The sociological context of trade union activity in the East Midland boot and shoe industry in the late Victorian era

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Additional Information:

- A Master's Dissertation. Submitted for the Master of Science Degree of Loughborough University of Technology.

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/34483

Publisher: © R.L. Jones

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"THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF TRADE UNION ACTIVITY IN THE EAST MIDLANDS BOO'T AND SHOE INDUSTRY IN THE LATE VICTORIAN ERA"

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Submitted for the Master of Science Degree of

Leicester University of Technology

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.A.  Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association.
A.S.C.  Amalgamated Society of Cordwainers.
N.U.B.S.O.  National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives.
V.C.H.  Victoria County History.
B.U.S.M.  British United Shoe Machinery Co. Ltd.
M.O.H.  Medical Officer of Health.
Fox  "History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives 1874 - 1957".
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SUMMARY

The Thesis sets out to relate the historical development of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives in terms of Talcott Parson's theory of social systems. The Procedure adopted was first, to outline the economic and social background in which the organisation operated and then to analyse the sociological contexts of its development for the latter period of the 19th century.

Adopting Talcott Parson's framework, the organisation was defined as a social system, (a social system is composed of the interaction of members whose relation to each other are mutually orientated through the definition and mediation of a system of structure and shared symbols and expectations) which if it is to survive as an "ongoing" system must solve four basic problems -

(i) goal attainment - ability to satisfy needs of the social system.
(ii) adaptation - attainment of necessary resources from environment.
(iii) integration - linking of the unit of the system - unify members.
(iv) latency - concerned with the functioning of the system.

The processes by which the four system categories are solved provide the theme of the study. All organisations are faced with these problems, and the particular structures devised to meet them will vary with the type of organisation under consideration. The problem is thus, how did the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives attempt to solve its four system problems, how successful was the Union in defining and implementing the mechanisms for the solution of these problems?

Particular Chapters examine various aspects of the Parsonian problem. The break-away of the shoe operatives from the old trade organisation, The Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association, is examined in Chapter III. While Chapter III examines the social system as a whole, Chapter IV examines a sub-system of the organisation (Leicester Branch) and how this specific sub-system met the problem of technological change. This approach demonstrated that what may be functional for one specific sub-system may be disfunctional for another or for the system as a whole. The adaptive mechanism is analysed in the fifth Chapter, especially the development of "factory"
working for the shoe operatives. The remaining four Chapters concern themselves with the Union's industrial policy vis-à-vis the manufacturers, and the growing militancy among Union members, special attention is given to the problem of goal attainment. By the application of sociological techniques to the historical development of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, it is hoped that new light may be shed on Trade Union activities in the late 19th century. A theory which outlines the sociological context in which an organisation operates, enables a more clear examination of the interplay between environmental factors, and analyses the role of "internal" processes which are essential to organisational development. The examinations of organisational change is given a new emphasis, internal factors within the organisation as well as the relation to its environment becomes an integral part of its historical development.
INTRODUCTION

"THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF TRADE UNION ACTIVITY IN THE EAST MIDLAND BOOT AND SHOE INDUSTRY IN THE LATE VICTORIAN ERA"

In analysing the social context of Trade Union activity in the late 19th century, although the explanation of social phenomena must be of primary importance, one cannot ignore the economic factor. Economic and social phenomena are interdependent, they both react on each other, and to ignore the economic development and structure of the boot and shoe industry, would be to undermine the significance of the social phenomena under investigation.

As a framework to provide a basis for future work a general outline of the economic growth of the industry is required. At what stage did the industry become important in the East Midland economy? What was its basic structure? What was the average size of its production units? These are important questions, for their solution provides information not only on economic, but also sociological phenomena.

A process of rapid technological growth produces ascore of economic and social problems for an industry and its workers - was there any evidence of rapid growth? Inter-related with technological factors are structure and size of production unit, all three variables being of sociological as well as economic interest. It is notoriously difficult to organise workers in an industry where the technology allows a system of out-door working - it is factories that bring operatives into contact. Similarly, the larger the basic size of the production unit, the more favourable are the conditions for workers' organisations. Large scale units, by allowing the aggregation of large numbers of men in one space, who hitherto had been separated, may provide an environment in which combination is enhanced.

The basic data used in the pursuit of these questions, comprise mainly of Census Returns for Leicestershire, supported by numerous Directories of Leicestershire and Rutland in the latter half of the 19th century; also of use
were local contemporary newspaper reports, old records of existing firms, and articles in various trade journals discussing the history of the industry.

Apart from the growth and structure of the industry, its location must be examined. The main emphasis will be placed upon Leicester as the centre of the industry, but it is also proposed to examine towns and villages in Leicestershire which became important centres of boot and shoe manufacture; namely - EARL SHILTON, SIBLEY, AUSTEY, DAMELL, OADBY and RINCKLEY. In the case of the Leicestershire towns and villages it may be useful to examine whether there were any differences in the structure of the country industry compared with that of Leicester. Unfortunately, it may be said that the origins of the industry in Leicestershire are surprisingly obscure. Census Returns and local directories provide a clue to the industry’s growth, and the records (and histories) of existing firms, and contemporary newspaper articles give a useful background.

Apart from pure economic growth itself, other correlates of economic development; namely, population, housing and general living standards will be examined. Was there a significant rise in population in Leicester and the surrounding areas? Did the building of houses meet the increasing demands for accommodation of a rising population? What were the general and working conditions of the Leicester poor, especially shoe operatives? These are questions which are on the boundary of economic and social problems, and are consequently important, for their examination informs us about not only the behaviour of economic and social phenomena, but also the relationship between them. Census Returns are the main informants concerning population statistics and the number of occupied houses. For the condition of houses themselves, a valuable source of information has been the Medical Officer of Health reports for Leicester in the late 19th century.

These reports shed an interesting light on housing conditions, sanitation and general amenities. As a corollary to the M.O.H. Reports the Annual Reports of the Leicester Domestic Mission 1846 – 1877 are a mine of information on general living and working conditions of the Leicester Poor, and provide
useful illustrations concerning the "lot" of shoe operatives.

Given the general framework of economic and social conditions the main purpose of the thesis is to examine the sociological context of Trade Union activity in the Boot and Shoe industry of the late 19th century. It is proposed to base this analysis on two basic concepts, that of "social system" and "organization" and it would be appropriate at this stage to define these two concepts and sketch out the relationship between them. The concept "Social System" has been brought into prominence in sociology by the work of Talcott Parsons; he has defined the concept thus:

The Social System is composed of the patterned interaction of members. It is constituted of the interactions of a quantity of individual actors whose relations to each other are mutually orientated through the definition and mediation of a pattern of structural and shared symbols and expectations.¹

A means of distinguishing a social system is given by the more frequent and intense occurrence of specific types of interactions among members than among non-members. The concept has been given greater clarity (and its application to this research seen more readily) by C. Loomis. He states:

Any level of interaction furnishes examples of Social Systems: the direct face to face personal interaction of two actors, or the indirect, enormously interlinked, impersonal interaction of a society.²

His next statement is of extreme importance:

The concept of the social system enables the analytic observer to move from a given sub-system to the larger societal system and back again.³

Thus it is equally legitimate to examine the social system of the Trade Union as a whole, and the relationships between Union Members and branch officials at the branch level, (or between the National activity of the Union, and its local activity in the East Midlands) since both constitute Social Systems exhibiting an orderly uniformity of interaction. It is not the people, but the uniformity which is termed social system.

The Boot and Shoe Trade Union may be regarded as a social system in its own right, or as a sub-system of some larger system order, equally we may examine areas of the Union which will be regarded as sub-systems in relation to

¹T. Parsons, Social Systems, p.vii. ²C.P. Loomis, Social Systems, p. 25.
the social system of the Trade Union as a whole. Apart from this conception, a Trade Union may also be examined from the viewpoint of a "Formal Organisation."

Blau and Scott state:

In contrast to the social organisation that emerges whenever men are living together, there are organisations that have been deliberately established for a certain purpose. If the accomplishment of an objective requires collective effort, men set up an organisation designed to co-ordinate the activities of many persons and to furnish incentives for others to join them for this purpose.

Thus for example workers organise Unions in order to improve their bargaining strength vis-à-vis employers.

In these cases the goals to be achieved, the roles the members of the organisation are expected to follow, and the status structure which defines the relations between them have not spontaneously emerged in the course of social interaction but have been consciously designed a priori to anticipate and guide interaction and activities. Since the distinctive characteristic of these organisations is that they have been established for the expedient purpose of achieving certain goals, the term formal organisation is used to designate them.

The two concepts "Social System" and "Formal Organisation" will be extensively used throughout the thesis, and to avoid future difficulty, it is proposed at this stage to examine their relationship in a general body of theory.

Talcott Parsons provides the theoretical background in a recent application of his general theoretical framework for the study of social systems to "Formal Organisations". According to Parsons, all social systems must solve four basic problems, if they are to survive as "on-going" systems: "Adaptation, Integration, Goal Attainment, Latency."

(1) "Adaptation": the accommodation of the system to the "reality demands" of the environment coupled with the acute transformation of the external system,

(2) "Integration": the function that relates the elements of the social system together - it serves to co-ordinate and unify members in a single entity,
(iii) "Goal Attainment": the actual ability to satisfy the needs of the social system, the defining of objectives and the mobilisation of resources to obtain them.

(iv) "Latency": function of maintaining the stability of the units participating in the system. There are two aspects of the latency function:
(a) system must maintain the cultural system the members subscribe to - "PATTERN MAINTENANCE".
(b) the motivation of members within the system must be maintained - "TENSION MANAGEMENT".

This scheme has sufficient application to be applicable to all social systems. For example if we take society as our social system, then the generally recognised adaptive function is performed by the economy. Formal Organisations, although they serve different specific functions are seen by Parsons, as part of the goal attainment sub-system of the larger society. But as referred to above, and now with the full implication of Parsonsian theory, each formal organisation may also be viewed as a social system in its own right, possessing its own set of sub-systems concerned with the solution of the four basic problems. Accordingly, each organisation must have structures that enable it to adapt to its environment and mobilise the resources required for its continual functioning. Mechanisms are also required to enable the organisation to implement its goals, including structures devoted to specification of objectives, and to allocation of resources within the organisation. To solve its integrative problems the organisation must find ways to command the loyalties of its members, to motivate their effort, and to co-ordinate the operations of its various segments. Finally, institutions must be developed to cope with the Latency problem, that is, to promote consensus on the values that define and legitimise the organisation's goals.

All organisations are faced with these problems and the particular structures devised to meet them will vary with the type of organisation under
consideration. The problem is thus, how did the Boot and Shoe Union attempt to solve its four system problems, how successful was the organisation in defining and implementing the mechanisms for the solution of these problems? Not only do we have to define the four system problems and examine the Union's search for their solution; but the analysis must be placed in a historical context. How far is Parsons' frame of reference valid, when placed in a historical context?

Critics have suggested that Parsons' system approach has a built-in static, conservative bias.

They point to the fact that the problems of order, integration and equilibrium have always played a central role in Parsons' thinking. If these views are correct, Parsonsian Organisation (Social System) theory would have no part to play in the historical examinations of the Boot and Shoe Trade Union. The critics have been answered and probably the most enlightened re-interpretation of Parsonsian theory has been made by Black, who states:

Parsons does indeed postulate an equilibrium seeking tendency as a property of systems of any sort, but it appears that Parsons' concern with equilibrium does not reflect the view that everything is automatically integrated and adjusted to everything else in the best of all possible worlds. It reflects instead the view that society represents a veritable powder keg of conflicting forces, pushing and hauling in all ways at once. Far from taking societal equilibrium for granted he sees it as a central problem demanding detailed analysis and explanation.6

This is of extreme importance, for by answering the critics who denounce Parsons as imbuing a conservative bias, it can be seen that the social system scheme is essentially dynamic, which enables us to examine and analyse historical change; as Parsons says:

and needs [needs of social system under analysis] which remain unmet, for even a while become sources of strain and tension with potentially disruptive consequences. . . . it courts conflict for a social system to be radically incompatible with the needs, motives, and capacities of the human agents who must play its various roles, and if this conflict comes too great, the social system must undergo change.7

This theoretical framework will be adopted in the Chapters concerning the social context of trade union activity.

6 & 7 M. Black, Social Theories of Talcott Parsons, p. 17.
Chapters one and two, dealing with the economic development of the industry, and some aspects of living and working standards at Leicester, respectively, will not concern themselves with the main body of theory outlined above.

In Chapter three, the main emphasis will be placed upon the breakaway of the shoe operatives from the old trade organisation, the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association, to the National Union of Operative Boot and Shoe Riveters and Finishers. The factors precipitating this change will be analysed. Did the old organisation fail to meet the adaptive or integrative needs of the system, or what attempts did it make to survive as an on-going system? What mechanism did the new organisation adopt to accommodate the four system problems, how far were its goals and other solutions to system needs differentiated from that of the old system? These are some of the basic questions which will be asked in Chapter three. Chapter four will examine the effect of technological change - namely the introduction of machinery - on specific areas of trade union activity. Initially, analysis of the relationship between technical change and the tension management and pattern maintenance processes will be pursued. Machinery tended to undermine the traditional wage system within the industry, causing disruption in the T.M. and P.M. Sector of the Latency function. The processes by which this disruption was channelled are of extreme importance. Chapter five on the other hand examines the organisation's attempt to change its external environment - namely its demand that all operatives should be employed inside the factory, rather than working in their own homes. The demand for indoor working was one of the most important policy decisions taken by the organisation in its formative years of development. Why was this policy adopted, what consequences did it have for the social system of the organisation, and for the social system of the worker? The change from working in the home to working in the factory involves a completely different attitude for the operatives. What was the initial response of out-workers to this policy; did they resist or accept tacitly the organisation's policy?

Chapters three, four and five, cover the period 1863-1891; by the early
1890's the organisation had become the third largest trade union in Great Britain, and the remaining chapters examine the organisation's industrial and political policies during the decade 1890 - 1900.

In 1891 the Union adopted arbitration as its official industrial policy and Chapter six will examine the processes by which this policy was adopted and its implications for the organisation. Internal conflict within the Union is the focus of Chapter seven special attention being paid to arbitration implementation - its development already outlined in Chapter six - and the political sympathies within the organisation. This conflict, although of national importance and culminating in an industry-wide lock-out in 1895, was mainly concentrated at Leicester, and the conflict at the Leicester Branch level and its relationship vis-à-vis the Union General Council will be examined. The conflict is seen as a dispute over the interpretation of the goal attainment process of the organisation.

The internal strife within the organisation created the general lockout of 1895, and the nature of the lockout, and the consequent settlement will be analysed in terms of their implications for the social system of the organisation.

The basic data used in the pursuit of these questions comprise mainly the Monthly Reports of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives 1874 - 1900. Information concerning Union structure, policy on machinery, outdoor working, arbitration, political sympathies, attitude of rank and file and Union leadership are readily available in these reports, and the special reports of the Union Conferences 1874 - 1900 have also proved invaluable. Branch Minute books furnished by the Leicester Branch of the N.U.B.S.O. for the period 1896 - 1903 have shed interesting light on the organisation's development at Leicester. Additional sources of information were the various contemporary trade journals and local newspapers. The Shoe and Leather Record appear to have taken a lively interest in the affairs of the N.U.B.S.O. between 1880 - 1900. Initially, it gave tacit support to the new organisation, but in the late 1880's and early 1890's under the editorship of Day, it violently
attacked the organisation and its editions were forever attempting to provoke the manufacturers to lock-out the operatives. The Journal of the British Boot and Shoe Institute has provided some scraps of information, but of greater significance have been the Leicester Chronicoles and Leicestershire Mercury and the Leicester Journal. The shoe industry being the staple industry of Leicester at this time, the local papers often carried reports of Trade Union officials' speeches, and the activities of the local branch of the N.U.B.S.O. Further, the activities of Boot and Shoe Union Officers in the other social organisations of Leicester - Local Council, Board of Guardians, School Board, Trade Council etc. - were reported and proved extremely informative. Finally, records such as the Medical Officer of Health Reports for Leicester, records of old firms, Leicester Manufacturers' Association, Minutes of Board of Guardians etc. have been used.

