achieving socialism.¹¹⁷ Three months earlier he had replaced O'Grady as one of NAFTA's parliamentary candidates.¹¹⁸ Briefly he is said to have been adopted as a communist parliamentary candidate in Salford.¹¹⁹ Unavailingly he contested the idea of such candidates' exclusive obligation to their party mandate.¹²⁰ As a Labour candidate too, his loyalty to party was subsumed within a more complex notion of representation in which elements of trade, class, constituency and faction all played a part.

His first commitment was to the sponsoring union without which he could hardly have reached parliament at all. Within the early PLP, the initial preponderance of union officials encouraged expectations that relevant business would be handled on a 'trade basis', exemplified by the strong collective identity of the Miners' MPs. As he negotiated the transition from interest group to national party, MacDonald's rejection of this principle provoked considerable discontent. In making his first appointments as a Labour premier he aroused particular concern by entrusting the Mines Department to the Clydesider Shinwell, who had no connection with the industry. Especially indignant was the Lanarkshire Miners' leader Duncan Graham, the sort of MP that MacDonald despised, who spoke out forcefully on such sectional issues and otherwise hardly at all.¹²¹

NAFTA was a different sort of case. There was no state department or overriding trade interest demanding parliamentary expression, nor any possibility of NAFTA exercising a significant numerical weight within the PLP. In this sphere too, weakness as a sectional actor therefore encouraged a more inclusive conception of representation, and the contesting of MacDonald's ideal of the professional politician in the name of organised labour as a whole. In more general terms than that of the mines (or mines department) for the miners, Purcell thus bemoaned the inadequate representation in Macdonald's government of 'fully fledged Trade Unionists and really well tried working-class representatives'.¹²² Following the uneasy passage of an Agricultural Wages Bill, he also urged that trade unionists would do a better job than 'some of our associates in the political Labour Movement' like the ex-Liberal agriculture minister Noel Buxton.¹²³ There was, however, no suggestion of trade representation. One reaction to the government

was the formation of a 'Trade Union Group' of MPs, whose secretary was the Miners' MP Mardy Jones.¹²⁴ Another was a revival of the idea of a 'trade union' labour party, but with a syndicalistic flavour displacing the earlier rejection of the politician-as-socialist.¹²⁵ A third, to be considered more fully in due course, was a reassertion of the TUC's independence of the Labour Party. Among the earliest expressions of this approach, not perhaps fortuitously, was the launching of a campaign among agricultural workers in which the TUC declined to involve the Labour Party.¹²⁶

In the case of the building and woodworking trades there was even a degree of progressive alienation from the Labour Party. When Labour made its first substantial parliamentary breakthrough in 1906, these trades had provided three of its fifty parliamentary candidates, and in 1910 the figure was six out of ninety-one.¹²⁷ By 1945, as Labour's challenge extended to virtually every constituency in the country, the figure had actually fallen back to five. With the enforcement of 'contracting in' to the Labour Party under the 1927 Trades Disputes Act, affiliation rates were also lowest in the craft unions; and out of forty unions surveyed by Cole in 1945-6, NAFTA's rate of affiliation was lowest but one.¹²⁸ Such diffidence was the more remarkable in the case of the building unions, given their strong producer interest in the politics of housing and the progressive marginalisation of their role in determining Labour's own housing policy.¹²⁹

This has been construed as half-heartedness towards labour representation, as indifference born of relative affluence, or even as a mark of patriotism.¹³⁰ As in the case of a trade-union Labour Party, it is true that the radical and not-so-radical variants of such an attitude can be difficult to separate. In NAFTA's case, it is nevertheless clear that scepticism regarding Labour's political machinery did not reflect an acquiescence in Liberal hegemony. NAFTA's socialist commitment not only predated the development of a more managed party organisation; it also proved obstinately resistant to it. Support for the Labour Party's excluded communist elements was a tangible expression of this. Rules regarding the eligibility of delegates might be resisted at local level.¹³¹ When Pollitt in 1930 fought a credible by-election campaign in Whitechapel, he acknowledged 'substantial backing' from the political funds of local NAFTA organisations.¹³² NAFTA by this time was the sole union in which communists could seriously discuss using the political levy, not for but against the Labour Party.¹³³ A decade later, Purcell's successor as its parliamentary secretary openly supported the communist-sponsored People's Convention during the period of the Nazi-Soviet pact.¹³⁴

Sponsorship by the union may have signified relatively little in terms of trade lobbying. It did, however, mean reflecting the wider values and policy positions of the union where these could be expressed in parliamentary terms. O'Grady's refusal to do so in respect of the war had been met with a new provision for the annual re-election of the

union's parliamentary nominees.¹³⁵ Refusing nomination on these terms, O'Grady retained his parliamentary seat but obtained the endorsement of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers – a warning once more against assumptions of a homogenised trade-union interest.¹³⁶ NAFTA's lack of a delegate conference made for somewhat ad hoc forms of accountability. Nevertheless, Purcell as the union's sole parliamentary representative of the 1920s was expected to provide a continuous account of his activities in the NAFTA *Monthly Report*.

Constituency provided a second basis of representation, but again in ways reflecting the specificities of trade and membership density. For groups like the miners or textile workers, geographical concentrations of membership could make for a formidable constituency presence and a virtual sense of ownership of the Labour nomination. Small and geographically dispersed, NAFTA had no such claim to any parliamentary constituency. O'Grady had represented a Leeds division; Purcell was interviewed or adopted in Bath, Stockport, Bristol North and doubtless other constituencies before contesting Coventry in the December 1923 election.¹³⁷ A city of migrants and many trades, mostly involving metalworking, Coventry since the war had enjoyed a succession of militant outside candidates. Curiously, all of them – Wallhead, Williams and now Purcell – were members of Labour's first Russian delegation in 1920. In one sense, the incoming trade-unionist candidate may doubtless be regarded as a 'carpet-bagger' to whom the issue of locality was secondary.¹³⁸ Unlike the middle-class candidate, however, Purcell brought with him notions of delegacy and accountability that helped shape his conception of the role of constituency representative. Already within the CPGB he had moved an amendment to a resolution that denied its candidates any local electoral mandate, proposing that a party mandate should be held 'as well as', not in place of, that of the particular constituency concerned.¹³⁹ There was no reason why that should not also apply to the Labour Party.

As post-war boom gave way to slump, the discharging of unattached young men from Coventry's workshops introduced a militant, almost insurrectionary note into local labour politics, exemplified by communist activities among the unemployed. The authorities urged the need for counter-propaganda, and a popular local preacher, J.R. Armitage, attracted weekly crowds through rhapsodies to Mussolini and diatribes against Bolshevism and Jews.¹⁴⁰ Purcell might have been in his element here, and the local communist organiser rubbed his hands at the thought of reducing his overfed Conservative opponent to a 'grease spot'.¹⁴¹ Militancy by this time was ebbing, however, and Purcell's election campaign was a model of restraint. Even opponents commended his eschewal of 'extreme views' and repudiation of rowdiness.¹⁴² Supporting speakers ranged from the communists on the left to the Countess of Warwick and the ultra-moderate miners' leader Frank Hodges.¹⁴³ Purcell's agent, finding his oratory a little too fervent

for his 'Sunday school training', ordered counterbalancing posters emphasising themes of altruism and moral responsibility.¹⁴⁴ But in reality Purcell's own address was of a timelessly melioristic character that was not to be diverted from Labour's own core objectives. When he had first stood for parliament in Salford in 1910, the peers versus the people had threatened to obscure this basic issue. Now it was free trade versus protection, and Purcell showed his disregard for both sets of alternatives by simply paraphrasing his Salford address – albeit that the vision of an 'England of the people' had now become 'an England of the Workers'.¹⁴⁵ Offered the endorsement of the industrialist and former mayor Siegfried Bettmann, an ILP supporter but fervent free trader, Purcell did not disdain it.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, his slogan of 1910 ('Hungry Men, Women and Children a million times more important than the House of Lords, Protection, or Free Trade') had been barely modified in fourteen years ('Thousands of hungry men and women are more important than Tariff Reform or Free Trade').¹⁴⁷

In a tight three-party contest, Purcell scraped in with the lowest share of the vote of any successful Labour candidate. MacDonal as his leader held that an MP's first responsibility was to attend to the parliamentary business for which he had been elected.¹⁴⁸ Gossip on similar grounds had in 1918 declined a NAFTA parliamentary nomination as impossible to combine with union office and tending to unacceptable levels of absenteeism from the House.¹⁴⁹ It was a position Gossip consistently upheld, reminding those inclined to prioritise other commitments that ordinary trade unionists had 'worked hard and paid from their wages considerable sums' to get them into parliament.¹⁵⁰