Modern printed sources were reduced almost exclusively to Fox's book History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives 1874 - 1957.

Although Fox was concerned with the national development of the organisations, he provides some interesting information concerning Leicester.
CHAPTER 1

"ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEICESTER BOOT AND SHOE INDUSTRY 1850 - 1900"

Between 1850 and 1900 a structural change occurred in the economics of shoe making in Leicester. Prior to 1850 the industry was cottage based and produced sufficient output to meet Leicester's needs only. By the late 1870's shoe making was a basic element in the Leicester economy, and the town had supplanted Northampton, as the centre of the industry. This process of rapid economic growth provides the context of the chapter.

In 1831 Leicester boasted 425 boot and shoe makers, a proportion of 21 per 1,000 of the population. The corresponding figures for Northampton, the traditional centre of the industry was 1,322 and 88 respectively. In 1835 there were only two wholesale shoe makers operating at Leicester, and at least one of these was to become the accepted pioneer of shoe making in Leicester. That was "... Thomas Crick ... known locally as the father of the industry, who in addition to running a warehouse, was also engaged in boot making and in leather carrying and straining. He abandoned the latter activity when he became a large scale manufacturer of shoes. The other [wholesaler] was J. Dikkes ... who was also a hosiery manufacturer and who later concentrated on children's shoes."3

During this early period...

... the unit of production was in most cases presumably the family, with perhaps an apprentice or two. The making of shoes was performed entirely by the traditional hand sewing method. Even the so called manufacturers had neither machines nor power in their factories. The industry [at Leicester] was probably organised in the same way as in Northampton where the factories were little more than central shops, operating on a putting-out basis.4

1Cottage industry - production performed at the home of the operative, employer provided raw materials and sometimes loaned the machinery.
2Victoria County History, Leicester, Volume 4, p. 314.
3Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1846, p. 12.
4V.C.H. Leicester, Volume 4 - production occurred in home of the operative, p. 315.
During the two and a half decades following 1850 this traditional structure underwent dramatic change, as the following figures indicate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NO. INDEPENDENT SHOE MAKERS</th>
<th>NO. OF MANUFACTURERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus between 1841 and 1877 the number of manufacturers grew by over 200%.

The number of people employed in shoe making in Great Britain between 1851 - 1861 fell from 274,000 to 250,000, while in Leicester the number rose from 1,393 to 2,741. In 1861 40% per 1,000 of the Leicester population were employed in the industry. The 1861 statistics for Leicester are only very approximate, and there is some evidence that the figures given for women and child labour may have been underestimated.

In 1863 a leading Leicester manufacturer stated:

"... the wholesale boot and shoe trade in Leicester may be said to have come into existence within the last five years: up to that date there were only two or three wholesale manufacturers in the town.

The same manufacturer estimated that there were between two and three thousand women employed chiefly in the large factories. "I arrived at that number" he continued, "by reckoning the number of sewing machines, which is tolerably known, at over 800 and taking a proportion of two fitters to each machinist with a margin for those who are otherwise employed."

By 1871 the total number employed in the industry (at Leicester) was about 11,000 exceeding the number at Northampton by about 1,000, 63 per 1,000 of Leicester's population were employed in the industry. During these formative years—

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5 Compiled from Leicester Directories 1840, 1860, Wright 1877.  
6 In his 1877 Directory Wright drops the term "independent shoe makers".  
7 This figure may be overestimated i.e. included shoe machine manufacturers. Wright is rather vague in his classifications.  
8 Y.C.R. Leicester, volume 4, p. 315.  
9 Ibid., p. 316.  
11 The number of shoe operatives employed at Leicester remain higher than at Northampton until at least 1931.
The organisation of the industry was such that those with only small amounts of capital - men of straw as witness to a later commission called them - could easily set up as manufacturers. Little machinery needed to be bought outright, other than sewing machines; sometimes not even those need be bought outright but could be hired from the manufacturer to them the workshop manager supplied his products. The expanding economy was able to absorb all those who wished to venture, even if some did fall out in times of depression. As a result the industry grew up in Leicester with many family firms very few of which became public or private companies before the first World War.  

The process of growth in the Leicester shoe industry was rapid, and compressed in a short period of time, what were the forces which gave impetus to this growth? The two principal machines which revolutionised the industry - the sewing machine and the Blake sole-sewing machine - made their first appearance in England, at Leicester. The development of the industry in Leicester can be traced to the introduction of the machine rivetting system by the Cricks in 1853, "A very important step towards factory production." This process allowed an increased and cheaper rate of production. But it is related that Crick met with some early problems in the distribution of his product, some retailers were reluctant to accept the new shoes, and he was obliged to dispose of his first products, to Loughborough at least, through the agency of a chimney sweep. In the words of Granger, Crick became "... the first entrepreneur of the shoe industry." The second machine to be introduced into Leicester factories with revolutionary consequences was the Blake Sole Sewer, even more important, perhaps, than Crick's rivetting process:

This machine saved the inner sole, already attached to the upper, to the outer sole. It was known in England before the American Civil War, and British Machine makers namely in Leicester, sometimes improved upon it. The Blake sewer was not sold, but leased to the manufacturer ...

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13 Machine Rivetting System - system of rivetting the sole to the upper by machine.
14 Clapham, Volume 2, Age of Iron and Steel, p. 95.
16 This observation is made initially by Clapham, volume 2, p. 95.
Crick was using a machine of this type in 1860, but it is said that the machine was first introduced into Leicester by Stead and Simpson about 1858, who had moved to Leicester from Leeds via Daventry in 1856.

Why did these machines find such fertile ground at Leicester? The traditional explanation is that the technological developments were unfavourably regarded by labour at Northampton and Stafford, the traditional centres of the industry, and strikes in these areas are said to have been one of the causes of the industry's growth at Leicester. Such a view is supported by Granger:

The traditional home of shoe making was Northampton, but the attempts by some manufacturers to introduce machines there met with considerable opposition which continued for about ten years. There is little doubt that not a few Northampton journeymen came to Leicester as a result of the strikes and intimidation prevailing in that town, and so Northampton's loss became Leicester's gain.18

Granger's position is given further support by a contemporary account of the Leicester Chronicle:

The first innovation [in the shoe industry] was the introduction of the sewing machine, and the opposition to this by the hand closer was much more determined than what has manifested itself since against other appliances, although far larger interests have been from time to time affected. Leicester in the mid 19th century was practically unknown as a shoe making centre, and might never have become famous for it, but for the great strike in Northampton against the sewing machine.19

This is a convenient explanation, but contains one fatal flaw. If, "Leicester in mid 19th century was practically unknown as a shoe making centre" why did the Northampton operatives move there? Other important forces inside Leicester itself must have been operating, forces which produce an environment which could accept a new machine industry.

Of extreme importance was the existence of a labour supply experienced in a tradition of home working methods. In the early and mid 19th century Leicester was the most important centre of the hosiery trade, William Felkings estimates of the number of frames in the various centres of the industry in 1844 shows

19 Leicester Chronicle, January 5th, 1901.
18,494 frames working in Leicester, compared with 14,595 in Nottingham. But at the time of Felkin’s enquiry, a further report by R.M. Muggeridge on the conditions of framework knitters, indicated that the industry at Leicester was in a state of almost complete stagnation. In 1810 - 20-30% of Leicester hosiery output was exported, the corresponding figure for 1845 was a mere 10%. Wages had remained stagnant throughout the period, while the standard of living of the framework knitter had deteriorated excessively. Unemployment was aggravated by overcrowding in the industry:

For a series of years past the supply of framework knitters has almost invariably exceeded the demand for them; and hence the value of their labour has been progressively if not constantly, diminishing, except in a very few of the fancy branches of the trade where considerable skill is required, and in which, consequently, the number of competitors has been proportionately lessened.

The workers in the glove trade apparently suffered the worst. A worker in that trade stated:-

I have been out as much as five or six weeks together and never earned a farthing. Some years, I have known the time when I have been out six months and never earned a halfpenny;

The economics of hosiery manufacture in mid 19th century Leicester had produced a surplus labour force which was adapted to machine work. This industrial environment was ideally suited to the new shoe industry. Surplus labour meant cheap labour, and workers used to operating machinery, meant less resistance to new innovations. The industrial environment at Leicester was in complete contrast to that of Northampton, and the shoe industry offered a new lease of life to the Leicester economy. In 1863 a Director of Preston and Sons stated:

He thought that its [Leicester’s] trade was never in a more prosperous state than at the present time. The

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20 Leicesters specialised in woollen hosiery. 6,446 frames were making cotton stockings, compared with 11,457 in the woollen branches.

21 Muggeridge’s Report was completed in 1845.

22V.C.H. Leicester, volume 4, p. 304.


24 1st Appendix to Report Conditions of Framework Knitters 1845, p. 117.

25 Stead and Simpson gave their reasons for moving from Leeds to Leicester - "cheap labour."

26 Preston and Sons was a Leicester shoe firm.
hosiery trade had benefited by the introduction of others - notably shoes - forming an opening for the surplus labour in the town, while the large factorie and warehouses sprang up around them, bore witness to the prosperity and extension of the shoe trade.

Further, little capital was required to set up in business in the shoe trade, the White's Directories of the 1840's-1850's list shoe manufacturers, who were also engaged in the hosiery and leather trades. The industrial environment of Leicester in the mid 19th century was one of flux, and ideally suited to the development of an industry which required cheap relatively unskilled labour that could operate machinery, and where the capital cost of establishing a shoe firm was low. The hosiery, elastic web and kid glove industries had provided this labour force, which the new shoe entrepreneurs readily utilised. It was these internal forces operating at Leicester, rather than external events at Northampton which were the impetus to the industry's growth.

The method of production during the period 1850 - 1860 was that:

... the uppers were cut in the factory, by the clickers, the elite of the labour force ...

... clicking was carried out almost entirely by men, together with the cutting of linings, which was the task of the juniors in training. Clicking demands skill and a knowledge of the differences in thickness, shade, markings, and quality of leather. Women and girls were employed in large numbers, both in and outside the factory in the next process, the closing of the uppers by sewing machines.

... Most of these uppers and soling material were then supplied to hand tackers, who were largely out-door workers. After this operation the tested uppers were again returned to the factory for the soles to be attached along with the heels and given out again to the hand finishers, who returned them to the factory when finished to be ironed and dressed.

... The machines used by the women were hired from the

27 Leicester Chronicle, October 31st, 1863.

28 Granger, "A co- incidental development in Leicester during this period had a significant bearing on the type of shoe manufactured. In 1859 a man named Caleb Wells opened a factory in Southgate St. for the manufacture of an improved Elastic Webbing. By 1877 there were no less than 47 elastic webbing manufacturing firms in the Borough of Leicester. Elastic Webbing was incorporated in the sides of boots for children, men and women."


employer, just as stocking frames were hired. In 1664 the rents were said to vary from one shilling to two shillings and sixpence a week, according to the value of the machine.32

Down to the eighties - and for that matter much later - factory boot making was far from being a complete power industry. In 1871 there were only 400 h.p. of steam in 145 boot and shoe factories; . . . Though the gas engine was coming into use during the next decade, steam remained the obvious power; few machines could be made really automatic; and new lighter ones for all kinds of sub-processes were constantly being tried. So only the heaviest and most certainly permanent machines, such as those for cutting butt, or doing very stiff sewing, were as yet regularly power driven. The rest, as shown in contemporary designs, all have handles or treadles."33

The origins of shoe making in the towns and villages of Leicestershire are obscure. There is no single authentic date or event from which it may be traced . . . "Like Topsy, it seems that it wasn't born, but just grew."34

There is little doubt that it was an off-spring of the larger and older industry centred at Leicester. The impetus to the development of the shoe industry in the Leicestershire villages was a function of the method of production of the industry itself.

If uppers could be taken from the factories and completed in the homes of workers who lived in the city, there was no reason why they should not be taken further afield.35

Leicester manufacturers, notably Crick, began to send out work to the country towns. Earl Shilton36 appears to be the first town which accommodated Leicester's output; in 1877 there were five boot and shoe manufacturers operating at Earl Shilton.37

The system of production operated was as follows:-

... closed uppers were taken from Leicester by cart, given out to the workers who did the making and finishing in their own homes, and then returned it to the carter - intermediary, who paid the local operatives and collected his own payment from the manufacturer when the completed boots were returned.38

33Clapham, volume 2 (Age of Iron and Steel), p. 95.
34"Historical Survey of Shoe making in Leicestershire", British United Shoe Machinery Co.Ltd., 1932.
36Earl Shilton 9 miles South West by West from Leicester, pop. 1894 - 2,600.
37Five manufacturers are listed in Wright's Directory of 1877.
From this system termed the basket work system, to primitive factories was a logical development, in which machinery undoubtedly played a large part:

... but even old people in the town [Earl Shilton] who were themselves operatives when the industry began are vague as to the order in which manufacturing business started. One of the earliest manufacturers of whom they have memories, and who is said by some to have been the first was an A.J. Norton and who ... clicked his own production. 39

An A.J. Norton and Co. boot manufacturers is listed in White's Leicester and Rutland Directory of 1877. Another early manufacturer named Headley 40 cut his own uppers; (thus operating independently of Leicester) and a third named Flude was at one time apparently a foreman of Norton, and later set up in business himself, specialising in elastic sided shoes. 41

What was probably the earliest factory in the town was in three small cottages still standing in the main street [1932]. Two of these were devoted to machining and one to finishing; and the machine in use was of treadle type, driven by cogs instead of a belt. Four girls are said to have been sent from Leicester to teach local workers how to use their machines. Girls who learned the work had to give their services for one month and later are said to have been paid at a rate as low as one shilling and sixpence a week. For making 4s to 6s42 the price was as low as one shilling per dozen whilst for larger sizes the operatives received one shilling and threepence per dozen, including grinding. 43 Child labour was also used, and one man still working in the town in 1932 recalls being put to work 'sprigging' when he was so small that he had to stand on a backless chair and be strapped to the bench to prevent him falling off. 44

Although the British United Shoe Machinery article dealt solely with Earl Shilton, it can be safely assumed that the pattern of development in the other Leicestershire 'shoe' villages followed a similar course. Indeed the article concludes:

Although all the foregoing facts apply most directly to Earl Shilton, that town has been selected not merely because it seems to be the first in the county where the trade developed but also because its story is very much the same as that of other country towns and villages in the country where the industry began soon after. 45

40 Headley is not mentioned in Wright's Directory of 1877.
41 White's Directory 1877, p. 19.
42 Presumably size refers to size of shoe.
43 Grinding - blue paper, utensil used in operating gas light.
45 Ibid.
White's Directory of 1870 lists four manufacturers at Anstey\footnote{Anstey is 3\frac{1}{2} miles North West of Leicester. The 1877 Directory says of Anstey: "contained in 1861 834 inhabitants, but in 1871 owing to the development of the shoe trade and stock frame knitting and the demand for labour at the granite quarries, they have increased to 1,012 persons living on 711 acres of land."} but neither at Hinckley\footnote{Hinckley population 1851 - 7,071; 1901 9,638.} nor at Barwell\footnote{Barwell population 1851 - 719; 1891 - 2,622. In 1851 there were 3 cord-wheelers and 6 shoe-makers at Barwell.} - both later considerable centres of the shoe industry - was there any trace of an industry in 1870, though at Hinckley a William Porter was described as "leather-cutter and boot-top manufacturer."\footnote{Directory 1877.}

He was possibly an embryo boot manufacturer, but apparently he did not meet with success, for there was no trace of him in the 1877 Directory. The only other shoe manufacturer operating in the country in 1870 appears to have been J. Clarke "shoe manufacturer and lime burner of Sileby.\footnote{Sileby 7\frac{1}{2} miles North East of Leicester, population 1891 2,380.} Not only was the county shoe industry thinly distributed in 1870, but the Directories indicate the elementary stage of its evolution. At Sileby Joseph Clarke combined shoe manufacturing with lime burning, while the first manufacturer at Barwell (1877) was also a grocer and carrier. It may be assumed that the capital for the early country industry may have come partly from such established and older sources outlined above, and as the new enterprise prospered the original occupation was dropped.

"The 'basket work'\footnote{Basket work system outlined above - where shoes sent out from Leicester partially complete and the process continued in the home of the operative in the country village, shoe then sent back to factory at Leicester.} system remained the usual method of industrial organisation in Leicestershire until the late 1880's. But in the early 1890's it fell into disuse and from that time onwards boot and shoe manufacturers multiplied in the country and factories became the general rule.\footnote{V.C.H. Leicester, Volume 3, p. 24.}"

The late 1880's and early 1890's was a period of rapid growth in the country shoe industry of Leicestershire.
TABLE 2. NUMBERS EMPLOYED LEICESTERSHIRE SHOE INDUSTRY 1881 - 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Boot manufacture</td>
<td>2,829</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>3,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Boot manufacture</td>
<td>4,930</td>
<td>1,714</td>
<td>6,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Boot manufacture</td>
<td>6,206</td>
<td>2,091</td>
<td>8,297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3. NUMBERS OF SHOE MANUFACTURERS LEICESTERSHIRE TOWNS 1871-1877 -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>NO. OF MANUF. 1871-77</th>
<th>NO. OF MANUF. 1884</th>
<th>NO. OF MANUF. 1895-6</th>
<th>POP. SIZE 1891</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hinckley</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anstey</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl Shilton</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enderby</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>2,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oadby</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sileby</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Wigston</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boots and shoes varied little in style, colour and design before 1900. The larger manufacturers competing in the same wholesale market, tended to eliminate the less efficient firms, but this process was slow because there was an ever increasing demand and in many cases independent retailers favoured certain manufacturers.

It was the bad management of aspiring shoe entrepreneurs rather than intense competition which led to failure, the following bankruptcy reports confirm this view:

54 In 1901 there were 26,561 boot and shoe operatives employed at Leicester, more than three times those employed in the country.
55 Figures are supplied from various Leicester Directories and no single year can be given.
56 Enderby 5 miles South West of Leicester.
57 One of the manufacturers was a co-operative venture.
58 Oadby 1½ miles south east of Leicester.
Failure of Rhodes and Weston boot manufacturers Leicester. Rhodes a clicker by trade said he started in business in 1887 with two other partners, 'the partnership' terminating in 1888. Since the present partnership the turnover of the business had been from £50 to £80 per week. To some of their customers they gave unlimited credit . . . and the credit taken averages from one to three months . . . He [Rhodes] supposed at the time they were getting a profit in their transactions, but he did not think so now. They lost £150 or £160 by bad debts, and he now estimated that they sold goods at a loss of about 15 per cent, whilst other losses arose through disputes with their workpeople. Weston [the other partner] in reply to the official receiver said that he did not admit that he was incompetent . . . but he believed that they must have sold goods at a loss of 15 per cent.60

'Failure of Eastwood and Jackob.' The Official Receiver's observations were as follows . . . 'The debtors only had £15 between them to start, they have done small hand to mouth business, selling their goods for cash weekly and they have probably lost money from the start.' 61

'Failure of Hurst and Co. established 1890 at Hinckley.' Official Receiver stated, 'The debtor put in £20 and his Brother-in-Law £100, the enterprise failed in 1894. Hurst started up again on his own, he seemed to have little sense.' 62

'Failure of William Davies, established 1890.' The Official Receiver's verdict, 'He started with a capital of £50. He never got out a balance sheet since he started, and it's impossible to say whether he ever made a profit or whether he has been losing money from the start.' 63

Despite this evidence of entrepreneurial inefficiency the number of shoe manufacturers operating in Leicester continued to increase through the 1880's and 1890's.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NO. OF MANUFACTURERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60 Leicester Chronicle, November 1st 1890.
61 Sun indicates the low amount of capital to set up in the shoe trade.
62 Leicester Chronicle bankruptcy reports 1899.
63 Leicester Chronicle bankruptcy reports 1899.
64 Leicester Chronicle, January 1905.
65 Compiled from Wright's Directory of Leicester 1880, 1890 and Rutland 1896-1900.
TABLE 5. NUMBERS EMPLOYED IN LEICESTER SHOE INDUSTRY 1881 - 1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NUMBERS EMPLOYED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>26,561</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ratio per thousand of the population employed in the shoe industry in the same period rose from 106 to 138.67

Meanwhile, technical innovations were continually introduced, Leicester shoe machinery firms were designing their own models and improving on the American machines which flowed into the country from the 1870's onwards. Hitherto machinery had only helped in making in the narrowest sense of the word. Now came the machines which were to accelerate production and require widespread division of labour. In 1872 the first Goodyear welt sewing machines were introduced into England . . . with this machine and the Goodyear chain stitcher it was claimed that a boot similar in quality to a hand sewn boot could be produced, and boots produced on these machines eventually superseded cheap hand sewn and welted work . . .69

By 1899, the improved version first introduced into Leicester by Royce and Gascoigne Ltd. could do in 16 seconds what formerly took an hour . . .69

More and more processes were afterwards performed by machines, aided by a system of standard sizes and half sizes until in the 20th century some processes became entirely automatic.70

At this stage it would be useful to examine the influence of machinery upon the size of the manufacturing unit and the way in which the machinery was supplied.

Before 1900, with the increasing use of machinery, competition between manufacturers of footwear machinery came to be based not upon cost but upon the varying output capacity of each machine. This affected the size of the manufacturing unit, as the machine manufacturers made no attempt to co-ordinate the technical functions of their machines and the factory had to have a large number of machines each with a specialised function.71

66 Compiled from 1881-1891 Census.
67 1901 return gives some indication of declining rate of growth of employment.
69 Wright, Romance of the Shoe, 1924, p. 224.
70 V.C.H. Leicester, volume 4, p. 319.
This intense competition between the shoe machine firms culminated in the formation of the British United Shoe Machinery Company in Leicester in 1899, an event which had far reaching consequences for the structure of shoe firms. The B.U.S.M. Co.\textsuperscript{72} tended to decrease the size of the manufacturing unit by producing machines with well balanced output capacities, in a team (of operatives) smaller than was formerly needed. The cost of machines leased from the B.U.S.M. Co. was exactly the same for small as it was for large firms, the payment being assessed at a fixed sum per 1,000 turns performed by the machine. Whether a factory consisted of 40 or 400 machines the cost per unit of shoe was identical, and thus the larger firms were prevented from achieving the economies of scale of spreading their machine costs over a larger output. "In pre 1900 days the optimum size of shoe firms were large. Under conditions of competitive machine supply, with no attempt on the part of machine producers to balance individual output capacities of machinery, relatively large manufacturing plants were required, in order to derive economics from mechanical team co-ordination. On the basis of production along standard lines, styles and designs of shoes, managerial tasks were fairly simple, and large scale buying of leather and selling of shoes resulted in maximum cost advantage ... whilst the monopolistic supply of machines after 1900 encouraged the growth of small scale plants which for technical reasons were at no disadvantage compared with large scale plants ...\textsuperscript{73}

By 1898 most manufacturing plants included in their machine systems, sole moulders, revolutionary presses, perforating, beading eye letting and hooking, rivetting, slugging and levelling, heel attaching, edge trimming and sewing machines - the industry was firmly established as Leicester’s main producer. Its process of growth, from its initial beginnings in the 1850’s was rapid, and it lurched forward aided, mainly, by technological changes in the nature of shoe production. The development of the Leicester industry had by the 1880’s and 1890’s spilled out and over into the country districts, where it was further stimulated by mechanisation. This rapid process of economic growth naturally

\textsuperscript{72}By 1900 B.U.S.M. Co. Ltd., provided over 70\% of shoe machinery supplied to the Leicester industry.

\textsuperscript{73}Hillman, \textit{Economic Journal} 1932, p. 281.
produced social problems for those engaged (and those about to be absorbed) in the industry, it is to the analysis of these social problems that the rest of this work is devoted.
CHAPTER 2

"SEVERAL ASPECTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN LEICESTER 1850-1900"

This chapter proposes to examine only certain aspects of working class life in Leicester in the last half of the 19th century. Emphasis will be placed upon housing, working conditions, leisure activities, and unemployment as indicators of the daily life of the Leicester poor.

A Leicester contemporary, Joseph Dare, described Leicester in mid-century as follows:

It is truly said, that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives. A stranger passing through any one of our large towns, witnesses in one part, busy streets lined with beautiful shops and handsome buildings; but if he casts his eye over another part, he will behold narrow and badly drained streets - filthy and confined courts, and their inmates clothed in the same dress all the year through.

Great wealth is contrasted with extreme destitution, knowledge with the darkest ignorance, wisdom by folly, piety by wickedness.

... Having been requested by the Reverend Loyte of Manchester, to furnish some account of the dwellings of the Poor in this neighbourhood, my attention has been drawn to the subject.

One striking peculiarity which I have noticed before is that the majority of them in yards, alleys and courts have neither back doors nor back windows. For the most part they consist of one down and one upper room each. The dwellings are of this construction in every yard I have examined from my own residence to the North Bridge. Generally large families, to whom rent is an object, crowd into these dwellings, and in bad times each room will have its separate tenants. This must be very detrimental to convenience, health and decency.

A decade later conditions appeared not to have improved. Dare reported:

It has to be feared that with the rapid increase of population there is some overcrowding and some of the new houses have been built so hastily that the tenants were obliged to shift their beds and set panchans to catch the rain. With the assistance of some friends of the Mission I have ascertained that there are at least fifteen hundred dwellings in this town that have neither back doors nor windows. So that allowing five

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1 Joseph Dare was a missionary for the Leicester Domestic Mission 1845-1877. The object of the Mission was to bring religion to the poor. Dare visited the poor throughout Leicester and each year produced a report of his year's activities. The Mission discontinued in 1877.

2 Annual Report, Leicester Domestic Mission, October, 1846, p. 5.

3 Quite a large area over 1 square mile.

4 Annual Report, Leicester Domestic Mission 1850, p. 5-6.

inmates to each . . . and the lower the grade of the population
the thicker is the crowding together, there are no less than
between seven and eight thousand sweltering in these wretched
unhealthy abodes.° The habits too of the inmates of backyards
and confined spaces are altogether different from those who live
in the sunlight and fresh air. Seldom seen by respectable
people they are heedless both of personal appearance and domestic
cleanliness.7

Dare was distressed by the signs of neglect and destitution which he
witnessed on his visits to the poor.

Overcrowding, bad ventilation, blocked drains, refuse deposited on the
streets, endangering not only the occupants of the houses, but the immediate
neighbourhood.

In illustration: here is a building with no back opening with
two small rooms, one down one upstairs. In this confined hole,
a father and mother and six children herd together . . . They
have occasionally harboured a man as a lodger. In another house
with small back rooms in addition, 13 people male and female are
heaped together. In another place, a sort of upper room a wife
and husband and six children ferment together. Cooking, washing,
sleeping, in short all the household work has to be carried out
in the same compartment.

Dare asks,

If, as is probably the case, in common lodging houses a certain
number of cubic feet of space must be allowed to each individual
why not enforce the same rule whenever it is violated.8

"Could the Leicester poor expect any help from the authorities or the
landlord? Concerning the smallpox outbreak in Leicester in 1866, Dare recalls
a case of a family where the father died from the disease and "the wife of the
house thought that it should be cleaned right through, especially as it had not
been whitewashed for seven years. But the house agent promptly refused to
have it done and threatened her with immediate expulsion if she made any 'to do'
about it. Nothing is done, she leaves, another family comes in and inherits the
filth of the pre-occupiers through the ignorance and inhumanity of the
collector."9 The approach of the 1870's did not, apparently, lift Dare's

7 Ibid.
9 Annual Report, Leicester Domestic Mission 1866, p. 15.
Our confined courts are the nurseries of vice, disease and death. They are becoming more and more so from year to year. Leicester was formerly noted for gardens and intra-mural spaces; they are fast disappearing. Yards and courts are being more closely surrounded, overshadowed by factories and blank walls. It is discouraging to observe that in several of the newly built parts of the town there are inter buildings springing up between the streets as originally laid out. Rows of small skimped tenements approached from the main streets, through narrow arched passages, choke up what ought to be gardens and breathing spaces and completely destroy the comfort and convenience to say nothing of the health of the first possessors. Each row so inter built necessarily confines the backs of itself and at least two other rows of houses. The land as at first laid out was not intended to be thus gutted up by an inferior class of dwellings.

Dare attacked the existing system of bye-laws which allowed this type of system, and the complete lack of interest on the part of the local authorities, in working class housing conditions. In 1876, Dare, after thirty years' service with the Leicester Domestic Mission, retired, and his successor Brasford, recalls his first impression of Leicester.

I have paid about 1,200 visits to different houses, situated in different parts of the town... drunkenness, squalor, dirt and distress prevail in many of the courts, and some of the streets which lay claim to respectability are little better than the courts. Except in London, I have not met with so much filth in so small a compass.

The Medical Officer of Health Reports for Leicester in the late 1870's support Dare's and Brasford's researches into the housing conditions of the Leicester poor:

Cellar dwellings in the Borough there are none, but two roomed cottages, without any means of through ventilation, and the cubic capacity of which is often barely sufficient for the healthy existence of one human being, much less a family, are to be met with in large numbers in our courts and alleys. In Leicester, ample provision is at the present time being made for the housing of the well-to-do artisan, but it is for the section of the community which can ill afford to pay more than three shillings or three and sixpence per week, for house rent, that better provision is required.

The Medical Officer of Health's plea for improved accommodation for the poor went unheeded; in 1875 a new M.O.H. reported:

10 Dare's reference to future building is an indication of increasing economic development in Leicester - fairly safe to assume that factories were probably shoe factories.
11 Annual Report, Leicester Domestic Mission 1872, p. 11.
12 Annual Report, Leicester Domestic Mission 1877, p. 11.
13 Medical Officer of Health Reports Leicester 1877 - Johnston Assistant M.O.H., p. 32.
Considering the size of Leicester, it is satisfactory to be able to say that the town is without cellar dwellings of any kind, but much of the smaller property inherited by the poorer classes is such as can be viewed with any degree of satisfaction. A large number of these dwellings, more especially those situated in the older courts, are entirely without efficient means of through ventilation; that is to say, they possess no windows, doors or other openings at the back of the dwellings. Most of these also consist of only two rooms, one up and one downstairs and are incapable of providing for the proper lodgement of children living with their parents. In a smaller number of instances, tenements consisting of one room only, serving for living room, bedroom and all other purposes, are in existence. The rents paid for these wretched homes, for the accommodation provided much higher than for those of better class property, and it is often owing to the fact of investments having been made and yielding a high rate of interest, that so much difficulty is met with, when any attempt is made to bring about a change in this class of property. Thus, to give examples, in one court house consisting of two rooms, only 3 ft by 7½ ft, are let at a rental of two shillings and sixpence and two shillings and ninepence per week; and as another example, houses with two rooms, 9 ft 7 ins by 9 ft 9 ins by 6 ft 7 ins are let at a weekly rental of three shillings, whilst the one room tenements alluded to, yield a weekly rental of two shillings and fourpence unfurnished, and three shillings and sixpence to four shillings per week furnished! Few of the houses in these courts are provided with separate closet accommodation, one or two closets serving for the use of several families; and this necessarily tends to anything but the keeping of them in clean and satisfactory conditions. **15**

For the better paid worker improvement had occurred, but in the mid 1880's for the Court dwellers of Leicester little improvement had been made since the time of Joseph Dare's reports in the 1860's and early 1870's. Nevertheless if improvement had not taken place, the shocking conditions of the Leicester Poor were being revealed in the H.O.H. Reports, and a widening franchise meant that local authorities were forced to direct their attention towards the poorer elements in the community. The change in emphasis from one of neglect to one of public concern for the housing conditions of the poor made rapid strides in Leicester, so much so, that in 1892 the Conservative Leicester Journal placed the following editorial before its readers:

"INSANITARY LEICESTER - LOATHESOME DENS". This would make a headline sufficiently startling to suit the tastes even of

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14 The average number of persons per house in Leicester in 1885 was 5 - safely assume that this figure may have been somewhat greater for the poorer classes.

those who are fascinated by the attraction of the 'new journalism' with which English people have of late become so well acquainted. Yet we regret to say that such a headline might fairly be used by any newspaper which chose to devote itself to the unsavoury work of describing the conditions of the tenements in which some of the abjectly poor of Leicester exist. Despite the fact enormous sums of money have, during the past few years, been expended upon ambitious schemes of sanitation; and notwithstanding the excellent salaries paid to a large staff of Sanitary officials, their Borough in by no means without unwholesome slums.