Purcell, whom Gossip must surely have had in mind, nevertheless made no secret of the greater significance that he attached to his TUC responsibilities.¹⁵¹ This was quickly reinforced by his scepticism and frustration on encountering at first hand how parliament conducted itself. In this he was not alone. On the basis of the modernised procedures and facilities of a municipality like Manchester, the Liberal Ernest Simon condemned the dysfunctionality of the national legislature.¹⁵² From a background in the suffrage movement, Dorothy Jewson scorned the obsession with ceremonial and theatre as inimical to any real sense of purpose.¹⁵³ Even MacDonal had until lately shown a penetrating insight into how, by these means, the imposition of a 'novitiate upon the elected ones' served to impress upon them 'the manner and the mind of the governing priesthood'.¹⁵⁴

Purcell, with his trade-union background, observed the proceedings with an anthropologist's eye for cultic practices. 'All the processions to and from the House of Lords are childish in the extreme and the foolish proceeding of listening to someone reading aloud what others have written belongs to a past age', he wrote of the King's Speech. The 'parade of pomp and jewels' was similarly a 'frightful and disgusting mockery', and, in defiance of its Bagehotian rationale, both the 'show

part' and the 'business part' impressed him only in a 'very depressing way'.¹⁵⁵ Through his role in the TUC Purcell several times led deputations to Labour ministers, and he could hardly have failed to note the greater attention these were accorded than was the backbench MP.¹⁵⁶ In Dutt's *Labour Monthly* symposium he suggested that if parliament had any role under the new industrial order it would be as 'new place ... for co-ordinating the industrial structure'.¹⁵⁷ In the meantime, he warned that even its swarming with workers' representatives would only provoke the certain obstruction of the 'vast mass of black reaction' that dominated Britain's state machinery. 'It is this phase of our Governmental make-up which causes so many of our thoughtful adherents to despair of Parliament ever becoming a potential factor in great working-class changes for the better.'¹⁵⁸

Purcell treated with greater respect his relationship with his constituents. Only after the Second World War was a modern conception of constituency representation generally adopted in Britain. In this period, even visiting their constituencies was for many MPs a somewhat negligible consideration.¹⁵⁹ Purcell, on the other hand, had acquired a motor-bike that allowed him to reconcile commitments in Coventry and London with the dash of a latterday Dick Turpin.¹⁶⁰ His principal innovation was the holding of open report-back meetings whose purpose, according to a local newspaper, was to review the week's parliamentary business and justify the way he had voted.¹⁶¹

In such an environment, Purcell slipped easily into an us-and-them idiom of plebeian wonderment and derision. Speeches of an hour dealt with matters so trivial 'that a Trade Unionist would have dealt with it in two minutes'. Discussion of the 'marking of eggs' was conducted as if none could take part who had not been at Oxford or Cambridge. Procedures and regulations were a century behind the times and for the energetic new arrival the Commons seemed 'about the laziest place that could be found on the face of the earth':

Only about one ninetieth of the speeches, or perhaps a little less, were of any value at all, and ... the work accomplished by many Labour members of the city, borough and urban district councils by far exceeded in absolute results the usefulness got out of the House of Commons when the amount of talking was compared. When a statement was made members kept getting up either to confirm or deny it, which was not a very useful occupation. Many of the members had gone there to make careers for themselves ... but this made things difficult for anybody entering the House of Commons who was used to constant movement and anxious for progress to be made.¹⁶²

Chairing the Hull TUC that year, Purcell returned to the issue and ascribed the TUC's 'workmanlike' conduct of business to its delegates having come to do a job and not simply to talk.¹⁶³ The TUC's spirit

of 'Go at it and get it done with' was also remarked upon by the American observer Scott Nearing:

A business-like air pervades ... There is no oratory. The mover of a resolution has ten minutes; the seconder has seven minutes; speakers who can get the floor have five minutes each. Delegates speak to the point ... [and] receive careful attention as long as they have anything to contribute. The moment their fund of material has run out they are invited from all over the hall to 'Sit down!' There is a great deal of sharp repartee, much laughter, some banter, a very little recrimination, and an almost complete absence of personalities ... [and] little appeal to parliamentary procedure. Discussion continues until the delegates feel that the problem has been fully stated, whereupon they begin to shout: 'Agreed! Agreed!' or 'Vote! Vote!'¹⁶⁴

In his disdain for parliamentary conventions Purcell had a good deal in common with the Webbs, for whom it also derived in part from local government and trade-union practice.¹⁶⁵ It could be that the undistinguished parliamentary careers of so many trade unionists did not necessarily represent innate incapacity – unless perhaps it was parliament's incapacity to modernise its own procedures. On the other hand, impatience with simply confirming and denying things may also explain why so little was found wanting, by the Webbs as well as Purcell, in the similarly expeditious but less good-natured methods of the Soviets.

The issue of party or constituency was posed directly for Purcell by Philip Snowden's first ever Labour budget. The sole distinguishing feature of the budget, even according to Snowden's own estimation, was the repeal of the wartime McKenna duties on imported 'luxury' goods.¹⁶⁶ Though Purcell in the election had expressed so little interest in such matters, he had a union interest in the piano trade and a constituency one in the motor trade, both of which benefited from the duties, with the motor industry becoming the focus of the debate. 'If anyone does not believe in the McKenna Duties', said Tory leader Baldwin, 'let them go and fight Coventry'.¹⁶⁷ Manufacturers in the city not only campaigned vociferously against repeal, but also organised Soviet-style workers' consultations producing majorities of hundreds to one in their support.¹⁶⁸ Both Purcell and his defeated Liberal opponent took the line of least resistance on the issue, and in his maiden speech Purcell supported a Tory amendment to retain the duties, though he abstained in the subsequent vote.¹⁶⁹ He even took the platform at the Coventry Drill Hall when a sort of ad hoc producers' alliance was mobilised in the interest of industrial protectionism.¹⁷⁰

Two features of Purcell's argument may be noted. First, that he described himself as accountable, not so much to his constituents as a body, as to the 'union men of Coventry', whose virtual delegate he

purported to be, and whom he had consulted through the 'presidents, secretaries, treasurers, shop stewards or check stewards of their particular branches'.¹⁷¹ This was to be echoed in the markedly trade-union flavour of his subsequent election campaign, which featured many of his TUC colleagues, and which was introduced with the remark that any trade unionist failing to support him was a blackleg.¹⁷² Purcell further presented protectionism, not as a necessary retreat from internationalist principle, but as if as a means towards the same ends. Whenever workers achieved conditions capable of being undermined, he told the Commons, 'we would indeed be fools if, under a better social order, we allowed anybody else to interfere with that standard and with those conditions. ... We would say, "You cannot come in under any circumstances"'.¹⁷³ This basic tension and anomaly will need to be revisited in the context of Purcell's trade-union internationalism.

Whatever the concessions to expediency, they were to no avail. By the time the government fell in October 1924, Purcell had gained notoriety for his role in support of the controversial Russian treaties, as will be described in the following chapter. The specific issue over which the government fell was the withdrawal of the intended prosecution of the *Workers' Weekly* editor J.R. Campbell, and Purcell, along with Lansbury and the ILPer Maxton, was among those whom the communists cited as having helped secure this withdrawal.¹⁷⁴ Liberals in Coventry made much of the Russian issue, and Armitage, rousing two thousand Tories to frenzied patriotic anthems, described the city as one of the world's great centres of communist intrigue.¹⁷⁵ Local reports nevertheless suggest that the Conservative campaign focused more on the issue of the McKenna duties. Assisted by an enormous motor flotilla on a polling day of intermittent downpours, this secured a comfortable victory, while Purcell, against national trends, saw a slight fall in the Labour share of the vote.¹⁷⁶ At the declaration of the poll, he shook hands with the Tory but signally failed to extend the same courtesy to his Liberal opponent.¹⁷⁷

Though Labour lost the election, this was primarily because the Liberal vote collapsed, to the advantage of the Conservatives. That Labour's own share of the national vote increased suggests that Russia, even in 1924, was not necessarily the liability with Labour's core constituency that some imagined. It certainly did not prevent Purcell achieving a famous by-election victory in the Forest of Dean the following June. Compared to Coventry's political and demographic volatility, the Forest of Dean had the more stable characteristics of a mining constituency, on which Labour's hold even in 1931 was shaken only by a National Labour candidate. Its MP since the war had been James Wignall, a TGWU-sponsored candidate of moderate views and nonconformist faith, and with Labour's setback in the general election there was no shortage of possible successors follow-

ing Wignall's death. A strong preference having been expressed for a national figure, the first choice, Margaret Bondfield, encountered local resistance to the running of a woman candidate, supposedly in deference to Wignall's views in the matter.¹⁷⁸ The second choice, Oswald Mosley, was then selected and endorsed by Labour's NEC, but withdrew at the request of his prospective Birmingham constituency.¹⁷⁹ Purcell was thus the third choice, adopted amidst some commotion in the presence of Labour's national secretary Arthur Henderson. Despite his initial backing for Bondfield, Henderson actively assisted Purcell's campaign, whereas MacDonald as party leader occasioned much adverse comment by declining to provide even the customary leader's declaration of support.¹⁸⁰ In the Forest of Dean campaign there was again a strong TUC presence, and Henderson was doubtless concerned not to aggravate the currently fraught relationship between the Labour Party and the unions.¹⁸¹ Even as it was, Ernest Bevin's disgruntlement at the loss of a previously TGWU-sponsored seat may well have contributed to his dalliance for a while with the idea of an independent trade-union party.¹⁸²