In 1890 an important piece of sanitary legislation concerning urban dwellings was enacted. "The Housing of the Working Class Act 1890", codified and simplified the numerous pre-existing Acts which have been known variously as Torrens, Shaftesbury’s and Cross’s Acts. The Act gave much greater facilities for dealing promptly with either insanitary areas or industrial houses or blocks of property, and gave increasing powers to local authorities to provide artisan dwellings when they considered such provisions desirable.

Leicester took advantage of this Act, and during the 1890's slum clearance and new house building, became an important aspect of Leicester Council policy.

In 1894 a survey was undertaken, concerning the Leicester tenements and the statistics throw interesting light upon the degree of overcrowding in Leicester.

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL NO. OF TENEMENTS</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OF TENEMENTS WITH:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 room</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 room</td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 room</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 room</td>
<td>36,147</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>1157</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 room</td>
<td>5,426</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No. of occupant figures not available

16. New popular dailies with emphasis upon social conditions.
17. Leicester Journal, March 25th, 1892.
18. A tenement is defined in the Census Returns as any house or part of a house occupied either by the owner or by a tenant.
### LEICESTER TENEMENTS 1894

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENEMENTS WITH</th>
<th>NO. OF TENEMENTS</th>
<th>% OF TENEMENTS</th>
<th>TOTAL NO. OCCUPIERS</th>
<th>% OF POP. IN EACH GROUP OF TENEMENTS</th>
<th>AVERAGE OCCUPIER PER ROOM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 room</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 rooms</td>
<td>2,578</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6,617</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 rooms</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4,266</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 rooms</td>
<td>5,426</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>23,058</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 rooms</td>
<td>27,105</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>140,474</td>
<td>80.48</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>36,147</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>174,624</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus in 1894 80.48% of the population of Leicester lived in tenements of more than four rooms whilst only .12% lived in single room tenements. From the fifth column of Table 2 it will be seen that the fewer the rooms in the tenement, the larger the proportion of occupants per room, whilst the average of 1.85 and 1.39 occupants per room respectively in one and two room tenements suggests overcrowding. The Medical Officer of Health estimated that there were 544 overcrowded tenements in Leicester which housed 3,677 people, or 2.2% of the total population was living in a state of overcrowding. Though this state of affairs was held to be unsatisfactory by the M.O.H. he did point out that Leicester had the lowest figure for overcrowding in the 32 great manufacturing towns, except Portsmouth. These figures indicate an improvement in housing conditions compared with the 1880's, but overcrowding does not reveal information concerning the physical condition of the house, only the number of occupants per tenement. It was not until the late 1890's that extensive redevelopment took place. In 1898 the M.O.H. reported:

The worst houses in Leicester are situated off the left hand side of Belgrave Gate and are situated about Green St., Ashby St., Sorden, Garden St., Orchard St., Wood St., and Royal East St. Besides the above named street there were some small houses closely packed together in Yeoman St., but apparently the construction of a new wholesale Market caused a number of these premises to be knocked down. Returning to Belgrave Gate,

---

20 Compiled from Medical Officer of Health Report 1894, p. 125.
a block of property in Langton St., which consisted of a number of small houses was pulled down in 1698 . . . In Taylor St., several rows of houses known as Palmerston Terrace Angyle Cottages, and part of Melville Terrace were purchased by the Corporation, the houses pulled down and the space utilised as a playground for children . . . Taking cottage property all through Leicester I think it will be compared very favourably with similar property in any other large town.22

By the end of the 1890s a distinct improvement in the housing of the poor had occurred in Leicester, but the evidence of Dare and successive Medical Officers of Health23 indicate shocking neglect and unhealthy and insanitary physical conditions of the poor's housing as late as the mid 1880's. In the late 1880's and early nineties public awareness, stimulated through M.O.H. Reports and local newspapers24 and the widening franchise, meant local authorities were increasingly forced to direct their attention towards the poorer elements in the community, and consequently improvement occurred.

If the Leicester poor tended to live in small squalid houses, what sort of conditions did they - especially shoe makers - experience in their working lives? Early in the 1860's Dare reported:

An intelligent fancy hand informs me that he worked in a shop in this town where forty men were employed from fourteen to sixteen hours a day without any ventilation except opening the windows, which was next to impracticable and always dangerous . . . Smaller workshops are yet worse, the finishing department too of the new kind of shoe making must be very prejudicial. As there is no stitching and workmen can sit nearly close together, this they do at both sides on ends of a low bench that reaches the whole length of a small narrow room. As heated irons are scarcely ever out of their hands, gas is always burning on a level with their knees . . . The walls and ceilings are always black with gas smoke. An intelligent friend tells me that seven shoe finishers work in a room about ten feet by eight feet, mouth of the chimney boarded up, no ventilation except at the door, four gas lights by night and two in the day to heat the burnishers. In another room he says, about eight foot square with a bed in it, and no fireplace, two gas lights always burning, four shoe finishers work, the bench occupying nearly the whole of the spare room, the workmen are compelled to sit on the bedside to work.


23See Medical Officer of Health Reports, Leicester 1876 - 1886.

24Considerable number of editorials in the Leicester Journal 1891-92 discuss the unsanitary conditions of Leicester especially the sewage system.
Dare concludes:

All workshops should be like factories under inspection. 25

In 1864, an epidemic of Scarlatina struck Leicester, 26 and Dare reflected:

The impression amongst many was that this disease was brought to town in the leather. Most likely this idea arose from the fact that several shoe makers were amongst its first victims. And this fact shows that personal habits have much to do with the organisation of the disease, for with grief it must be stated that this class are amongst the most 'degraded' of the working population. Many of the finishing shops are wholly destructive of health. 27

Dare's observations of shoe makers' working conditions are supplemented by the M.O.H. Reports of the 1860's and early 1870's:

In many of our small workshops, especially in some branches of the shoe trade, proper ventilation is perfectly impracticable, as they are only the ordinary rooms of a common dwelling house for the working class. In some of these - especially shoe finishers - I have found eight or more persons at work with no other ventilation than what is afforded by the window and door. The former, except in summer months very usually closed. In some of these workshops, they have one or two jets of gas constantly burning for heating the tools in some branches of the trade [finishing] thus adding of course, very greatly to the impurity of the air. Persons employed under such disadvantages and circumstances naturally become weak in constitution predisposed to such diseases as consumption. 28

Deaths from consumption killed a higher proportionate number of shoe makers than any other section of the Leicester working class, between 1850 and 1890:

26 The scarlatina epidemic within the Borough of Leicester caused 104 deaths.
27 Annual Report, Leicester Domestic Mission 1864, p. 15.
28 Medical Officer of Health Report, Leicester 1865. Another factor affecting health was the degree of food adulteration, and it might be assumed that the poor elements especially shoemakers would purchase food of the cheapest kind, thus the food was more likely to be adulterated in some form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NO. SAMPLES ANALYSED</th>
<th>NO. ADULTERATED</th>
<th>% ADULTERATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from 1891 the figures indicate a downward trend.
## TABLE 9. OCCUPATION OF PERSONS WHO DIED FROM CONSUMPTION 1878-1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>DEATHS</th>
<th>BREAKDOWN OF DEATHS WITHIN SHOE TRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warehouse etc.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Shoe makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porters etc.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks etc.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Shoe hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Trades</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe Trade</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Riveters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elastic Trade</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Clickers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Finishers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradesmen</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Pressmen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the total numbers who died from consumption between 1878-1881, 24% were employed in the shoe trade.

## TABLE 10. OCCUPATIONS OF THOSE DYING FROM PHthisIS (CONSUMPTION OF THE LUNGS) 1902-1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL NO. OF DEATHS</th>
<th>SHOEMAKERS: DEATHS</th>
<th>BREAKDOWN WITHIN SHOE TRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Shoe Finishers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot; Rivetters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot; Clickers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot; Hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot; Lasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot; Machinists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29 Compiled from Medical Officer of Health Reports, Leicester 1882, p. 55.

30 Compiled from Medical Officer of Health Reports, Leicester 1902, p. 52.

For the period 1901-1905 the total deaths from phthisis were:

## TABLE 11. DEATHS FROM PHthisIS (MALES OVER 10) IN LEICESTER 1901-1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>NO. MALES EMPLOYED 1901</th>
<th>NO. OF DEATHS FROM PHthisIS 1901-1905</th>
<th>ANNUAL RATE PER 1,000 MALES EMPLOYED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boot and shoe trade</td>
<td>17,770</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other trades (hosiery incl.)</td>
<td>43,209</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unoccupied or retired</td>
<td>10,270</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled M.O.H. Reports, Leicester 1905.
Of all those who died from Phthisis (consumption) in 1902 33.5% were formerly engaged in the shoe trade. While there is a percentage rise in the number of shoe workers' deaths from consumption between 1881 - 1902, the total number of deaths declined. There would appear to be some correlation between shoemakers' housing and working conditions and the high death rate of consumption amongst this class of workmen. Not surprising the National Union of Operative Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers during the 1870's and 1880's advocated strongly the need for legislative control of workshops and deputations were sent to William Harcourt and Asquith (both Home Secretaries). In 1890 the Union won a significant advance in Leicester, when it compelled manufacturers to employ all Union men - if they so wish - inside the factory, thus causing new factories to be built and increasing Union control over working conditions. In 1892 the Factory and Workshop Act (1891) came into operation and imposed the following duties upon Town Councils:

- (1) "To look after the sanitary conditions of Workshops."
- (2) "To provide means of escape from certain factories."

Under the conditions of this Act a systematic and complete examination was made of workshops in Leicester in 1894. The workshops were visited, inspected and measured, careful notes were taken of their sanitary conditions, of their state of cleanliness and ventilation and the number of operatives employed. The following statistics were the result of that inquiry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADE</th>
<th>NO. OF WORKERS</th>
<th>NO. OF EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>NO. OF VISITORS</th>
<th>NO. OF OVER-CROWDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boots and shoes</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 N.U.C.B.R.F. became the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives in 1890.
32 Indoor working will be dealt with later.
33 Medical Officer of Health Report, Leicester 1894, p.100.
Each separate room in the different workshops was measured, its cubic space registered. The Sanitary Committee decided that 250 cubic feet per person was sufficient space - but this unit was small enough when one remembers that no provision was allowed for those working overtime, or for the gas jets that were probably burning during working hours.

**TABLE 13.** **EXTENT OF OVERCROWDING - LEICESTER SHOE WORKSHOPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURE OF WORKROOMS</th>
<th>NO. OF EMPLOYEES AT TIME OF VISIT</th>
<th>NO. OF EMPLOYEES ALLOWED</th>
<th>EXTENT OF OVERCROWDING (People)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WORKSHOP</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>MALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boots and shoes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 13% of all workshops were - by the definition of the Sanitary Committee, overcrowded.

**TABLE 14.** **DETAILS OF SANITARY CONDITIONS - BOOT WORKSHOPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. OF BOOT WORKSHOPS VISITED AND INSPECTED</th>
<th>TOTAL NO. OF WORKROOMS</th>
<th>CLEANLINESS OF WORKROOMS</th>
<th>WORKROOM VENTILATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the general survey it was estimated that 22.2% of all types of workshops were unsatisfactory. Although some workshops were estimated to be less satisfactory than other types of workshops, this figure indicates an improvement in conditions as compared with the 1870's and 1880's. One problem however was the high death rate from consumption found amongst shoe operatives as late as 1902 - in fact there had been a percentage increase in shoe makers' deaths from consumption compared with the early eighties. The Medical Officer of Health explained this phenomenon as the time factor involved in the disease's development. The shoe makers' dying from this disease in 1902 were the victims of the shocking working conditions they experienced in the 1870's and 1880's. As with housing,

34 Medical Officer of Health Report, Leicester 1894, p. 102.
35 Medical Officer of Health Report, Leicester 1894, p. 103.
36 The survey covered workshops employing 1,660 operatives. The total employed in Leicester in 1894 was 16,699 males and 7,320 females.
37 Medical Officer of Health Report, Leicester 1902, p. 55.
it was not until the 1890's that significant advances were made in shoe makers' working conditions, the earlier decades were distinguished by insanitary and unhealthy conditions of work.

A worker living at the level of subsistence, fears one thing above all, loss of employment.\textsuperscript{38} The 19th century unemployed worker had no national insurance or unemployment benefit to tide him over bad times. If previously his income had only allowed him and his family to exist at subsistence level, unemployment meant the Union Workhouse. The younger workers' attitude towards the workhouse, Dare suggests, was a combination of:

A dread of separation, and a fear of their children being taken away from them. This seems, in many instances, to have a demoralising effect, in lessening the sanctity of marriage and weakening... family feelings. Old people generally dislike the idea of going into the Unions, they don't like being locked up; they shrink from the company of so many as are at times huddled together; they especially dislike being classed with those who are so much younger than themselves, their habits and feelings being at variance.

Dare occasionally visited an old man who,

in the winter was obliged through want of employment, to take refuge in the Union at S...\textsuperscript{39} he is more than sixty years of age and blind in one eye, being of weakly frame he can earn at best but little; yet he has left the Union and says he would sooner die for want than return.\textsuperscript{40}

The shoe industry being a seasonal trade, the operative was never free from the threat of the workhouse, and even if this threat was avoided during his working life, his last days were almost invariably spent in dire poverty in the Union.\textsuperscript{41} The old, infirm or unemployed workers' fear of the Union can never be calculated, and in a society which was distinguished by an almost total neglect of its most unfortunate members\textsuperscript{42} only one avenue of escape was offered -

\textsuperscript{38} Shoe making was a seasonal trade and in the 19th century was particularly prone to seasonal unemployment especially during the winter months, when provisions were needed more than other times of the year.

\textsuperscript{39} Union is probably Sileby, about 7 miles north of Leicester.

\textsuperscript{40} Annual Report, Leicester Domestic Mission 1846, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{41} Between 1845-1900 the main alternative industry in Leicester was framework knitting - this trade was in decline in Leicester from the 1860's onwards, and many framework knitters entered the new shoe trade, thus depressing wages and employment in that industry.

\textsuperscript{42} As suggested earlier it was not until the late 1860's and 1890's that the municipal authorities interested themselves in the poorer elements in the community.
vagrancy or begging. In 1855 Dare calculated:

... I find that there about 70,000 lodgings annually supplied to vagrants\(^43\) in this county alone ... There are about 50,000 vagrants passing every year through the county, the majority of whom are obtaining their subsistence by very quest onable means. It appears probable, from the following returns, supplied by Sergeant Wright, Inspector of Nuisances, that about half this number of wandering individuals, pass through the Borough of Leicester, and he states there are in Leicester 38 common lodging houses registered. These accommodate:

Nightly 587; Weekly 4,109; Yearly 213,668\(^44\)

### TABLE 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VAGRANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>61,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>62,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>63,060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Tramps 4 - 5,000.

In 1864 for sleeping accommodation alone £813.14s. 0d was paid by inmates, and tramps paid £54.15s. 9d.

### TABLE 16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>ACCOMMODATION SLEPT IN</th>
<th>COST OF ACCOMMODATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>100,740</td>
<td>£1,134. 5s. 0d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dare comments on the figures "thus showing that a regular organised system of mendicancy\(^47\) is suffered in our midst.\(^48\)

Like any other social group, there were different classes or grades of vagrants, and Dare brings those vividly to life:

The first class of beggars are called 'HIGH FLYERS'. These are generally shrewd, quickly-witted fellows who have received some education. They go well dressed, they can draw up a petition or begging letter and are never at a loss for some plausible fabrication. 'FOREKY SQUARES' are another class; these make finger rings out of brass buttons, they are large coat buttons, they stamp two rings out of each button, they have a complete set of tools, such as stamps, delicate hammers, files, brushes etc ... they go with them amongst servants, or

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\(^43\) Dowe defines vagrants as 'wandering inmates of the common lodging houses.'

\(^44\) Annual Report, Leicester Domestic Mission 1855, p. 10.


\(^47\) Mendicancy - vagrant or tramp.

the 'slaves' as they call them and make from two to four shillings each for the rings. The men make these rings at their lodgings, and send out their female companions to dispose of them. They do not make many at once for fear of the police. Another class are called 'CHINA FAKERS,' these profess to be makers of broken articles of china or glass . . . Dress FENCERS or rather I suppose dress fencers are those who foist spurious lace on unsuspecting ladies. GRIDDLERS or CHANTERS are the ballad singers who draw out miserable tunes to set to some terrible mishap which has befallen them. The 'Griddler' takes a 'Humper' with him who holds the hat, or begs from door to door, while the 'Chanter' doles out his ditty. Some of the inmates of the lodging houses do not seem to possess sufficient genius to follow any of these mysteries of the craft, but pursue begging only. These are said to go on the 'DOWN RIGHT' or 'MONKEY' as they term it. These various classes are constantly shifting their quarters; they stay out a month or six months in one locality, they then decamp to another, making a certain round in nearly a given time. Some of them visit Malton, Oakham, Uppingham, Market Harborough, Lutterworth, Hinckley, touching at all the intermediate villages and then back to Leicester. Most of the men have a partner, married or otherwise; some of them undertake the business, while the women remain the lodging house, others turn them out to beg while themselves remain at home in utter idleness. While talking among themselves they cannot be understood by the uninitiated.

Dare gives the impression of a society within a society with its own set of values and customs. Leicester Domestic Mission Reports, until the termination of the Mission in 1877 make frequent reference to the number of vagrants and beggars resident at Leicester or the country districts of the county. For the 1880's and 1890's no figures are available, but the boot and shoe industry experienced a rapid process of technical change during these two decades, and structural as well as seasonal unemployment was at times high. Such unemployment affected the shoe maker's standard of living considerably, but by the 1890's improved social facilities - union unemployment fund at Leicester, and local authority relief to the poor - mitigated slightly the economic threat of unemployment.

The day to day life of the Leicester poor - especially certain classes of shoe makers - appears not to be a happy one, how then did they spend their few

50 Greatest threat during the 1880's and 1890's was the introduction of machinery which substituted boy for adult labour - this problem caused considerable conflict.
51 Introduced at Leicester in 1891.
52 Reference has not been made of the social cost of unemployment - loss of status, inability to provide for the family, feeling of social uselessness etc.
hours of leisure? Were they members of the local Band of Hope, the Temperance Society? Dare attempted to ascertain the religious convictions of the Leicester Poor:

B.T., who resides in a large street informs me that he did not think there were more than seven or eight families living there, who were in the habit of regularly attending public worship.

Dare attempted to corroborate this statement by interviewing workers in other districts of Leicester:

"M.G." exclaimed in a mournful tone, "the labour and cares of the present life drives away all thoughts and concern of heaven and hell, or preparation for a future life. We are obliged to put our children to work as soon as they can move their fingers, and they are too tired to go to a night school. We do not go ourselves to a place of worship, because our clothes are not fit, the rich tuck up their fine things, and sit away from us, as if we were filled with vermin.

Another told Dare:

How can we sing praises to God with hungry bellies.

Their attitude towards the clergy was:

The Ministers to be hypocrites, or would they protect their hundreds and thousands a year without ever having come amongst us, to cheer us in our poverty, to soothe us with their sympathy when sick, or lighten the dark hours of death with the beamings of that immortality of which they say so much.

This was an indictment of a religion whose chief purpose was to serve the conscience of the middle classes.

If they did not go to Church what did they do?

One Friday evening [reports Dare] I went to one of our singing saloons. It is capable of seating 600 people who are admitted by tickets marked 2d, 4d, or 6d, according to where the purchasers wish to go, to the back or front seats on the floor or the gallery. All are expected to drink. The ages of those present ranged... from 16 to 70, many who were mothers had their infants present with them. About 9 o'clock the audience began to muster pretty strong, and there was a sprinkling of every class from the shoe finishers, sweaters... apparently regarded as the lowest class - to the tradesmen and professional gentlemen. I noticed on this night a very large proportion of those present belonged to some of those firms in the shoe trade, who pay on Friday, and

52 A classic indictment of Samuel Smiles' philosophy of "self help."
55 Sweaters were young helpers (mainly boys) who assisted the shoe finisher (or webber).
who were spending a day sooner merely because they had the money, and could not keep it. 56

A few years later Dare reported:

The following facts will show, perhaps more fully than any general statement, our present social and religious manifestations. Reckoning the hospitals and certain school rooms with the churches there are 16 places in which Episcopalian service is celebrated; and the dissenters have 48 places of worship, what I wish to point out is, that while we have, in all, but 64 religious agencies, there are in the town 545 drinking establishments - they are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licensed Victuallers</th>
<th>285</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beer Houses</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine Shops</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So there are more than 8 places for the sale of intoxicating liquor to one for divine worship. The drinking shops too are open all the week as well as the Sabbath day. 57

There was approximately one drinking establishment to every 100 inhabitants.

Figures for the 1880's and 1890's are obscure, but it may be safely assumed that the leisure pattern of the great majority of the working class did not undergo any dramatic change. The frequent occurrence of shoe makers in the "drunk and disorderly" columns of the Leicester Chronicle and Leicester Journal during the 1880's and 1890's supports this view. 58

It should be remembered that this chapter only attempts to examine the poor elements in the community. For the better off artisan improvement occurred throughout the latter half of the 19th century, but for the unskilled worker - notably the shoe finishers and rivetters and their 'sweaters' - a picture emerges of small and insanitary dwellings, unhealthy working conditions - often as in the shoe trade in the operatives' own dwelling - fear of unemployment, and leisure activity which attempted, for a few hours at least, to dispel the drudgery of their lives. A growing social awareness promoted through such mediums as Dare's Domestic Mission, local newspaper reports, M.O.H. Reports, and an expanding franchise, forced the authorities to realise that the Samuel Smiles' philosophy was no longer sufficient, and that these people needed help. Progress gathered

58 Shoe workers (male and female) outnumbered other occupations by more than 3 to 1.
59 Fortified by the Samuel Smiles' philosophy.
momentum in the late 1880's and 1890's and was aided by one further agency; an agency deeply involved in the struggle for a better life for a certain section of the Leicester poor, that was the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, and its formation and early patterns are examined in the next chapter.
In 1863 the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association was formed, ten years later this organisation was disbanded, and a national organisation created, the National Union of Operative Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, an organisation which exists to the present day. This chapter proposes to examine the forces which created and destroyed the Cordwainers' Association, and those which created and sustained the National Union.

Shoe makers' organisations had existed in London in the 18th century, and in the 1840's - 50's a society termed The Amalgamated Society of Cordwainers was formed. In 1863 this organisation held a special conference at The Bell Inn, Old Bailey.

...main object of the Conference was to consider the complete revolution taking place in the manufacture of boots and shoes and consequent in the introduction of machinery and the pegging and rivetting systems, and the most desirable mode of meeting these systems.

These problems were subjected to long and serious discussions, the general feeling of the delegates being:

that no opposition should be offered by the men to those altered modes of working, but that the attention of the societies should be directed as to how best they could secure a share of the advantages resulting from the new manufacturing processes as well as the employers.

It was also resolved that the whole of the societies of the United Kingdom should form themselves into one body to be called 'The Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association' and the new workmen introduced into the trade, such as pegmen, rivetters and machinists should be invited to join the society.

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1 The Union changed its title at the 1890 Union Conference to the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives.
2 See Aspinal 'Early English Trade Unions' - mentions Society of Journeymen Shoe Makers.
3 The origins of the Amalgamated Society of Cordwainers is obscure, a craft union based primarily at London and Northampton - no evidence of its existence at Leicester.
4 The Conference was attended by 28 delegates representing the larger societies, 100 societies sent letters of representation.
5 Leicester Journal, January 17th, 1863.
Technical change in the form of sewing machines introduced new types of workers, and the new centres of production within the industry. The effect of the new machines was to reduce the degree of skill required for all but the better qualities of goods, this eased the entry into the trade, and greatly extended the potential sources of labour supply. The old craft traditions were not being wholly supplanted in the early 1860's, but the leaders of the Cordwainers' Society realised that the machine shoe workers represented a potential threat to their craft status, and considered that their interest would be best served by forming a new organisation - Amalgamated Cordwainers' Associations - which incorporated the new shoe operatives among its members. Effective control over their working conditions would be enhanced by co-operating with the machine shoe operatives, rather than excluding them from the organisation and thus presenting a divided front to the employers. In terms of Parsonsian systems analysis, the old craft organisation was facing an adaptive problem vis-à-vis its environment - adaptation "deals with the problem of controlling the environment for the purpose of attaining goal states." The Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association was created in an attempt to solve the environmental problems, that it failed indicated that the attempted solution of one system problem may prove disfunctional for other system processes. This failure must now be examined in detail.

There are at least two approaches to the sociological examination of formal organisation - (this case the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association). They can be studied either in terms of their role complexes or in terms of their value patterns. Talcott Parsons takes the second approach as his point of departure, as he considers the process of legitimisation of extreme importance in the functioning of organisations. Legitimisation is the belief by the members

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6 See introduction of thesis.
7 Parsons and Smelser, Economy and Society, p. 17-18.
8 The system processes of Goal Attainment, Integration and Latency (a) Pattern Maintenance; (b) Tension Management.
9 Weber adopts "role complexes" in his study of bureaucracy.
that the goals and value pattern of the organisation and the decisions made by the hierarchy in the pursuit of goals are "right" or "good". Parsons argues that there are two types of legitimising; external legitimacy where the goals and value pattern of the organisation must attempt to gain legitimacy from wider society. This point will be developed later in the chapter. Internal legitimacy, where the members of the organisation must hold the belief that the goals and value patterns are operated in their own interest. It was the latter process of legitimacy which was of concern to the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association.

The Amalgamated Society of Cordwainers was a craft union primarily concerned with the interests of hand sewn shoe workers, in 1863 due to technical changes it reformed its structure (A.C.A.) and allowed unskilled shoe workers to join its ranks, but the old hand sewn shoe workers, with their own traditional values and their mastery of an ancient craft, did not accept the new machine workers as equals. The reaction of the Cordwainers to the machine shoe operatives suggests Fox consisted of "a passion compounded of jealousy, fear and contempt."

1. jealousy of a rival;
2. fear of technical development by new processes;
3. contempt of skills which they regarded as vastly inferior to theirs.

The failure by the Cordwainers to accept the unskilled workers as equals, prevented the institutionalisation of a common value pattern within the organisation. The unskilled operatives felt inferior partners and consequently did not accept the value system of the Cordwainers as legitimate. The dilemma facing the organisation was twofold, neither the skilled nor the unskilled operative regarded the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association as legitimate; the craft shoe worker believing that the organisation had lost its craft tradition by allowing unskilled operators to become members, the machine workers believing that the organisation was still primarily orientated towards the interests of the craft worker.

10 Fox, History N.U.E.S.O. 1874-1957, p. 3.
From the start, the leadership urged its members not to resist the technical changes and accept into their ranks, as equal the unskilled shoe operatives. They were arguing, persuading, coaxing, coercing the craft worker to accept a new value system. But despite the 1863 resolutions, "that men employed in the rivetting and finishing ... and those working in factories, be recognised, and can belong to any section or form sections by themselves," the "Stitchmen [craft workers] looked sourly upon the interlopers and in some cases contrived at local level the policies of obstructions that were being condemned by the top leadership." Conflict appeared first in 1867, when, after a dispute at Kendall involving rivetter and finishers committed the union to considerable expense, the rivetters and finishers section was expelled from the Association. The Council realised its mistake, and warned the craft workers that the old policies would destroy their former status:

... we regret to see that there is still the old prejudices existing ... we cannot hope that anything we are able to say will remove it ... but it ... is our duty to try to show the error of clinging to the idea that when the tide is rising ... it will not stop because we persist in remaining where we are. The tide of change in our trade is flowing ... This change is not of our creation, nor is it under our control. It sprang into existence by concurrent circumstances, and has endeavoured to be kept back by bitter hatred and prejudice against those who by force of circumstances have been brought into it.

In 1870 Leicester rejoined the Association but paradoxically Leicester was to provide the conflict which eventually brought down the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association. In 1873 Martin Leader, the Secretary of the Leicester Rivetters and Finishers Section, was canvassing opinion in fourteen other rivetters and finishers sections as to the possibility of breakaway from the Association. In the same year, in a circular, Leader accused the A.C.A. of waxing fat on the rivetters and finishers substance, of accumulating a large fund by their contributions and then using it in campaigns to gain wage advances for the stitchmen. He bitterly criticised the Council for calling a strike in

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12. Fox, *op.cit.*, p.3.
Leeds the previous year when they had no funds, and then calling upon the Leicester rivetters and finishers for heavy financial support. 14

The A.C.A. leaders had clearly failed to gain the legitimacy of the rivetters and finishers, and of the leaders' attitude themselves Fox states:

"Experience had already shown that the Cordwainers' leaders could contribute little to a solution of the problems of the machine made trade. With the best will in the world, they could barely conceal a distaste for this alien sphere which seemed such an inferior version of their own." 15

The Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association formed out of the technical changes of the early 1860s failed to produce a common value pattern, which both skilled and unskilled workers could hold to be legitimate. The interests, attitudes and aspirations of the unskilled shoe worker were a world apart from those of the traditional craftsman. The A.C.A. was never in fact an organisation, but merely a coalition of opposing forces, a coalition which in 1873 splintered, the craftsmen forming the Amalgamated Society of Boot and Shoe Makers, 16 the machine shoe operatives forming the National Union of Operative Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, which adopted as its headquarters the largest centre of the new machine trade, Leicester.

The major problem facing the Rivetters and Finishers Union, was that of survival. In 1874 it had 4,204 members with approximately a quarter of those based at Leicester, twenty years later it was the third largest trade union in the United Kingdom. Its survival during the early years involves an examination of the decision making procedures adopted in the context of a hostile environment. Parsons assumes that goal attainment 17 has clear primacy in the functioning of an organisation. "The paramount set of decisions will be," within the framework of the organisation, "the set of decisions as to how on the more generalised level, to take steps to attain the goal." 18

14 Fox, op.cit., p. 5 - the reference to Leicester, for financial support, may indicate that the Branch was fairly large.
15 Fox, op.cit., p. 4.
16 In 1900 the Amalgamated Society of Boot and Shoe Makers had four members at Leicester.
17 For definition of Goal Attainment see introduction.
assumed that in the formative years the main goal of the organisations apart from serving the interest of the members, is that of survival). Goal attainment in this context involves "policy decisions."