Uncertainty as to the candidate made it difficult for Labour's opponents to know how to counter its appeal. Initially seeking to target the patrician Mosley, the Liberals put up a Baptist lay preacher who had worked at the coalface all his life. Even the Conservatives invited in one of their very few MPs to boast any sort of union background.¹⁸³ Once Purcell was in the ring, the overwhelming focus of both campaigns shifted to his alleged extremism, both political and religious.¹⁸⁴ Amidst extensive national press interest, Purcell played up to the image and told the *Sunday Worker* how audiences seemed hungry for his cries against war and capitalism – the more his enemies lied, 'the more I hammered them'.¹⁸⁵ He had strong support from the Forest of Dean Miners' Association (FDMA), which, like NAFTA, was a small, militant union that regularly supported communist causes, and whose agent Jack Williams was associated with the Miners' Minority Movement.¹⁸⁶ Polling Labour's largest ever vote in the constituency, Purcell's victory was described by Labour's national agent as one of the party's most satisfactory results for some time.¹⁸⁷ Possibly in response to the Bondfield affair, the equality of the sexes had been emphasised in Purcell's campaign, and at the declaration of the poll the number of women among his supporters was particularly remarked upon.¹⁸⁸

Half a century earlier, the Forest of Dean miners' leader Timothy Mountjoy, who was also a Baptist preacher, had urged that a working man could 'never be truly represented except by a working man'. This did not necessarily mean a worker of the same trade, and it was the building worker George Howell whom Mountjoy and his colleagues approached as possible candidate. Shorn of its labourist-syndicalist trappings, this is a conception of labour representation that can be traced across the decades and had its final flowering in the 1920s. 'Is

it not an outrage on justice', said Mountjoy, 'that the least useful class of all should have a representative in Parliament for every family, while the most useful class, which produces all the wealth, should not have one representative for a million families?' 'I go to the House of Commons to represent the working classes', Purcell similarly stated after his election victory. 'It is our class that requires more and more representation.'¹⁸⁹ Though it long predated socialism, this idea of labour representation continued to provide a distinctive accent within it. In Coventry Purcell even conceded there might be good men among the Tories; perhaps, he once confided to Walter Citrine, even Churchill was among them.¹⁹⁰ In the Forest of Dean he paid particular tribute to his well-born Liberal predecessor Sir Charles Dilke, whose radical and trade-union sympathies were so highly regarded within the labour movement.¹⁹¹ Good government, even in such hands, was nevertheless 'not the equal nor could be the substitute of representative government. It was the Labour Party that gave the workers, whether manual or by brain, the chance of determining their own destiny.'¹⁹² Bramley, in the same way, while warmly approving Dilke's achievements, pointedly commended his refusal to accept a position in the early ILP, on grounds that 'Labour should find its leaders in its own ranks ... a view that the present generation of Trade Unionists will heartily endorse'.¹⁹³ Workers 'by brain' were now acknowledged; but the Hardie myth to this extent remained intact.¹⁹⁴

Purcell was both a wantonly negligent MP and an exemplary one. With the novel experience of a safe Conservative majority, there was a widespread view in Labour circles that parliament risked expiring of 'inanition'.¹⁹⁵ Purcell was openly scornful of the 'constant crawling in and out of division lobbies', generally on the 'most trifling subjects', both as a futility in itself and as a distraction from more pressing issues.¹⁹⁶ In his chairman's address at the Scarborough TUC in 1925, Alonzo Swales cited basic parliamentary arithmetic to show that MPs could best advance their cause by 'incessant propaganda' outside of the House of Commons.¹⁹⁷ It is commonly said that the position of trade-union MPs was becoming a form of superannuation.¹⁹⁸ In Purcell's case, on the other hand, his parliamentary salary was a sort of subvention allowing him to take on the responsibilities within the wider industrial movement that he saw as the real key to his political effectiveness.

He was exemplary, however, in his regard for his constituency. Unlike a middle-class carpet-bagger like Sidney Webb, he took the view that he ought to live in the constituency that he represented. No other member had found it necessary or convenient to do so, Williams reported. 'He would be in close touch at all times with the people he represented. (Applause.)' Though she is rarely mentioned in any other context, Purcell's wife also impressed in this respect, as an 'ordinary working class woman' who settled among her husband's

constituents.¹⁹⁹ There could be no greater contrast than with the somewhat patronising communications which Beatrice Webb addressed to Seaham women from her Westminster home. Even the local newspaper commended the informed and educative way that Purcell, as his internationalism became ever more pronounced, addressed constituency audiences on issues like Mosul and Mexico.²⁰⁰

Uncommon even in Purcell's time, the distinctiveness of such a conception of representation was eventually to be lost sight of. As Labour swept to power in 1945, the hopes of the 1920s seemed in many respects to be fulfilled. 'They voted Labour because they felt that Labour meant *themselves*, and people like them', wrote Richard Crossman, a successor to Purcell as Labour MP in Coventry. 'For the first time the working class was not afraid of being run by themselves...' An Oxford don himself, Crossman was not unaware of the ambiguity of such a claim, and of the 'gulf' that existed between Westminster and Coventry. Vividly he evoked his 'entirely new absorbing life in the House, and very remote – those eager faces crowding round the loudspeaker, and those voices ... "Dick, when you get there will you be sure not to forget us."' Pursuing the issue with his parliamentary colleagues, Crossman could detect little interest in the idea of 'organized information' such as Purcell had used to keep in touch his constituents. 'Strange how politicians like *personal* publicity and fight shy of information sessions. ... Or rather they love talking freely inside the "closed circle", and making speeches outside it. And their speeches are very different from their talk.'²⁰¹

Purcell's speeches were not so different from his talk. Labour's trade unionist representation was certainly circumscribed in its own ways, both occupationally and in respect of gender. Nevertheless, an MP like Purcell embodied at least the aspiration to a more socially representative form of government, and he did talk to constituents as if the closed circle might have included them, or else the arcane rituals that excluded them kept him out too. Within his lifetime, both Coventry and the Forest of Dean were reclaimed by gentleman Labour candidates of Liberal proclivities and social pedigree.²⁰² In Coventry by 1945, the displacement of the 'horny hands of toil' by clerical and professional workers was also evident at municipal level.²⁰³ Even union nominees began to look more like professional politicians, and increasingly over time they at least demonstrated a professional commitment to their responsibilities. The weakness of any enduring conception of self-representation has nevertheless remained an enduring failing of British democracy. Purcell, as we shall see, made what was effectively an unforced withdrawal from parliament in 1929, and this was symptomatic of the weakness in the end of the challenge to parliamentary mores. In social though not in gender terms, the trade unionists of Purcell's generation did nevertheless do more than anybody else to address these deficiencies.

2.5 ALL POWER TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL?

Hyndman believed that Tom Mann would have been a still more formidable leader had 'his mind ... been capable of continuous action along one definite line'.²⁰⁴ This was the perspective of the emerging party career, identified with a single institution, even if Hyndman's SDF was not a particularly successful one. Mann's longevity, conversely, represented adaptability as the key to effectiveness, employing whatever organisational channels were most readily available. With his philosophy of the good-looking peg, Purcell likewise made no special virtue of continuity on a single definite line. In this again, he appears a figure influenced far more by Mann and syndicalism than by Hyndman and orthodox social democracy.

The resemblance, even so, was partial and in some respects superficial. Until he found a resting place among the communists, and to some extent even then, Mann always retained the mindset of the freelance agitator. Even his union, the Engineers, provided only intermittent focus; and while standing three times for the post of general secretary, he did so at long intervals and on the basis of credentials earned almost anywhere but in its service. Tied to office in neither the physical nor the institutional sense, Mann's several sojourns overseas encapsulate the peripatetic quality of his socialism.