By policy decisions are meant decisions which relatively directly commit the organisation as a whole and which stand in relatively direct connection to its primary function . . . the critical feature of policy decisions is the fact that they commit the organisation as a whole . . . "19

Given survival as a major goal of the new Union, the most critical policy decisions taken by the organisation was to adopt conciliation with the employers as its industrial policy. In 1877 the General Council of the Rivetters and Finishers stated:

We have no doubt that we owe our past and present peaceable position . . . to the determination created in the minds of our officers and members, to act in all disputes in such a conciliatory manner as to prevent if at all possible, a rupture with their employers.

The Council then illustrated the value of conciliation compared with strike action:

... Conciliation has, we are glad to say, been faithfully carried out by the great majority of our Branches, and we doubt not the Manchester Strike and General Lockout, which has cost us close on £200 might have been avoided had there been a little more calmness of judgement and a more moderate use of the power the men had obtained on Sheffington's shop" ... As an instance of what can be accomplished by reasoning instead of strikes, we have pleasure in stating that during the quarter just closed, the total amount paid to members in disputes in our Leicester Branch has only amounted to £3.15s.0d. When the large number of members concerned, and the state of trade are taken into consideration, it clearly shows the excellent management of the Officers, the discipline of the members, and also the good relations existing between employer and the Union. We could say the same of many other Branches of our Union but the one case is sufficient to convince you of the utility of adopting your actions to the peculiar circumstances, and dangers by which you are for the time being surrounded. Strikes in such a condition of trade are more than ever

19 Parson, op.cit., p. 28.
20 H. Sheffington, a Manchester shoe manufacturer - operated a Union shop, but in October 1877 he dismissed all Union members, 50 men were locked out for over 6 weeks. Manchester Branch Report - Monthly Report, October 1877, H.U.O.B.S.R.F.
undesirable and should be avoided, and above all should never be entered into until every other means have been tried and failed, and then only when the circumstances of the case show a fair prospect of success. What we desire and expect in such critical times from our members is that they will place the utmost confidence in their officers, that they will assist them in trying to settle all disputes amicably if possible, to willingly abide by their advice, and judgement, and if called upon to make any trifling concessions which the necessities of the present state of trade may demand, to fairly consider if it is not better to do so than to run the risk of a strike, and their places being filled by the host of non-Unionists who are ever ready to sell themselves in order to defeat the objects of Unionism.

The implications of this report have far reaching significance. Clear emphasis is placed upon conciliatory procedures as official union policy, the cost to the Union of strike action is contrasted with the advantages of peaceful settlement (Leicester). The report attempts to instill into the individual operative the advantages of conciliation and the dangers of strike action. When the operative is confronted with a problem he should seek the advice of the Union Officer, act in a conciliatory manner, accept (or offer) concessions, and must never forget that the non-union operative is always ready to usurp his position. The Union was attempting to gain the legitimacy of its members (in terms of conciliation) by stressing the advantages of conciliation and it also hoped to gain legitimacy from wider society by presenting itself as a peaceful organisation concerned with the promotion of industrial peace, rather than conflict with the employers.

Throughout the 1870's the Union leaders stressed the advantages of conciliation in their attempt to win over members' support, and enable the Union to survive the difficult years. Great difficulties still presented themselves, as Sedgwick the Union Agent warned:

Since our formation, various influences have conducted to the further extension of the Union in towns where no Union existed, and also amongst individuals who had not enrolled themselves as members previously. In some cases a certain amount of pressure had to be brought before the desired result was obtained. The class of men just named are by no means willing Unionists and lose no opportunity of withdrawing their connection with us the moment the pressure from any cause is removed. Others join from motives of pure selfishness and with the intentions of being Unionists only so long as their selfish desires are

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gratified. These men are a continual source of danger and expense, and as the Union's benefits have to be dispensed on cases of dispute, these men, by their discontent and general misconduct with their fellow workers foster disputes in order to obtain the Union's benefits as their prey.22

The Union's policy of conciliation thus faced danger, but on examination of the organisation's financial accounts for the period 1877-1880 indicates that this policy was successfully implemented - apart from the exception of the Glasgow lockout - and that the official leaders had won support for conciliation from the majority of the rank and file. The adoption of conciliation - supported by the rank and file - enabled the organisation to accumulate a substantial financial reserve, which could be used with great effect when conflict arose in certain areas. Moreover, by advocating conciliatory procedures the Union leaders were suggesting that both Unionists and employers had a common interest which they could negotiate to their mutual benefit - the Union wish to appear as a "rational" organisation interested in industrial peace, and thus gain legitimacy from wider society. That the adoption of conciliation proved to be successful in terms of the organisation's "goal" of survival is reflected in the following statistics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 19</th>
<th>N.U.O.B.S.R.F. TRADE DEPARTMENT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE:23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 1877-December 1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HALF YEAR ENDING</td>
<td>TRADE DEPT. INCOME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 3rd, 1877</td>
<td>£1,693. 0s. 2d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 3rd, 1878</td>
<td>£1,972.18s. 9d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2nd, 1878</td>
<td>£1,463. 8s. 9d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2nd, 1879</td>
<td>£1,837.11s. 1d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1st, 1879</td>
<td>£1,647. 0s. Od.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 7th, 1880</td>
<td>£1,852. 0s. Od.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 6th, 1880</td>
<td>£1,643. 0s. Od.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


23 Compiled from half yearly accounts incorporated in:
(a) Monthly Report, March 1878
(b) Monthly Report, September, 1878
(c) " February, 1879
(d) " August, 1879
(e) " March, 1880
(f) " August, 1880.
(g) " February, 1881.

24 Lockout at Glasgow accounted for £967.0s.0d for the total strike and arbitration expenses.
The average percentage of strike and arbitration expenditure to total trade income for the period 1877-1880 was 27%.

Leicester Branch providing one quarter of total membership in terms of money expended for strikes adopted a policy of conciliation.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HALF YEAR ENDING</th>
<th>TOTAL STRIKE AND ARBITRATION EXPENSES</th>
<th>LEICESTER STRIKE EXPENSES AS % OF TOTAL STRIKE EXPENSES (APPROX.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 3rd 1877</td>
<td>£339.19s.11d</td>
<td>£22.15s. 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 3rd 1878</td>
<td>£1,140. 4s. 6d.</td>
<td>£28. 8s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2nd 1878</td>
<td>£54.11s. 6d</td>
<td>£22. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2nd 1879</td>
<td>£570. 1s. 4d</td>
<td>£63. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1st 1879</td>
<td>£395.16s. 3d</td>
<td>£147.15s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 7th 1880</td>
<td>£759. 5s. 0d</td>
<td>£40. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 6th 1880</td>
<td>£217.19s. 0d</td>
<td>£85. 0s. 0d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average percentage expenditure of strikes and arbitration expenditure at Leicester to total national strike expenditure for 1877 - 1880 was 20%. At an inaugural meeting of the Barnsley Branch, Thomas Smith - General Secretary - gave the following reasons for the success of the National Union:

The reason why their Union was in a better position than others might be twofold. Firstly because the men had always met the employers in a conciliatory spirit, and had discussed their disputes in that way many strikes had been averted. And secondly on account of their good financial condition. So far as the present financial condition of the Union went they were never in a better condition than at the present time. The Union had been established four years, during which time they had had many uphill fights, but he was glad to say, owing to the conciliatory spirit shown by the officers and men, many difficulties had been overcome. 28

The decision to adopt conciliation as official industrial policy was decisive and successful.

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27 Compiled from Monthly Reports: (a) March 1878; (b) September 1878; (c) February 1879; (d) August 1879; (e) March 1880; (f) August 1880; (g) February 1881.

A second set of decisions that must be performed if an organisation is to survive in the long run are what Parsons described as "Allocative decisions." Allocative decisions are relevant to the adaptive needs of the organisation; they are concerned with the distribution of scarce rewards and facilities. The basic allocative decision is, who is going to do what, this involves the distribution of responsibility. One is concerned here with the Union hierarchy, the proper responsibility given to specific roles, the structure of the organisation, the relation of the Branch to the General Council, what responsibility should Branch Officers possess etc. It is essential that in the formative years of an organisation, the responsibility structure operates efficiently, the problem facing the National Union was, were there sufficient talented and dedicated officials available to carry out the desired tasks. Sedgwick the Union Agent, fully appreciated the need for dedicated officials, and that the success of the organisation depended upon their administrative skill and efficiency:

Now the success or failure of the Branch depends upon a judicious selection of a man for this office, an energetic and capable man could almost create a numerous and useful Branch by his own efforts, while, on the other hand an apathetic indifference, together with a want of knowledge of our general laws, would lead to a certain failure, and to the collapse of a Branch, which, if wisely managed, would have been useful and strong. Some of the essential qualifications for the office are: adherence to the principles of the Union, a faith in the benefits derived from its membership, and an earnest desire to propagate and extend this adherence and faith amongst his fellow workmen, but even with these very desirable qualities, it is necessary that the Branch Secretaries should be thoroughly versed with our Union laws in order to have power to give them effect, where this knowledge is lacking the Branch is in danger of being misled and mischief is the sure result; it should, therefore, be the duty of a member on election as Secretary to carefully study the laws, and obtain from the Council any information he may deem further necessary.

At Leicester a permanent President was appointed in 1877;

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29 Majority of branch officials were unpaid, varied with size of branch, secretary usually received a salary. Neither Council members nor the General President were paid.

30 Later that same year, 1878, Sedgwick was to become General Secretary, on the resignation of T. Smith, he held the post until 1886, when he was appointed as an Inspector of Factories (apparently the first Factory Inspector to be appointed from working class origins); he died in 1930.

The work of this Branch [Leicester] is most arduous, and requires the undivided attention of both Secretary and President in order to keep the men together. The new system of Permanent President must prove beneficial where such a large body of men are concerned. 32

Leicester Branch did exercise a certain degree of authority vis-à-vis the General Council.

A series of disputes has taken place on one of our largest shops, affecting over a hundred men, at the Co-operative Wholesale Society, and in consequence of the intricate nature of the dispute, the Council . . . were unable to take the matter in hand. A special meeting of the Branch was convened by the local officers, and permission sought and obtained to take the matter in hand locally. 33

Delegation of authority was thus exercised, but the General Council, based at Leicester, 34 remained in effective control of Union policy, and kept a watchful eye on Branch Officers. In October, 1879 the General Council warned:

We regret to have to call the attention of our members to certain unpleasant and at the same time unfortunate circumstances which have happened in several of our Branches recently, and which, in part at least, could have been prevented had our members attended to the business of the respective Branches . . . we refer to the several cases of defalcation on the part of Branch Secretaries; this evil is one which Branches would do well to consider, as it involves not only the interest of the Branch where the deficiency takes place, but also the greater question of the stability and confidence of the whole members of the Union.

The Council was further concerned that Branch deficiency might lose the 'legitimacy' the organisation so greatly desired, from wide society.

To the public it will present the appearance of men being appointed to hold office who are, in the first place, lacking the required ability to properly conduct the business of the office to which they were elected, and secondly, are minus the requisite principle of honesty towards the body on whose interest and behalf they are suffered to act. We are prompted thus to speak from the knowledge of the evils produced, and also because we know neither Branch or Union can afford this unlooked for drain upon the Funds to exist, or, what is equally if not more important, the confidence of the members weakened as to the honour and integrity with which the business of the Union should be conducted and our prestige maintained. 35

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34 The General Council could only be elected from Leicester Branch. By general law.
35 Monthly Report, October 1879, N.U.O.B.S.R.P.
Branch deficiencies and inefficient officers were to create problems for the organisations in the late 1870's and early 1880's, but the Central Council, based at Leicester, under the leadership of George Sedgwick (from 1878) set an example which the Leicester Branch of the organisation closely adhered to. That the leaders of the organisation were fully aware that inefficiency and corruption occurred at lower levels of the hierarchy, prevented complacency permeating the Union structure, and enabled it to survive these early problems.36

Co-ordinate decisions [states Parsons]37 are the operative decisions concerned with the integration of the organisation as a system [integration being defined as the process of linking the units - individual actors, groups, collectives - of the system, together] concerning the relation of co-ordinating decisions with the two types of decisions outlined above - decisions of policy and decisions of allocation still leave open the questions of motivation to adequate performance ... What is co-ordination from the point of view of the operatives of the organisation [the official hierarchy] is co-operation from the point of view of the personnel [Union rank and file].

The problem of members' co-operation was crucial to the National Union, the major difficulty it faced in the late 1870's and early 1880's was rank and file apathy and non-unionist labour. The 1878 election for Union officers - at national and district level - was distinguished by an extremely low vote,38 and the General Council did not hide its displeasure:

The Council notice with extreme regret the small number of votes recorded, some of the Branches not even taking the opportunity to vote at all ... The Council do not attach any blame to the Branch Officers, some of them have written, stating the great difficulty they experienced in getting the small number of members together who did vote. We hope that the time is not far distant when our members will deem their attendance at our meetings a pleasure, as well as a duty, their position will then be better known and respected and the knowledge thus gained will enable them the better to judge the difficulties that at times surround those who they place in positions of great trust and responsibility.39

36 Monthly Reports throughout the late 1870's and early 1880's stress the need for official integrity and administrative skill.
37 Parsons, Structure and Processes in Modern Society, p. 33-34.
38 Sedgwick for example polled only 576 votes - for the position of General Secretary - and this was his first election since the resignation of T.Smith.
A year later the Council was warning its members:

In too many cases, even amongst members, whose fidelity and willing sacrifice have forced them to be staunch unionists, there exists a feeling of apathy in reference to the large number of workmen who, either from motives of selfishness or ignorance of our objects and laws still remain aloof from us. Now, from the first commencement of his membership it is the duty of each Unionist to endeavour to induce by all legal means all his fellow workmen with whom he may be brought into contact, no matter how or when, to join the Union. We could, if properly organised and disciplined, make ourselves a power which could influence even the highest authorities of the land.

To combat apathy and non unionists and increase the influence of the organization a policy of trade organisation was adopted; at the 1880 Conference a sum of £210.0s.0d was provided for this purpose. No special procedure was adopted. Local executives were left to their own discretion in devising schemes for recruiting members, but their implementation had to meet the approval of the General Council.

Branches desirous of obtaining a grant for organising purposes, must send to the Council an application giving details of the system to be adopted and an estimate of the probable expense.

In July, 1880 the Council reported:

The Scheme of Organisations... we are pleased to say is being taken up with good spirit by a number of branches... The information to hand from the... Branches show that a considerable amount of success is attending the efforts made in this direction by the members who have undertaken this object. We feel sure that our members have only to consider the importance of strengthening our present position in order to be able, in the future, to maintain the prestige of the Union, as evinced in the past; every new member made means an increase of power.

Leicester quickly took advantage of the organisation scheme, and was awarded a grant of £10 for this purpose in July, 1880. Later that year the Branch reported:

...We have joined during the past fortnight no less than one hundred and thirty new members. There seems also a new spirit growing up among our members, with a determination to organise the Branch, and we are pleased to say not only with us but throughout the country, to do something to bring those working in our trade in amongst us... and by the foresight of

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the delegates to our last Conference, in voting money for organisating purposes, it has given the whole of our Branches the power to do something to strengthen themselves. The system we are now adopting seems likely to bring about results the most sanguine could hardly have expected. We have divided the town into districts, and have twenty real earnest workers, who are if necessary, doing a house to house call; this is to catch those working away from the factories in small shops and their homes, more especially finishers ... It is further intended, after having worked the town well in this manner to hold meetings in the various districts to consolidate the whole. We hope by this means to greatly increase our numbers also to show to those who join us that united we can accomplish great things, and divided we are at the mercy of every petty tyrant.44

Union membership rose significantly in Leicester and the Leicester county districts between 1880 - 1884.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>LEICESTER</th>
<th>ABSTEY</th>
<th>EARL SHILTON</th>
<th>BELGRADE</th>
<th>BALMELL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880*</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>1,633</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All these figures are approximate.

In each area, membership had increased by almost 50%.

The Union leadership in the early years of the organisation's development, displayed imagination and courage in decision making and policy implementation. The adoption of conciliation based on rank and file support - allowed the development of a sound financial base, and by presenting itself as an organisation concerned with industrial peace, the Union gained much needed legitimacy from wider society. Close vigilance of Union officers at branch level enabled the hierarchy to maintain a reasonably efficient administrative machine - this was certainly the case at Leicester, by far the largest Branch, and the successful adoption of organisation systems, instilled in the Union officers and rank and file the belief that the organisation was concerned with the protection of their welfare and interests. A belief in the organisation's progress found fertile ground at Leicester, and in the 1880's this Branch was to play a major role in the interpretation of the industry's wage system, a role which is the province of the next chapter.

45Compiled from Annual Registry of Members 1880 and 1884.
CHAPTER 4

TECHNICAL CHANGE LEICESTER 1881 - 1889 AND THE INDUSTRIAL WAGE SYSTEM

This Chapter examines the impact of technical change between 1880 - 1890. Especially the extent to which the introduction of machinery created problems for the Leicester Branch of the National Union, and the methods by which the branch and the central organisations attempted to solve these problems. Two technical innovations had particular importance for the Leicester industry; first there was controversy over piecework and day labour, second, the decision of the Leicester clickers* to join the organisation and form Leicester No. 2 Branch, an action which precipitated the change of the organisation's title from that of the National Union of Operative Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers to the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives.

The decade 1880 - 1890 falls into two phases, for the greater part of the decade technical change consisted in the consolidation of existing techniques within the production units, however, after 1888 new lasting and finishing machinery was introduced on a large scale.

Prior to the late 1880's machinery played a relatively small part in the industry because it was possible to mechanise only some stages of production. This resulted in the development of machinery for some processes of manufacture but the ordering of work remained traditional. Thus new categories of machine operators emerged side by side with the old traditional worker, the hand laster, the hand rivetters and the hand finisher. More important still, the effect of this process was to disrupt the piece rate system, the traditional method of payment within the industry. As Fox¹ observes, "There was no uniform piecework systems, different areas adopted varying classification systems." The piece rate or list varied both in application and definition. "They might cover a larger or smaller portion of the employers in a town or district (termed a town or uniform statement) or might apply only to a single

* For an explanation of clickers, p. 70.
¹ Fox, op.cit., p. 48.
employer (termed a stop statement). The effect of machinery on this system "meant that these rigid statements had to become accommodated in terms of a changing atmosphere of new styles, new materials, new processes." More important, it gave impetus to a tendency on the part of employers to dispense with the traditional wage system, by employing men on day labour. Men were hired by the day or week rather than the piece, and during the late 1870's and early 1880's this system began to encroach on Union preserves. This encroachment was deeply resented by the Leicester Shoe Operatives and created serious problems for the National Union and the Leicester Branch.

PIECE WORK v. DAY LABOUR, LEICESTER 1880-1890

The wage system controversy at Leicester falls into three phases: first the Leicester branch met with success in placing a total ban on day labour, second, the policy of total ban had to be slightly modified owing to problems created in areas outside Leicester, third, the ban had to be removed. By tracing the organisation's endeavours to solve its wage system problems, relief is shed on the reaction of Trade Unions to technical change.

If we take as our point of departure, the assumption that the Union is a formal organisation, with its own social system, then the Leicester Branch forms a sub-system of that total social system. Further it was assumed in the introduction, that all systems, and sub-systems have to solve four system problems, those of Adaptation, Integration, Goal Attainment and Latency. The employer's encroachment upon the traditional wage system, produced tension management problems for the Leicester Branch, and adaptive problems for the National Organisation. "A Social System" asserts Parsons, "is always characterised by an institutionalised value system. The social system's first

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2 Trade Unions are formal organisations in the sense that they represent rationally ordered instruments for the achievement of stated goals.

3 For definition of the system patterns see introduction, note the latency system subdivided into Pattern Maintenance and Tension Management.

4 Tension Management, part of latency sub-system - concerned with the protection of institutional value system of the social system.

5 Parsons and Smelser, op.cit., p. 16-17.
Functional imperative is to maintain the integrity of that value system and its institutionalisation - in this case the traditional wage system within the industry. This process of pattern maintenance means stabilisation against pressures to change the value system, pressures which may spring from "motivational sources of change" (in this instance, the introduction of day labour). Motivational tensions arising from strains in any part of the social situation or from organic or other intra-personal sources, may threaten individual motivation to conform with institutionalised role expectations. Stabilisation against this potential source of change, may be called Tension Management. Thus the introduction of day labour was producing for the Leicester Branch tension management problems.

The seriousness of the problem of tension management becomes clear from the time it took the Leicester Branch to distinguish the dangers of day labour and then to propose a solution to it. A Leicester Branch Report for May 1880, refers to the firm of Nicholas Evans and Co. which "shines more conspicuous than the rest, in consequence of their unyielding desire to encroach, from time to time, on the wages of their workmen. The discussions have been frequently on the day labour, and the more extensive sub-divisions of it." Similarly, in the Leicester Branch report of February 1881, "The question of day labour for a considerable time past has been the chief bone of contention of Walker Kempson and Brown, Royle and Co. and C.J. Wilkinsons. The desire on the behalf of the Manufacturers seems to be to evade the payment of many extras they now pay under the present system of piece work. In May, 1881 the Leicester Branch acted, and at a special Branch Meeting the members, "having a decided preference for piece work voted unanimously to continue it." The Leicester Branch, following the meeting, placed the following amendment to Rule 26, to the whole

6 i.e. as union members - this produces danger for integrative mechanisms i.e. ability to unite the units [members] of the system together.
body of the Union:

(a) No member in any particular Branch shall work day work — with the exception of over lookers or apprentices and shop foremen.

(b) No member, under any pretence whatever, must article himself in any way to an employer for any stated term of service, under the penalty of expulsion from the Union.

Leicester took the threat to the traditional wage system "seriously," it was to be protected even to the extent of transgressors being expelled from the organisations. Thus Leicester attempted to solve its tension management problems by placing a total ban on day labour. How far was this policy endorsed by the National Organisation?

Leicester gained the full backing of the organisation. In May 1881, the General Council reported "This system - day work - which is one of the latest devices of the employers, to obtain a reduction in the wages of their workmen ... much to the disadvantage and direct loss of large numbers of our members, and here it may be as well to state that the amendment is not aimed at day labour pure and simple, but [also] the quasi mischievous system which they - the employers - choose to designate as day labour, but which experience had proved to be a means of permanently reducing not only the wages engaged directly but those who may be working under piece work in the same town."

The Council did not entertain any illusions concerning the implications of the Leicester amendment. "Should the amendment now put forward be accepted by the Union, its effects will be that whilst those of our members now working on the Day or Week system would continue until such times as the sanction of the Council was obtained to secure its discontinuance, but on and after the publication of the result no member will be permitted to accept day or week

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11 Note here the central organisation is pointing to the problem of Adaptation - it notes with concern the reduction of wages, a factor which could effect union "dues" - a reduction in members' financial resources and the contribution to the Union would result in severe adaptive problems. It also indicates that one particular problem i.e. day labour, may produce different system patterns and different system levels.
labour. Should any member be found violating the amended rule he will be liable to forfeit all benefits derived from membership of the Union." The amendment was carried by 291 votes to 18, Leicester voting 73 for 0 against. The introduction of day labour creating problems of tension management, provoked the Leicester Branch, in producing the amendment to Rule 26. The Branch was acting as a protection agent, shielding the worker from alien forces which threatened to disrupt the old traditional system.

The amendment to Rule 26 not only served as a solution to the Leicester Branch's tension management problem, it had far reaching sociological consequences in another important sphere. If the rule was to be obeyed strictly to the letter it would pose important questions concerning the degree of organisational control over members' behaviour in terms of technical change. The amendment indicates a change in the power relationship between organisation and member. After July 1881 the organisation could impose a rule which laid down certain strict limits of member behaviour concerning a specific type of activity, (day labour) violation of the rule resulting in expulsion from the organisation. The change in the power relationship was however, the product of a democratic system, the amendment was placed before the entire body of the organisation for deliberation. In any voluntary organisation, assumptions of power by the decision makers, must be accompanied by members' support - legitimacy. Only, insofar as the increased power of the organisation (at National and Branch level) was held to be necessary, in order to preserve the traditional wage system, was it held to be legitimate. If the support or

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14 Represented by the General Council.
15 Of course the organisation experienced appalling apathy by members, only 309 voting out of a total union membership of approximately 5,000 - nevertheless, they had the right to vote.
16 Needless to say, where Trade Unions enjoy a closed shop in a particular industry, the title of voluntary organisations is somewhat dubious, but the Boot Union could hardly be said to enjoy a closed shop in 1881; there were approximately 5,000 members in the entire organisation whilst there were more than 20,000 shoe operatives in Leicester in 1871.

** Note here on legitimacy - legitimacy is the support given by members to hierarchy to carry out rules &c. if an organisation loses the legitimacy of its members it will cease to exist as an on-going system.
legitimacy is withdrawn, the power structure assumed by the organisation has to be adapted, the decade 1881-1890 illustrates how and why this legitimacy was gradually withdrawn, and the Leicester Amendment changed. It also illustrates that the problems facing a branch - sub-system - of an organisation do not necessarily coincide with those of the organisation, of which it is a part. The Leicester Branch remained hostile to day labour until the late 1880's, the organisation's attitude underwent gradual change. This emergence of differences between Leicester and the organisations requires examination.

As early as 1881, the General Council entertained reservations concerning day labour, in June of that year it reminded its members that there was not an absolute ban on day labour: "In paragraph one of the Amended Rule, it would appear absolute [the ban on day labour] but a reference to the footnote it will be at once seen that this is not so in any case, as no action to entirely discontinue day labour can take place until the Council have thoroughly investigated the case." It suggests that the necessity for action rests to a large extent with the members themselves, but it does stress that where the members call in the Council "the Council will take such action as they might deem expedient to restrain the evil complained of, as the well-being of the majority of our members must at all times be the principle aim of the Council."

Thus the Council displayed certain reservations but official policy was the protection of the piecework system of payment. In June 1882 the Council warned members "We think it desirable to caution our members against any violation of the terms of the Leicester Branch Amendment to Rule 26. When trade is slack in the winter, it may appear to the members to be most conducive to his welfare to accept day or set wages, but the member must not forget that he is not only breaking the rules of the Union but also doing a great injustice to his fellow workmen who choose to loyally follow out the General Law on the matter." This attack upon day labour by the General Council, indicates the difficulties facing branches. How far was Leicester successful in attempting to

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solve its tension management problems by the application of the amended Rule 26?

A Leicester Branch report of November 1881\(^{19}\) indicates the difficulties involved. In November a strike had broken out at Messrs. Rowley and Co. over the classification of a certain boot, further the firm had been employing five lasters and four finishers on day labour, and when the Branch withdrew its members, the above lasters and finishers had been given the work. A meeting of the men was called, which included the day workers the branch officials explaining the difficulties in which the men were placing the piece workers, but apparently the day workers refused to strike. The strike lasted four weeks and was finally settled to the satisfaction of the Branch. Similarly in January, 1882\(^{20}\) Leicester Branch reports: "The question of day labour versus piece work has once more come to the front." A town firm has induced a number of men to work on the day system as a result they were "named" in the Branch Report, being given the title of "SCABS". The placing of the names of transgressors against Union rules - Scabs - in the Branch reports is of extreme importance, for it sharply differentiates those who break Union rules from those who are loyal to the organisation.

The Leicester Branch was by far the largest Branch, both numerically and in terms of financial resources, in the organisations. It was therefore adequately equipped in its fight against day labour and its belief that the traditional wage system should be preserved. The fight, as indicated in General Council reports and Leicester Branch reports above, was hard, and economically difficult for the men, and other Branches were not so favourably placed in terms of resources,\(^{21}\) the Leicester amendment was beginning to create some serious problems. In December 1882, the Leeds Branch called for a special delegate meeting of its members - to be held in January, 1883 - to discuss the question of day labour and apprentices. The Report continues:

\(^{19}\) Monthly Report, November 1881, N.U.O.B. & S.R.F.
\(^{21}\) Both in terms of members and money - also official ability not a measurable resource, but extremely important in the early formative years of a Branch - Leicester appears to have suffered little in terms of embezzlement by officials, which was quite a 'profitable' concern in other branches.
limited. The Leicester amendment was proving to be a two-edged weapon; on the one hand it operated effectively as a tension management stabilising mechanism in protecting the traditional wage system, but on the other hand the cost of this protection was the price of numerous shoe operatives being excluded from the organisation; thus creating adaptive problems at Branch and national organisational level.

The outcome of the meeting was that the following Rules were passed regarding the wage system to be operated within the industry:

1. No Rivetter or Finisher shall work day work upon any shop where piece work only exists. In cases where Rivetters and Finishers are now employed, both as day and piece workers, it shall be permissible for Branches - with the consent of the Council - to admit all such workers as Members of the Union, with the object of ultimately placing them upon the same system of working.

2. In cases where members are working day work, no action shall be taken on such shop or shops, without first obtaining the sanction of the Council to do so.

The 1883 Rules lifted the Leicester absolute ban on day workers, and enabled shoe operatives, who otherwise would have been lost to the organisation, to becoming members and thus aid the organisation in its growth. But it must be remembered, although this is a departure from the 1881 position on day workers, official policy of the Union remained the protection of the piece work system. While day workers were now admitted into the organisation, the object of the organisation was, "of ultimately placing them upon the same system of working" - the traditional piece work system. The special delegate meeting of 1883 modified the Leicester amendment, it did not radically alter the attitude towards the wage system, protection of the piece rate system was still official policy.

In Leicester itself, the traditional system of work was defended with vigour as the Branch reports of 1883 and 1884 testify. In January, 188424

the Leicester Branch launched an attack against day labour, stressing upon their members the need to read the Union rules carefully and not to compromise their officials. The following extract from the Branch Report is a strong salvo against those who deviate from the value system by breaking the rules concerning day labour. "This bait [day labour] is rarely thrown, except [when] trade is bad\textsuperscript{25}, the foreman as a rule being the medium whereby the thoughtless and gullible workmen are entrapped by a promise of winter's work, not caring to what inconvenience they put their fellow-workmen who decline to accept those humiliating conditions, this wilful violation of our rules is in our opinion [bringing about as it does a reduction in wages] tantamount to Scabbery, which every right minded Unionist must emphatically denounce." The statement emphasised Leicester's determination to protect the traditional system from encroachment by day labour, indeed this determination to solve its tension management problems appears once more in the Union Conference, June 1884.

Before the 1884 Conference\textsuperscript{26} Thomas Horobin, a Leicester delegate, attempted to reverse the Leeds amendment to Rule 26 (the rule emerging from the special conference of 1883) and once more make it illegal for an operative engaged in day labour to become a member of the Union. He moved a formal resolution "that the whole of Rule 26 be struck out and the following inserted:

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No Rivetter or Finisher shall engage to work day labour after such a day that may be fixed by this Conference with the exception of shop foremen and over-lookers of apprentices.

Horobin then proceeded to strongly condemn the day work system, implying in his address the problems of tension management produced by the system. "In the slack season," he suggested, "the day workers were kept in regular work, whilst the piece workers had to take his chance. This led to disputes among employers and created an ill feeling among the work people themselves."

The resolution was rejected, delegates and especially the General Secretary Sedgwick implying the dangers of adoption of the resolution was carried, he

\textsuperscript{25} Quite a frequent occurrence, especially as boots and shoes were prone to seasonal fluctuations.