Purcell's attachments, by contrast, must at every stage be located within the secure institutional framework of a labour movement career and a stability of position mirrored domestically by small-scale address changes within Manchester's working-class suburbs.²⁰⁵ Mercurial as he seemed, Purcell knew the value of this union base. As a communist he defended the position of union-sponsored parliamentary candidates. As the Building Guild took shape, he advised Coppock not to abandon union office for such a venture; and though Purcell for a period worked full-time for the Furniture Guild, he arranged a sort of secondment from NAFTA while he did so.²⁰⁶ On entering parliament, he insisted on remaining a paid union officer, and as NAFTA's 'parliamentary secretary' received a further subvention equivalent to half his parliamentary salary. When this was reduced to £25 a year after he lost his Coventry seat in 1924, he wrote to Bramley that it looked like pushing him 'to the Beach' – in other words, getting his cards.²⁰⁷ Even such an honorarium nevertheless secured his continuing eligibility for the TUC general council.

This indeed was a basic consideration. Purcell's was the syndicalism of the union officer, but of a distinctive type. Unlike the miner Cook or the engineer Tanner, he could not have aspired to a wider influence merely through his union. Ambivalence about conventional politics did not therefore take the sectional form of an accentuated group identity like that of the miners or dockers. Instead, Purcell found a vehicle in the broader trade-union interest that was identified locally

with the trades councils and nationally with the TUC. In the period of Purcell's involvement, these bodies aspired to a quasi-political authority, removed from the immediate pursuit of trade interests but deriving their legitimacy from the workers as producers. Assuming roles of industrial co-ordination and political advocacy, their field of competency was subject to three competing claims. One was that of the unions from which they drew their authority, but which nevertheless remained jealous of their individual prerogatives. A second was that of the emerging Labour Party and its claim to represent the movement's sole or pre-eminent political voice. A third, potentially, was that between the trades councils and TUC themselves, as co-ordinating bodies at national and local level. By the end of the 1920s, these tensions had to some extent been resolved. Separate spheres of industrial and political competency were becoming more clearly demarcated, in each case subjected to more formalised systems of control and the restriction of local autonomy. The scope for a career like Purcell's was thereby reduced if not actually eradicated. The role of the communistic union leader has had its counterparts in subsequent periods of trade-union history. Never again, however, was such prominence achievable on so slender an industrial basis, through the affirmation of the unions' collective interests by a mere French polisher.

Framing Purcell's career at both ends were the trades councils. From his earliest days in Manchester he was a branch delegate and executive member of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council (MSTC), serving as its chairman (1905-7, 1917-19, 1922), its vice-chairman (1914-17), and as a delegate to the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Trades Councils.²⁰⁸ Syndicalism in this instance provided a rationale and reinforcement for activities to which he was already committed. There was a heavy trades council representation at the ISEL conferences, and Bowman drew on the French example of the *bourses du travail* in urging a National Federation of Trades Councils as Labour's 'natural discussion ground ... in its general interests' and an affirmation of class over craft.²⁰⁹ As envisaged by both Bowman and Mann, the trades councils would displace municipal authorities as 'the Industrial Councils of tomorrow'.²¹⁰ In the meantime, given the rudimentary state of Labour's electoral organisation, except as provided by the unions themselves, trades councils claimed a role in the representation of labour interests going beyond simply industrial matters. In Manchester and Salford, it was the trades council which in 1902 took the initiative in the establishment of a local Labour Representation Committee, with Purcell in due course as one of its five trades council delegates. As yet, the city had no divisional labour parties and the MSTC remained jealous of its own prerogatives, whether in the nomination of candidates, affiliation to the national Labour Party or the local representation of labour interests.²¹¹ During the war years, its role was further enhanced by the electoral

truce, and Purcell's activities ranged from helping to form a tenants' defence league to representing labour on the Manchester section of the National Committee for Combating Venereal Disease.²¹²

Even into the 1920s Purcell described the trades councils as a basis for the one big movement of the workers. In Dutt's *Labour Monthly* symposium he wrote of 'the inclusion of administrative, technical, manual and mental workers inside the industrial organisation; the organisation of the Trades Councils ... into integral parts of the National Industrial Union, the direct connection everywhere of the finger tips to the head'.²¹³ Purcell chaired a committee of the TUC and the trades councils aimed at formalising their relations, and in the notion of the trades councils functioning as the TUC's local 'correspondents' there remained an echo of the idea of labour's discussion ground.²¹⁴ By this time, however, it was the general council itself that provided the primary focus for Purcell's ambitions. If the general council as co-ordinating 'head' represented the logic of the general staff now realised at a national level, the downgrading of the trades councils to its fingertips or correspondents implied subordination and in due course the stifling of local initiative and grassroots militancy.²¹⁵ For the time being, however, this was obscured by the TUC's appearance of combativity, of which Purcell was the virtual personification. Already during the 1922 engineering lockout he had headed off calls for a local council of action by referring to the greater potential effectiveness of the general council.²¹⁶ Despite its disparate manifestations, his career as a significant public figure started and finished with his membership of the general council.

Purcell had first attended the TUC in 1917, replacing Bramley as NAFTA delegate on the latter's appointment as TUC assistant secretary. Two years later he began a nine-year stint on what was then still the TUC's parliamentary committee, and a body hardly more effective than when the Webbs in the 1890s had described its powers as 'absurdly inadequate'.²¹⁷ In 1921, however, the general council took its place as an 'actively functioning organ' empowered to act upon its own initiative.²¹⁸ Even as its assistant secretary, Bramley was identified with this more active role. Unlike the secretary, C.W. Bowerman, he was undistracted by parliamentary responsibilities, and on succeeding Bowerman in 1923 he accepted the condition that he relinquish any parliamentary ambitions of his own. Already as assistant secretary he made claim to 'freedom of initiative and some power to take action in matters of detail'.²¹⁹ He could not, however, take things further than commanded support within the general council itself. If in 1924-5 he had the opportunity for some extraordinary initiatives in policy, it was because he had willing collaborators among the other leading actors on the general council.

Despite his union's lack of leverage, Purcell was perhaps the most important of these. In theory the general council had been provided

with a rationalised basis of representation to match its heightened authority. Seventeen trade groups were established; and where the parliamentary committee had functioned as an undifferentiated general body, these were now represented on the general council according to a rough proportionality. Among other things, this was meant to put an end to the 'vicious principle of bartering and bargaining' which had produced anomalies like the exclusion of miners' representatives in 1919.²²⁰ Even so, the continuing practice of election by the whole congress meant the tempering of the representative principle wherever there were competing nominations to the general council. Justified as offsetting the direct nominating powers of the larger unions, the system allowed Purcell an uninterrupted tenure as one of two representatives of the building, woodworking and furnishing trades. Like the Building Trades' secretary Hicks, he received some five times the congress vote of the Woodworkers' Society nominee, even though the Woodworkers' membership was greater than that of both their unions combined.²²¹

The common impression that the general council comprised 'the established leaders of the main trade unions' is therefore not quite accurate.²²² Nor indeed did such figures automatically assume positions of pre-eminence. Unencumbered by the heavier union commitments, someone like Purcell was able to take on major TUC responsibilities for which longevity, translating into a sort of seniority, seemed a sort of credential. While TUC chairman in 1924, he also sat on the Disputes Committee, the Indian Affairs Committee and the committee for the metal and building trades, as well as chairing the National Joint Council with the Labour Party and the Joint International Committee. Crucially, both as chairman and as vice-chairman in 1924-5, Purcell also chaired the TUC's international committee. Not surprisingly, there was some concern to establish a more equal distribution of responsibilities.²²³ Nevertheless, as Purcell now took on the further responsibility of IFTU president, he more and more began to function as a TUC full-timer. Indeed, though while out of parliament in 1924-5 he was reportedly working at his trade, the payment of general council fees and expenses still allowed him to meet heavy commitments as the TUC's vice-chairman.²²⁴

If nothing else, officers from the smaller unions were above suspicion of pushing significant sectional interests. They thus provided successive TUC secretaries, and in securing the position in 1923 Bramley defeated candidates from several of the larger unions.²²⁵ Another contributory factor was that the more powerful unions in several cases treated the general council as a distinctly second-level responsibility. Among them was the numerically and strategically crucial Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), founded in 1922 and led by Ernest Bevin. If illustration were needed of the general council's initially haphazard composition, it is that Bevin as yet ceded

the transport group nomination to veteran figures like Tillet – ‘an old fuddler’ according to Bevin – and Harry Gosling.²²⁶

Given the relatively fluid and ecumenical basis of trade-union politics, there was never any formal left slate or programme. There was, on the other hand, the shared formative experience of a movement strong in collective ethos and weak in collective disciplines, and providing an assortment of causes and credentials in place of a party card. Tillet, for example, was a steadfast associate of Purcell, speaking for him often in the Forest of Dean and commending his ‘proletariat sense’ in whatever consistent meaning the erratic Tillet attached to the phrase.²²⁷ Overshadowed by Bevin domestically, in this final phase of his career Tillet also resumed his earlier international interests, taking part in the Russian delegation, missing the one to India only through ill health, and raising funds in the USA during the 1926 miners’ lock-out.²²⁸ Especially close to Purcell over a number of years was Hicks. Both had combined union office with a syndicalist rhetoric; both drew from marxism a legitimation of industrial struggle that precluded any sense of responsibility for the ruling capitalist order without generating much idea of how to bring it to an end. Though never a CPGB member, Hicks shared Purcell’s disposition towards unofficial or communist-sponsored movements like the LRD, the ICWPA and what Rodney Barker has called the educational syndicalism of the labour colleges’ movement.²²⁹ Both were also steadfast supporter of the Soviets, and their close relations were cemented by Hicks’s nominal co-editing of *Trade Union Unity* in 1925-6. Between them, they represented their trade group continuously on the general council until Purcell’s departure in 1928.

With the temporary ascendancy of its left-wing elements, attempts to order the TUC’s relations with the Labour Party according to relatively formalised if unwritten lines of demarcation left room for uncertainty and even tension.²³⁰ From neighbouring offices in Eccleston Square, joint Labour-TUC departments had been established for research, legal advice, publicity and international affairs. In 1922 there also appeared under their joint auspices a monthly *Labour Magazine*, conceived as ‘frankly and avowedly the official monthly journal of the Labour Movement’.²³¹ On the other hand, there was no cross-representation between the general council and the Labour executive, nor any requirement on the parliamentary leadership to attend to the demands of the TUC or its constituent unions. In 1923 the Labour Party urged that the two bodies’ annual conferences be held in the same town consecutively and thus effect ‘a more satisfactory arrangement for the Agendas for discussion upon purely industrial and purely political subjects’.²³² Not only was the proposal resisted, but the following January members of the general council entering MacDonal’s government were required to vacate their seats. With Bramley now installed as full-time secretary, the TUC was beginning

to show a new assertiveness regarding its need for a separate political voice.

The experience of the MacDonald government could hardly fail to reinforce this tendency. While necessarily intervening in 'industrial' subjects, it studiously refused any special rights to consultation on the unions' part. By the eighth month of the government, Purcell was successfully moving that the TUC decline to co-operate with a Board of Trade committee on whose composition it had not been properly consulted, while Bramley had failed to secure even a single meeting with MacDonald.²³³ With the exception of the Wheatley housing reforms, which were drawn up with the involvement of the building industry, Purcell gave the government's record a decidedly lukewarm reception at the 1924 TUC and emphasised that a 'well-disciplined industrial organisation' remained the principal weapon of the workers.²³⁴ Bramley on similar grounds proposed the TUC's recovery of its 'distinctly separate' identity and public profile. 'We have had no trade union literature, no trade union publicity, no trade union voice in the public press or elsewhere on the initiative of our Joint Departments', he complained. 'The Labour Party cannot have it both ways. If when in office we are to be detached from the Labour Movement we cannot be treated as an integral part of that movement when Labour is out of office.'²³⁵ In this spirit the TUC declined to involve the Labour Party in activities addressed to the rural areas and the issue of unemployment, and at the following year's TUC voted to assume complete control of its own research, publicity and international departments.²³⁶

The most dramatic example of this unwillingness simply to defer to the Labour Party was in respect of international affairs. Bramley's appointment as assistant secretary had coincided with a qualitative expansion of the TUC's international activities, symbolised by the establishment of an international department and the *International Trades Union Review*. It was also under Bramley's impetus that the TUC assumed the functions of international representation that had hitherto been exercised mainly by the smaller and less inclusive GFTU.²³⁷ One result was that the TUC took over from the GFTU the British prerogative of nominating the IFTU president. The first such nominee, replacing the GFTU general secretary W.A. Appleton, was J.H. Thomas; the second, succeeding Thomas after his entry into the MacDonald government, was Purcell himself. From the tiny pool of NAFTA activists, Bramley and Purcell had emerged to enjoy what briefly was a directing role for a movement four-and-a-half million strong.

What could not have been anticipated was how their spirit of independence would above all be demonstrated in respect of Russia. In 1920 the TUC played its part in a general labour movement delegation to the new workers' Russia. It also accepted the idea of a joint international committee that would service the Labour Party on

'political' questions and the TUC on 'industrial' ones, thus implicitly circumscribing the political role of the latter.²³⁸ Four years later, on the other hand, it organised its own Russian delegation, passing over the possible participation of the ILP. This could only be taken as a statement of intent given that relations with Russia had latterly been the most sensitive and contentious area of Labour Party policy. That the delegation also undertook to investigate the Zinoviev letter, whose handling had so glaringly called MacDonald's judgement into question, merely underlined the apparent challenge to his authority. In subsequently urging the need for the TUC to control its own publicity, Bramley specifically cited the example of its Russian delegation.²³⁹ As the TUC then revived its independent publications, two of the first five pamphlets, along with delegation report itself, dealt with Russian matters.²⁴⁰ It was as if Bolshevism were in some distinctive way a peculiarly trade-union issue. As Tillett put it, while other European trade-union movements had 'largely surrendered industrial identity to political action', the British movement alone stood 'four-square to all its obligations or enmities ... retaining relentlessly a firm grip on economic, wage and trade union action apart from politics and politicians'.²⁴¹

Purcell and Bramley were respectively chairman and secretary of the Russian delegation. They were also the only common denominator between the delegation itself, the twelve-strong contingent at the subsequent Anglo-Russian trade-union conference, and the five-member commission which then approved a joint advisory council of the British and Russian unions, or ARJAC.²⁴² On being elected to the TUC's parliamentary committee in 1916, Bramley had observed that 'a representative of a small union, though pleading from sometimes an unpopular cause, can depend on the tolerant support of Congress, provided on Trade Union matters responsibilities are faced and duties done'.²⁴³ On meeting this condition, he and Purcell were entrusted for a time with key offices which they used to project onto Russia the internationalist precepts they had learnt within the Furnishing Trades. It is to this development that we now turn.

NOTES

1. Torr papers CP/Ind/Torr/8/3, Purcell to Mann, 2 June 1921.
2. A.W. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy*, Oxford: OUP, 1979, p. 138.
3. Bertrand Russell, *Roads to Freedom: socialism, anarchism and syndicalism*, Allen & Unwin, 1918.
4. Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, Allen & Unwin, 1920.
5. See ch. 1 above.
6. Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann, 1856-1941. The challenges of Labour*, Oxford: OUP, 1991, p 193.

7. Communist Unity Convention, *Official Report*, CPGB, 1920, p. 7.
8. Purcell, 'Towards a new policy: V', *Labour Monthly*, May 1924, pp. 268-9.
9. Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, Allen & Unwin, 1986 edn, p. xi.
10. RGASPI 495/1006, BSP executive committee to ECCI Amsterdam sub-bureau, 6 May 1920.
11. For Mann see *Bolshevism and the British Left*, I, pp. 219-23; for Pollitt, Kevin Morgan, *Harry Pollitt*, Manchester: MUP, 1993, ch. 2; for Tanner, the entry by Nina Fishman in *DLB XI*, pp. 274-83.
12. Communist Unity Convention, pp. 6-7.
13. *Communist*, 25 November 1920, report of meeting at Hackney addressed by Williams and Purcell.
14. NA CAB 24/126 CP 3179 RRO 28 July 1921, 24/128 CP 3333 RRO 24 September 1921. The CPGB version was always that Cook had been expelled; see RGASPI 495/100/42, 'Renegades of the Communist Party of Great Britain', n.d., c. 1926-7.
15. 'Renegades of the Communist Party of Great Britain'. The reliability of the source is questionable, and Purcell's first name is given as Harry.
16. RGASPI 495/100/94, unnamed correspondent to W.N. Ewer, 28 February 1922.
17. For a discussion see Morgan, *Harry Pollitt*, Manchester: MUP, 1993, pp. 26-31.
18. For the Profintern see Reiner Tosstorff, *Profintern. Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1920-1937*, Paderborn: Schoeningh, 2004. An English translation is due to appear in 2014.
19. Reproduced in *Trade Unions in Soviet Russia. A collection of Russian trade union documents compiled by the ILP Information Committee and the International Section of the Labour Research Department*, LRD/ILP Information Committee, 1920, p. 44.
20. Tanner papers 6/2, 'A brief summary of discussions & negotiations re Industrial Red Inter.', c. July 1920. The discussions summarised took place between 16 and 30 June; see also Morton H. Cowden, *Russian Bolshevism and British Labor 1917-1921*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 90-1.
21. Also in Tanner papers 6/2.
22. *Daily Herald*, 15 July 1920.
23. Tanner papers 6/2, circular of Provisional International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions (British Bureau), London division council (secretary: Pollitt; chairman: Mann), April 1921.
24. NA CAB 24/162 CP 422 RRO 18 October 1923. A communist motion on the subject at the MSTC was carried against Purcell's express recommendation; see *Manchester Guardian*, 18 October 1923 and (without mention of Purcell's contribution) *Workers' Weekly*, 26 October 1923.
25. *Sunday Worker*, 12 July 1925.
26. CPGB party council meeting, 20 November 1924, reported *Workers' Weekly*, 5 December 1924; see also *Workers' Weekly*, 12 December 1924.
27. RGASPI 495/100/168, Pollitt, 'Organisation of the left wing', c. November 1924; Pollitt, report on Russian trade union congress, *Workers' Weekly*, 5 December 1924; RGASPI 534/7/24, Pollitt to Andrés Nin, 31 December 1924.

28. RGASPI 534/7/32, Watkins to Losovsky, 5 March 1926.
29. *Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labour*, 17-25 November 1924, pp. 156-7, contribution of Swales.
30. Purcell, 'The burning question of international unity', *Labour Monthly*, September 1925, pp. 526-7.
31. *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 7 March 1925.
32. *NAFTA Monthly Report*, March 1922, p. 18.
33. Andrew Thorpe, 'Stalinism and British politics', *History*, 83, 1998, pp. 608-27.
34. E.g. Hugh Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Volume 2: 1911-1933*, Oxford: OUP, 1985, p. 363.
35. NA 30/69/220 RRO 29 May 1924.
36. RGASPI 534/7/24, Mann to Losovsky, 23 December 1924.
37. *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 5 December 1925; James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Volume two: the General Strike 1925-1926*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1969, pp. 81-2; LHASCP CP/Ind/Hann/1/12, programme for 'Great United Demonstration', 7 March 1926; *NAFTA Monthly Report*, January 1926, pp. 23-4; Watkins to Losovsky, 5 March 1926.
38. RGASPI 539/3/294, Bob Stewart to MOPR EC, 11 December 1925
39. For Fimmen see ch. 4 below.
40. RGASPI 495/100/171, Inkpin to CPGB PB to Zinoviev 9 October 1924. It would appear that S.G. Hobson's production *The Left Wing*, of which only one issue appeared was the first manifestation of this project; see *Bolshevism and the British Left*, I, pp. 116-17.
41. RGASPI 495/100/176, letter from unnamed correspondent, 3 November, forwarded A. Valenius, Moscow, 6 November 1924; Hutt papers CP/Ind/Hutt/1/2, Hutt to 'Karl August', 29 December 1925; MacDonald papers (NA) 30/69 1171, Walton Newbold to MacDonald, 2 June 1926 .
42. Even Tom Bell, the CPGB's head of agit-prop, contributed as 'sometime President of the Amalgamated Ironmoulders of Scotland'.
43. LRD minutes, 12 March and 2 April 1925, also 'Unity an appeal', printed circular, March 1925. A subscription basis was introduced with the September 1925 issue.
44. Hutt papers CP/Ind/Hutt/1/2, Hutt to Joanny Berlioz, 2 April 1925.
45. RGASPI 495/100/227, undated letter c. 1925 to Albert Inkpin.
46. The characterisation is Newbold's: MacDonald papers (NA) 30/69 1172, Newbold to MacDonald, 19 July 1927.
47. Communist Unity Convention, pp. 44-5.
48. GARF 5451/13a/55/37, biography of Zelda Kahan Coates, 1925.
49. Newbold to MacDonald, 19 July 1927.
50. RGASPI 495/100/96, typescript report on work of the RILU British bureau, n.d., c. July 1923?; Morgan, *Harry Pollitt*, ch. 2.
51. RGASPI 495/1/140, Petrovsky to Manuilsky, n.d. but September 1924 (translation from Russian courtesy Francis King); *Workers' Weekly*, 5 and 12 September 1924; for the Hull TUC see also ch. 4 below.
52. Newbold to MacDonald, 19 July 1927.
53. Jan Oudegeest, 'Amsterdam - London - Moscow', *IFTU Press Reports*, 14 April 1925.

54. MacDonald papers (NA) 30/69 1170, Morrison to MacDonald, 12 November 1925.
55. RGASPI 495/100/243, Inkipin to Brown, 17 June 1925 enclosing Gallacher to Bennett 17 June 1925.
56. 'The "Left Wing" and the Sunday Worker', *Sunday Worker*, 15 March 1925; prospectus for Campaign Committee, *Sunday Worker*, 17 and 24 May 1925.
57. RGASPI 495/100/245, unnamed correspondent to 'Max' (Petrovsky), 29 December 1925; also 495/100/303 for Petrovsky's information report, stamped 21 January 1926 and 534/7/32, 'Black' to Losovsky, 1 January 1926; *Sunday Worker*, 20 December 1925 and 10 January 1926 (Winifred Horrabin's account); *Manchester Guardian*, 21 December 1925.
58. L.J. Macfarlane, *The British Communist Party. Its origin and development until 1929*, MacGibbon & Kee, 1966, p. 36; Mellor, 'A critique of guild socialism', *Labour Monthly*, November 1921, pp. 397-404.
59. Bedford papers M/8, second National Guild Conference, 9 December 1922, report and related papers. For Beauchamp see the entry by Raymond Challinor and John Saville in *DLB X*, pp. 19-22. Other communists with a more durable involvement in the guilds included Beauchamp's husband, the lawyer W.H. Thompson, Sam Elsbury of the National Tailoring and Clothing Guild and the sometime Christian socialist and Trotskyist, Stuart Purkis.
60. Mellor, 'Critique', p. 399.
61. For Hobson and guild socialism, see Kevin Morgan, 'British guild socialists and the exemplar of the Panama Canal', *History of Political Thought*, 28, 2007, pp. 120-57.
62. See *Bolshevism and the British Left*, II, ch. 8.
63. *Manchester Guardian*, 3 July 1905.
64. The best account remains Mark Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes. The architecture and planning of early state housing in Britain*, Heinemann, 1981.
65. See Frank Matthews, 'The building guilds' in Asa Briggs and John Saville, eds, *Essays in Labour History 1886-1923*, Macmillan, 1971, pp. 284-331.
66. Matthews, 'The building guilds', pp. 308-9.
67. See Hobson's report to third National Building Guild conference, *Manchester Guardian*, 14 August 1922.
68. *Manchester Guardian*, 8 December 1919.
69. *Manchester Guardian*, 22 March 1920.
70. *Manchester Guardian*, 30 April 1921.
71. *Manchester Guardian*, 13 June 1921.
72. Bedford papers M/11, circular for National Guild Conference, 29-30 April 1922.
73. See Gossip's observations, *Monthly Report*, October 1919, pp. 18-21. Local practice varied widely; for example, in the same issue (p. 10) the union's regional organiser described how in Reading the employers were members of the building employers' association but NAFTA was not eligible for affiliation to the Bulding Trade Conciliation Board.
74. There is an entry on Coppock by John Saville in *DLB III*, pp. 49-52.
75. *NAFTA Monthly Report*, October 1910, p. 9.

76. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, August 1919, p. 11; see also *Manchester Guardian*, 18 September 1919.
77. *Daily Express*, 5 April 1925.
78. See Kevin Morgan, 'The problem of the epoch? Labour and housing, 1918-1951', *Twentieth Century British History*, 16, 3, 2005, pp. 227-55.
79. *Manchester Guardian*, 1 August 1917, 8 November 1919; NAFTA *Monthly Report*, December 1918; Federation of Lancashire and Cheshire Trades Councils, conference on housing, reported *Manchester Guardian*, 9 April 1923; see also NAFTA's resolution to the National Labour Housing Association, NAFTA *Monthly Report*, September 1924, p. 13.
80. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, April 1922, pp. 16-18.
81. Bedford papers M/15, Purcell, typescript report, 'The Furniture and Furnishing Guild Ltd', 24 February 1922.
82. *Manchester Guardian*, 22 March 1920, 30 April, 13 June, 12 August and 17 October 1921, 6 May 1922.
83. There is a copy in TUC archives 292/9.2/6.
84. TUC archives 292/9.2/6, FFG manifesto, 21 September 1921.
85. See the summary of the assistant official receiver, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 March 1923.
86. S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left. Memoirs of a modern revolutionist*, Edward Arnold, 1938, p. 246; *Manchester Guardian*, 9 March 1923.
87. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, February 1922, pp. 26-8.
88. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, June 1922, p. 16.
89. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, April 1922, p. 16; June 1922, p. 20; November 1922, p. 9; Bedford papers M/15, note of conversation with G. Kempton, London Furnishing Guild, 19 February 1923.
90. FFG manifesto, 21 September 1921.
91. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, June 1922, p. 20.
92. *Manchester Guardian*, 14 August 1922; NAFTA *Monthly Report*, October 1922, pp. 23-4.
93. Second National Guild Conference, 9 December 1922, contribution of G. Kempton.
94. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, December 1922, pp. 6-7; March 1923, p. 10; *Manchester Guardian*, 9 and 11 January 1923.
95. Second National Guild Conference.
96. Bedford papers, National Guilds Council building guild sub-committee minutes.
97. *Manchester Guardian*, 15 December 1922.
98. At least with the passage of time; see *Dean Forest Mercury*, 21 October 1927.
99. Bedford papers M/15, H.C. Davies, secretary, Piano Workers' Guild, to unnamed correspondent, 25 May 1924; *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 11 April 1925 (advertisement); Lansbury, 'Workers' pianos', *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 4 June 1927; TUC archives, 292/9.2/6, Davies to Citrine, 28 March 1928.
100. Purcell, 'The Furniture and Furnishing Guild Ltd'.
101. Purcell, 'The Furniture and Furnishing Guild Ltd'; see also Bedford papers M11, letter to Cuthbert Johnson, 27 August 1922: 'The Guilds are extremely keen on quality of workmanship, and the Furniture Guilds ... have found that this somewhat prejudices them with new customers who

- (naturally enough) compare their tenders with the prices asked for the usual commercial shoddy’.
102. See *Bolshevism and the British Left*, II, ch. 6.
 103. Second National Guild Conference, contribution of Hobson. In attempting to establish the National Guild Building Society, Hobson was to recognise the desirability ‘from a functional point of view’ of having ‘trained business men’ of guild sympathies on the board; see Bedford papers M/11, Hobson to J.H. Marriott, 24 March 1923.
 104. Margaret Bondfield, *A Life’s Work*, Hutchinson, n.d., p. 200, diary entry for 26 May 1920.
 105. Second National Guild Conference, contribution of Hobson.
 106. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, April 1922, pp. 16-18.
 107. *Dean Forest Mercury*, 3 July 1925.
 108. For the Soviet parallel, see William J. Chase, *Workers, Society, and the Soviet State. Labor and life in Moscow 1918-1929*, Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987, pp. 38-43.
 109. Bedford papers, M/9, memorandum to Tom Shaw, Minister of Labour, n.d. but early 1924.
 110. Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee *News Bulletin*, 4 January 1936.
 111. Earl C. Ford and William Z. Foster, *Syndicalism* (1912), Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1990 edn, ed. James R. Barrett, pp. 23, 26.
 112. See the discussion in Wayne Thorpe, ‘*The Workers Themselves*’. *Revolutionary syndicalism and international labour, 1913-1923*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989, pp. 18-20, 323.
 113. See *Bolshevism and the British Left*, I, ch. 5.
 114. IFTU *Press Reports*, 20 November 1924.
 115. Thorpe, ‘*The Workers Themselves*’, pp. 73-4.
 116. ‘What is syndicalism? Is it the future creed of labour?’, *Syndicalist*, March-April 1912; editorial, *Syndicalist*, July 1912.
 117. See Communist Unity Convention, pp. 9 and 29. The word ‘valuable’ was removed in the final resolution as a concession to anti-parliamentarians.
 118. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, February 1920.
 119. ‘Renegades of the Communist Party of Great Britain’.
 120. Communist Unity Convention, p. 27.
 121. MacDonald papers 30/69/1168, Graham to MacDonald, 25 January 1924; also the entry on Graham by John Saville and Joyce Bellamy in William Knox, ed., *Scottish Labour Leaders 1918-1939. A biographical dictionary*, Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1984, pp. 127-8. For MacDonald’s concerns with trade representation, see for example his *A Policy for the Labour Party*, Leonard Parsons, 1920, pp. 31-2.
 122. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, February 1924.
 123. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, August 1924, pp. 22-3.
 124. MacDonald papers (NA) 30/69/1168, Mardy Jones to MacDonald, 28 May 1924.
 125. See ‘John Ball’, ‘What is wrong with us?’, *Lansbury’s Labour Weekly*, 28 March 1925 and Tanner’s ‘hearty endorsement’ the following week; also Sidney Webb to Beatrice Webb, 29 September 1925 in Norman Mackenzie, ed., *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb*, vol. 3, Cambridge: CUP, 1978, p. 249.
 126. 56th TUC *Report*, 1924, pp. 430-3; 57th TUC *Report*, 1925, p. 240; also

- Clare Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside. The politics of rural Britain 1918-1939*, Oxford: OUP, 2007, pp. 114-17.
127. Details in Frank Bealey and Henry Pelling, *Labour and Politics 1900-1906. A history of the Labour Representation Committee*, Macmillan, 1958, pp. 290-2; Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918*, Cambridge: CUP, 1990, p. 328.
 128. G.D.H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948, pp. 482-4; Cole, *British Trade Unionism Today. A survey*, Gollancz, 1939, pp. 214-15.
 129. See Morgan, 'The problem of the epoch?'
 130. Tanner, *Political Change*, pp. 324, 401, 403.
 131. York DLP executive committee minutes, 11 October 1922.
 132. Pollitt, 'The communist party and the Whitechapel by-election', *Labour Monthly*, January 1931, p. 33. In the subsequent general election, a contribution of £4 from NAFTA's East London United branch is noted in Pollitt's *Communist Election Special* (LHASC CP/Ind/Poll/10/2).
 133. RGASPI 495/100/480, report on options for the political levy by F. Wagner.
 134. This was F.E. Sweetman, prospective parliamentary candidate for Chatham; see 'The policy of coalition has failed', *World News and Views*, 31 May 1941, p. 347.
 135. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, April 1919, p. 18.
 136. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, February 1920, pp. 16-18.
 137. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, October 1920, p. 27; Stockport Trades Council and Labour Party minutes, 22 October 1922.
 138. The view of Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People. Party, language and popular politics in England, 1867-1914*, Cambridge: CUP, 1998, pp. 229-36.
 139. Communist Unity Convention, pp. 9, 27,
 140. For lurid examples see *Coventry Herald*, 19-20 January and 27-8 April 1923. See also See Frank Carr, 'Municipal socialism. Labour's rise to power' in Bill Lancaster and Tony Mason, eds, *Life and Labour in a Twentieth Century City: the experience of Coventry*, Coventry: Cryfield Press, n.d., pp. 183-94.
 141. NA CAB 24 RRO December 1923.
 142. *Coventry Herald*, 23-24 November, 7-8 and 14-15 December 1923.
 143. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, January 1924, pp. 16-17.
 144. George Hodgkinson, *Sent to Coventry*, Robert Maxwell, 1970, p. 81.
 145. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, December 1923, pp. 20-1; Purcell, West Salford election address, January 1910, WCML.
 146. Siegfried Bettman, 'Struggling: the autobiography of S. Bettman', Coventry City Record Office 1417/1, p. 731; *Coventry Herald*, 7-8 December 1923.
 147. Purcell, West Salford election address; Hodgkinson, *Sent to Coventry*, p. 81.
 148. See e.g. MacDonald papers (NA) 30/69 1771, MacDonald to J.E. Walton, 13 July 1926.
 149. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, May 1918, EC business. O'Grady had similarly resigned as a union organiser on the introduction of parliamentary salaries in 1911.
 150. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, April 1926, pp. 2-3.
 151. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, February 1924, pp.20-1 and March 1924, p. 10.

152. Mary Stocks, *Ernest Simon of Manchester*, Manchester: MUP, 1963, pp. 71-2, 86.
153. Jewson, 'What a woman Labour MP thinks of the House', *Labour Magazine*, February 1924, p. 447.
154. MacDonald, *Policy*, pp. 100-2.
155. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, February 1924.
156. See 56th TUC *Report* 1924, pp. 85-125.
157. Purcell, 'Towards a new policy: V', p. 270.
158. NADRA *Monthly Report*, April 1925, pp. 21-2.
159. See Greg Power, *Representatives of the People? The constituency role of MPs*, Fabian Society, 1998.
160. T.J. Williams, 'Labour in the playing fields', *Labour Magazine*, June 1924, p. 67.
161. 'Mr Purcell's Weekly Address', *Coventry Herald*, 14-15 March 1924.
162. *Coventry Herald*, 22-23 February 1924, 14-15 March 1924, 21-22 March 1924; also NAFTA *Monthly Report*, April 1925, p. 21.
163. 56th TUC *Report* 1924, p. 498.
164. Scott Nearing, *British Labor Bids for Power. The historic Scarborough conference of the Trades Union Congress*, New York: Social Science Publishers, 1925, p. 18.
165. See *Bolshevism and the British Left*, II, pp. 106-7
166. Philip Snowden, *An Autobiography. Volume two: 1919-1934*, Nicholson & Watson, 1934, pp. 638-59.
167. Baldwin cited Noel-Baker papers, Nbrk 1/42, Coventry Labour Party, 27th annual report, 1929.
168. See for example *Coventry Herald*, 25-26 April and 2-3 and 9-10 May 1924.
169. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, June 1924, pp. 22-3. In declining to join with the 'anti-Labour attack' Purcell had no doubt came under pressure not to do so.
170. *Coventry Herald*, 2-3 May 1924.
171. 173 Hansard fifth series, 13 May 1924, cols 1239-44.
172. Speech of G. Morris of Coventry Labour Party at Purcell's adoption meeting (*Coventry Herald*, 17-18 October 1924). Speakers in Purcell's support included Cramp, Swales, Hicks, Quaile, Varley (all general council members) as well as Bramley, Gossip, Coppock and Bevin.
173. 173 Hansard fifth series, 13 May 1924, cols 1239-44.
174. NA 30/69/220 RRO 21 August 1924 citing CPGB press statements, 13 and 16 August 1924.
175. *Coventry Herald*, 24-25 October and 31 October-1 November 1924.
176. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, November 1924, pp. 26-7.
177. *Coventry Herald*, 31 October-1 November 1924, also 4-5 April and 17-18 October 1924 for similar disparagement of the Liberals.
178. *Gloucester Citizen*, 16 and 18 June 1925; Labour Party NEC minutes, national agent's by-election report, 24 June 1925; Sidney Webb to Beatrice Webb, 24 June 1925 in Mackenzie, *Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb*, vol. 3, p. 239.
179. Labour Party NEC minutes, 24 June 1925. In recording these facts as a sort of accolade to Mosley, Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, Macmillan, 1981 edn, p. 157, does not mention the nature of the objection to

- Bondfield's candidacy, and compounds this by his slighting references to the jealousy of Mosley's rivals.
180. IISH SAI 1663, Henderson to Tom Shaw, 24 June 1925.; MacDonald papers 30/69 1170, Hamilton Fyfe to MacDonald, 17 July 1925; Ellen Wilkinson, *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 25 July 1925; Labour national agent's by-election report, 24 June 1925. In other circumstances MacDonald fully accepted that 'the duty of the Leader of the Opposition is to send a letter to every candidate' (MacDonald papers 30/69 1172, MacDonald to Mrs Mears, *Daily Herald* editorial secretary, 1 April 1927).
 181. TUC archives 292/20/9, TUC general council minutes, 10 July 1925; Lansbury in *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 25 July 1925. Visiting general council members included Swales, Tillett and Smillie.
 182. MacDonald papers 30/69 1172, Bevin to MacDonald, 3 December 1927; Sidney Webb to Beatrice Webb, 29 September 1925.
 183. Extensive coverage of the campaign can be found in the *Dean Forest Mercury* and the *Gloucester Citizen*.
 184. See in particular 'Labour and the Churches', *Dean Forest Mercury*, 17 July 1925.
 185. *Sunday Worker*, 19 July 1925.
 186. National Minority Movement, *Report of Second Annual Conference*, NMM, August 1925; *Workers' Weekly*, 17 October 1924.
 187. Labour Party NEC minutes, national agent's by-election report, 28 June 1925.
 188. Speeches by Williams and Mrs Fawcett, Labour national women's organiser, *Dean Forest Mercury*, 3 July 1925, and by Purcell, *Dean Forest Mercury*, 17 July 1925.
 189. Ralph Anstis, *Four Personalities from the Forest of Dean*, Coleford: Albion House, 1996, p. 152; *Dean Forest Mercury*, 17 July 1925.
 190. *Coventry Herald*, 24-5 October 1924; Citrine papers 1/7, copy diary entry 4 August 1925.
 191. *Dean Forest Mercury*, 3 July 1925 and 5 February 1926.
 192. *Coventry Herald*, 24-5 October 1924.
 193. Bramley, 'Dilke, a defender of the people', *Labour Magazine*, April 1925, p. 551.
 194. See *Bolshevism and the British Left*, I, ch. 5.
 195. TGWU *Record*, June 1925, p. 241; Ellen Wilkinson, *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 27 March 1926.
 196. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, January 1926, p. 22.
 197. 57th TUC *Report*, 1925, pp. 66-7.
 198. E.g. Clegg, *History*, p. 356.
 199. *Dean Forest Mercury*, 4 September and 4 December 1925; NAFTA *Monthly Report*, October 1925, p. 9.
 200. *Dean Forest Mercury*, 5 February 1926.
 201. Crossman papers 154/3/AU/1/127-8, notes 2 August 1945.
 202. Respectively Philip Noel Baker and Morgan Philips Price, see *Bolshevism and the British Left*, I, pp. 158-9, 166-8.
 203. John A. Yates, *Pioneers to Power: the story of the working people of Coventry*, Coventry Labour Party, 1950, p. 20.
 204. Henry Mayers Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, Macmillan, 1912, p. 463.

205. Purcell is recorded as living at Brook Terrace, Davy Hulme in 1916; at Talbot Road, Davy Hulme in 1925; and at Kendall Road, Crumpsall in 1929 and until his death.
206. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left*, p. 220; *NAFTA Monthly Report*, June 1922, p. 16.
207. Bramley papers box 1, Purcell to Bramley, 22 December 1924.
208. The *DLB* entry by David Martin provides basic career details.
209. Clinton, *Trade Union Rank and File*, pp. 84-7.
210. Clinton, *Trade Union Rank and File*, pp. 85, 87.
211. Tanner, *Political Change*, p. 145; L.A. Bather, 'A history of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council', Manchester: M Phil, 1956, pp. 161-71; Clinton, *Trade Union Rank and File*, p. 51.
212. *Manchester Guardian*, 1 and 2 August 1917.
213. Purcell, 'Towards a new policy: V', p. 270.
214. *TUC Report*, 1924, pp. 180-2.
215. As argued in Clinton, *Trade Union Rank and File*.
216. *Manchester Guardian*, 20 April 1922.
217. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism*, Longmans, Green & Co, 1894, p. 472.
218. *The General Council of the Trades Union Congress. Its powers, functions and work*, pref. A.B. Swales, TUC General Council, n.d. but 1925, p. 4.
219. TUC archives 292/28/1, 'Office development. Supplementary statement by F. Bramley', n.d., c. 1918.
220. Clegg, *History*, pp. 308-9.
221. See the discussion and voting figures in 56th *TUC Report*, September 1924, pp. 333-4 and 489-93. Understandably, the ASW was seeking to have the method of election changed.
222. Margaret Morris, *The General Strike*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, p. 171.
223. See TUC archives 292/28/1, 'Functions of committees. Interim report', July 1925.
224. For example, he served on the majority of the TUC's government deputations in that period; see *Sunday Worker*, 28 June and 5 July 1925 for reports that he was working at his trade and Clegg, *History*, p. 451 for the general council's financial arrangements.
225. TUC archives 292/21.12/1, Bramley biographical file.
226. Cited Robert Taylor, 'Citrine's unexpurgated diaries, 1925-26: the mining crisis and the national strike', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 20, 2005, p.77.
227. *Dean Forest Mercury*, 2 March 1928.
228. NTWF archives 159/3/C/188, Edo Fimmen to Robert Williams, 17 February 1922 for Tillett's renewed interest 'in the International'. Tillett had played some part in the early years of the ITF and was briefly its secretary and president.
229. Rodney Barker, *Education and Politics 1900-1951. A study of the Labour Party*, Oxford: OUP, 1972, ch. 7. Purcell differed from Bramley in this, and when in 1924 the more respectable Workers' Educational Association elected Bramley as its president, the more proletarian National Council of Labour Colleges followed by electing Purcell to the same position (*Manchester Guardian*, 12 May and 14 September 1925).

230. On this theme see Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance. Trade unions and the Labour Party*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991, ch. 2. The use of Minkin's idea of 'rules' in relation to the CPGB is discussed in *Bolshevism and the British Left*, I, pp. 41-3.
231. *Labour Magazine*, May 1922, p. 24
232. TUC archives 292/20/8, TUC general council/Labour Party NEC joint minutes, 27 September and 31 October 1923.
233. TUC archives 292/20/9, TUC general council minutes, 24 September 1924, 292/28/1, 'Mr Bramley's points re joint departments', n.d. but 1925.
234. 56th TUC Report, 1924, pp. 66-8.
235. 'Mr Bramley's points'.
236. 57th TUC Report, pp. 84-5, 356-69.
237. Marjorie Nicholson, *The TUC Overseas. The roots of policy*, Allen & Unwin, 1984, pp. 21-3; TUC archives 292/28/1, 'International Bureau', memo by Bramley presented TUC parliamentary committee office committee, 16 May 1919.
238. Christine Collette, *The International Faith. Labour's attitudes to European socialism 1918-1939*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, p. 49.
239. TUC archives 292/28/1, 'Mr Bramley's points re joint departments', n.d. but 1925.
240. For details see 57th TUC Report, p. 324.
241. Ben Tillett, *Some Russian Impressions*, LRD, 1925, p. 19.
242. Daniel F. Calhoun, *The United Front. The TUC and the Russians 1923-1928*, Cambridge: CUP, 1976, pp. 54-5.
243. NAFTA *Monthly Report*, October 1916, p. 18.