\textsuperscript{26} Monthly Report, June 1884, N.U.O.B. & S.R.F.
There are 0. number of firms here [Leeds] employing a considerable quantity of hands, who employ nothing but day labour, the matter is becoming a very serious one, so far as this Branch is concerned, as by our rules, under the Leicester Amendment, the men are obliged to leave us while working for these shops . . . while the Union has not the slightest power to grapple with the evil. We hope that some means be found to remedy the matter. 22

It appears that the Leicester Amendment provided an effective solution to tension management problems in Leicester, but it confronted Leeds (and other branches) with certain adaptative problems.

In March 1883 23 a Special Delegate Conference held at Leicester to discuss the problems of day labour and machinery, proved that the Leeds case was not an isolated example, and that the organisations had a serious problem to contend with.

Edward Kell, General President, in his Chairman's address pointed to the problems facing the organisation in attempting to enforce the Leicester Amendment. The main trouble Kell suggested occurred during the winter months, when short time working was introduced; some men accepted day work, thus ensuring a safe seat until the spring. Each man by following this course ceased to be a member of the organisation, and registered his lack of support - legitimacy - for the Leicester Amendment. Kell concluded, "the Union's action was to terminate the men's trade money, the whole expense falling on the Branch, thus through a decline in financial dues creating adaptive problems for the Branches and the central organisation. The actual debate on day labour was opened by the Leeds representative John Judge, who referred to the anomalies Leeds had occupied since the adoption of the Leicester Amendment. He pointed out that where machinery was extensively utilised in the bottoming of boots, day labour was predominant, and he concluded that the basis of the organisation should be made sufficiently broad to admit day as well as piece workers, as the former were largely increasing in Leeds and other towns, and by excluding them from the organisation its powers were being considerably

22 Monthly Report, December 1882, N.U.O.B. & S.R.F. - an adaptive problem the ability to get from the environment the resources required for achieving goals in the case of the National Union members and money "dues".

warned of the consequences to the organisation of a rigid policy towards day
workers (as proposed by Horobin) which would drive many potential members into
the arms of the non-unionists. Nevertheless the resolution was only defeated
by twenty-five votes to nineteen.

Horobin's defeat, reflected the fact that the problems and interests of
the Leicester Branch, were secondary to those of the whole organisation, but
this did not in any sense deflate Leicester resistance to day labour. The
Leicester branch reports for September 1885, 27 June 1886, 28 July 1886, 29
August 1886, 30 September 1886, 31 October 1886, 32 September 1887, 33 December
1887, 34 January 1888 35 and February 1888, 36 all report of pressure brought to
bear on employers by the Leicester Branch to end day labour.

By late autumn 1888, the situation had changed dramatically. New lasting
machinery was beginning to be adopted by the industry on a national basis.
The General Council recognised the new threat and in November 1888 37 announced
"machinery has played an important part in the history of our trade, but we
are fully assured that it is destined to play an important part than it has
hitherto done. This opinion is based upon the observations we have made, and
the careful watch we have kept upon all the newest inventions that have lately
been flooding the markets, the most serious being the lasting and finishing
machines" - (apparently two types of machine were of special importance, "The
Chase and the one introduced by the English and American Machine Co."). Apart
from the technical aspects of the new machines, their introduction forced
serious problems concerning the organisation's policy vis-à-vis day

this instance resulted in two shoe finishers being brought to court, the
employer claiming that one of the operatives was bound to him for a week's
work, the employer won his case.
33. Monthly Report, Sept. 1887, N.U.O.B. & S.R.F. In this case the employer in
dispute threatened to send his work out to Anstey, a Leicestershire village.
Anstey was also a section of the Leicestershire branch of Rivetters and
Finishers.
labour. From the *Monthly Report*, i.e. November 1888, the Council warns, "Already we have enquiries by one of our Branches where these machines are being laid down, as to the position of the members who may be offered day labour to work in conjunction with them. In reply, we have pointed out the rule bearing upon day labour, but they answer that the rule does not meet the cause of these members and urgently request us to consider what means can be devised to meet such cases." Clearly the 1883 Rule was producing adaptive problems for the organisation, a new situation had arisen but the rigidity of the rule meant that the organisation was limited in its reaction and as such, important resources i.e. members' money was being lost to the Union. Further the support (or legitimacy) given to the organisation for the management of Rule 26 was being rapidly withdrawn, as shoe operatives, operating under the new systems produced by the machinery, saw their membership within the organisation threatened. The General Council did not delay in meeting the new situation, and a special Delegate Meeting to be held at Leicester on Monday, January 21st 1889 was called to discuss Day Labour and Machinery.

At the delegate meeting it was decided to admit machinists working on the day labour system, and to continue working on that system, into the organisation. As the Council put it "We, however, live in a progressive age and since then [i.e. the special delegate meeting March 1883] ... the question of machinery in our trade has become an important factor especially in times of dispute; and as employers are adopting it, we felt it better that the Union should be consulted as to the wisdom of having those who work with machinery as members, and these friends in dispute, rather than refuse to entertain them as members, thus making them possible enemies in case of emergency." The ruling

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38 These machines were to be operated on the day system only - the 1883 Rule accepted day workers only on the proviso they adopted a piece work system.
on Day Labour had become an embarrassment and the following addition to Rule 26 was adopted: "In case of employer using Lasting and Finishing Machines it shall be allowable for our Members to work day work in conjunction with the same, each district to fix the rate of wages to be paid."

Thus from 1881 when the Leicester amendment had placed a complete ban on day labour, the organisation had been forced to change its policy, first in 1883 by admitting day workers, provided they adopted a piece work system, to 1889 when specific types of day workers were allowed to join the organisation and to continue to operate on day labour. In times of rapid technical change rules have to be flexible, otherwise numerous functional problems arise for an organisation. Further the National Union of Operative Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers was an organisation comprising numerous branches, experiencing various economic conditions, and what was functional for one particular branch or sub system, was not necessarily functional for the whole. The 1881 amendment to Rule 26 had acted as a tension management stabilising device for the Leicester Branch, and the device had proved functional insofar as the Branch was strong enough to enforce it, and it was held to be legitimate by the Leicester shoe operatives. However, technical changes had resulted in the amendment and the later 1883 Rule, acting as a barrier against certain classes of operatives entering the organisation. Had the 1883 Ruling been enforced in the face of the new conditions operating in the late 1880's, two factors of extreme sociological importance would have resulted. Firstly, by preventing certain expanding classes of shoe operatives from joining the organisations, Rule 26 would have produced a serious adaptive problem (i.e. in terms of member and money resources, thus severely reducing the capacity of the organisation to carry out its goals) and secondly by barring this growing class of shoe operative engaged in day labour from becoming members of the organisation the Rule would have lost all claims to legitimacy - in a voluntary organisation it would have to be changed and changed it was.

In terms of day labour, it may be argued that Leicester had acted somewhat insular in that it was more concerned with its own system problems,
than those of the whole organisation, but in another direction Leicester
greatly increased the strength of the organisation, this was the decision of the
Leicester Clickers and pressmen to join the organisation and form Leicester
Number Two Branch.

THE LEICESTER CLICKERS - 1890

The clickers were the aristocrats of the boot and shoe workers. Wright speaks of them as such: "The Clicker, in the early days of machinery, was better paid and consequently better dressed, than the rivetter and finisher on whom he looked down - even to the length of wearing a white collar. The rivetters and finishers on their part, could not conceal their dislike of the men who gave themselves provocative airs."

Following the break-up of the Amalgamated Cordwainers Association in 1874, the clickers had remained aloof from the Cordwainers attempts to organise other shoe operatives. This is understandable for the clickers regarded themselves as a superior class of workman, and did not see their interests and those of the rivetters and finishers who had formed the National Unions, as one. Consequently clickers attempted to develop organisations of their own, for example in 1873, the Leicester Chronicle refers to demands made by the Clickers' Union, for a 15% increase in wages, the strike ended in defeat for the clickers in June 1873. Further, according to Fox some attempts by small groups of clickers in Leicester were made from time to time. "It was about the year 1876," wrote a

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40 T. Wright, Romance of the Shoe, p. 178.
41"Clicking - the cutting of the upper - was accompanied by the use of patterns cut in early times from cardboard, and later from zinc, sheet iron or fibre board with a narrow brass binding. The pattern is laid upon the leather by the Clicker who runs a knife along the edge of the pattern, in doing so he often, although unconsciously, made a clicking noise with the knife which is said to account for his denomination. Bailey's Dictionary (1721-1800) however, quoted with approval by Kelvin, the shoe maker, says "Clicker to click or clack, as shopkeepers do at their doors. From this we judge that the Clickers at certain times of the day stood at their doors soliciting custom" - Wright op.cit., p. 179.
42 Prior to the eighties.
43 Leicester Chronicle, May 3rd, 1873.
44 Leicester Chronicle, June 21st, 1873.
45 Fox op.cit., p. 136.
Branch Secretary, "when the Leicester Clickers and pressmen, having a separate Union attempted an advance of wages and reduction of hours, and after fifteen weeks were defeated, and in a great number of cases went in at a reduction." 46

Thus it would appear that the clickers did make attempts to organise themselves, (if somewhat unsuccessfully) and stood apart from the attempts of the Rivetters and Finishers to organise the industry in the 1870's and 1880's. However by 1890 the Leicester Clickers had joined the National Union in large numbers, and formed their own branch at Leicester. What produced this changed attitude? - the answer, the impact of machinery.

By the 1880's Clicking presses were being introduced in Leicester, and clicking departments were being enlarged in the gradual development from tiny back room workshops to factory units. Machinery had the effect of reducing the status of the clicker vis-à-vis other shoe operatives and the extension of workshops into machine production units depersonalised the clicker's relationship with the "master."47 This loss of status and depersonalisation of "master" clicker relationship served to lessen the social differentiation between clickers and other shoe operatives, and created clicker grievances, which could only be channeled through an effective, strong organisation - the N.U.O.B. & S.R.F. provided the organisation the Clickers required.

It should not be implied that the Clickers rushed into the open arms of the Leicester Branch officials, Clickers were losing their former position of social superiority, but they were still proud men, watchful of their independence. Their entry into the National Union, was on condition that the organisation could solve certain system problems, those of Pattern Maintenance and Adaptation. As stated earlier in this Chapter a social system is always characterised by an institutionalised value system, and its first functional imperative is to maintain the integrity of that value system, and these

46 Fox, op.cit., p. 137.

47 As Union increase in size Clickers become alienated from the "master" or decision maker, the decision makers were less "physically" involved in the actual production, thus Clickers lost their identification with "management," and consequently their superior position vis-à-vis other shoe operatives.
pressures arise from two primary sources (the first source, dealt with early, was that of tension management). Here we are concerned with cultural sources of change. As Parsons explains:

Certain imperatives of cultural consistency may mean that cultural changes taking place outside the value system relevant to the social system in question may generate pressures to change important values within the social system. The tendency to stabilise the system in the face of pressures to change institutionalised values through cultural channels may be called the 'pattern maintenance' function.

The Clickers were proud and independent men, and thus the organisation had to ensure that the value system of the Clickers would be respected, that it would not be submerged and lose its identity in the larger organisation. Further, the organisation had to ensure the Clickers that it was strong and powerful enough to deal with their grievances, it had in other words, to indicate that it could produce sufficient resources to attain stated goals i.e. that it possessed a strong adaptive sub-system.

Now the organisation solved these problems and 'wooed' the Clickers into the Union is vividly brought to light at a meeting of Clickers held at Leicester in March 1890. The purpose of the meeting, according to the Leicester Chronicle and Mercury, was for the Clickers and Pressmen of Leicester to form a branch of the Rivetters and Finishers Union. The Chronicle described the meeting as, "very largely attended and enthusiastic." The Chairman for that night was Thomas Lane, Vice President of the Leicester Branch, also present were General Secretary Inskip, T. Barrat, Oldershaw and Thomas Horobin, Union Treasurer.

Lane in his opening remarks observed that

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48 Parsons and Smelser, op.cit., p. 16-17.
49 That differences of outlook and values, between Clickers and other shoe operatives was still manifold in 1890 is illustrated by this example from Fox. "An example from the Minutes of the Leicester No. 2 Branch, December, 1890. "Mr. Allan took exception to the word 'strike' being used by the last speaker' and for many years the Clickers were to be known as the collar and cuff brigade."
50 Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury, March 24th 1890.
51 Thomas Horobin was shortly to become General President on the resignation of Edward Kell.
the reason why they met together that evening was in response to expressions of opinions which had been conveyed to the officials of the Union from all directions of the town as to the desires of the Clickers and pressure to join their Union and the organisation has displayed its interest by the presence at the meeting of such important figures as General Secretary Inskip and Union Treasurer Horobin.

Inskip, in the main speech of the evening, suggested that for some years past, the executive of the Rivetters' Union had felt a desire to see other departments of the shoe trade organised, but they were in hopes that Clickers and penmen themselves, "being 'intelligent' men" would recognise the necessity of forming a Clickers Union - here Inskip in stressing the independence of the Clickers, and their intelligence, in other words he is re-affirming their high social status in the shoe trade. Inskip then proceeded to indicate the advantages to the Clickers, if they joined the Rivetters' Union. They would be joining a body which had already established machinery which could be adapted for their own interest, further this body was represented throughout the United Kingdom, protecting the interests of 24,000 members and having £20,000 funds at their disposal. Similarly Barratt, a Leicester official, continued to impress upon the Clickers how the Union had solved its adaptive problems and was a strong organisation which would be worthy of their trust - "when they first attempted to organise themselves at Leicester, their subscription in one week amounted to only ninepence, in 1890 a week's subscription exceeded £150, and the number of members being more than 8,000" Lane then concluded "the only way they [the Clickers] would get their grievances settled would be by combination."

Thus the organisation's attempts to persuade the Clickers that the National Union was strong and powerful, and that it had at its disposal the resources to redress the Clickers' grievances. But they had not yet solved the problem of Pattern Maintenance, how could they ensure that the value system of the Clickers would not be submerged in the totality of the organisation? The organisation very neatly solved this pattern maintenance problem by suggesting that the Clickers should form their own branch at
Leicester, which would work in conjunction with the Rivetters' branch, but they would exercise "home rule," over their own affairs. Their identity was not to be lost in the large Leicester No. 1 Branch, but they were to form their own Branch, with Clickers running its affairs, and bringing the specific grievances of Clickers before the National Union. Thus the Clickers could be integrated into the larger organisations, without being submerged by the larger body. As Horobin summed up "by forming a branch of Clickers and Pressmen they would be able to appoint their officers and regulate their own affairs, subject of course to the official of the National Union."

The Leicester Branch reported in March, 1890:

We had a very successful meeting of Clickers and Pressmen in the Temperance Hall - over 1,000 being present to listen to addresses from Messrs. Lane, Barratt, Horobin and W. Inskip (General Secretary). Afterwards a resolution was carried with great enthusiasm to form a Branch of the Rivetters and Finishers Union, to be officered by Clickers and Pressmen, and known as Leicester No. 2 Branch. A large number joined the same night, and Tuesday, April 1st - a dubious date - is set apart for enrolling members, from seven until 10 p.m. at the Cherry Tree Hotel, Bond Street, when we hope the Rivetters and Finishers will make it known to as large a section of the Clickers and Pressmen as possible, so that a substantial number may enrol themselves.

In January 1891, the Leicester No. 2 branch of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives had 825 registered members - thus the strength of unionism in Leicester had been significantly enhanced.

The decade 1880 - 1890 had presented the Boot and Shoe Unions with serious problems, both at national and local level. Technical changes had meant that certain of its rules, initially produced to protect workers' interests, later acted as barriers to the growth of the organisation. Further changes produce different problems at varying organisational levels, and consequently branch interests were to prove secondary to those of the National

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53 Monthly Report, January 1891, N.U.B.S.O.
54 The N.U.B. & S.O. came into force in the May Union Conference of 1890.
55 And to the interests of the shoe operatives, at least those operating machines on the day labour system.
56 Different problems were produced both vertically (i.e. Leicester Tension Management Day Labour), National Union Adaption and horizontally (i.e. Leeds option to Leicester amendment v Horobin attack on day labour 1884).
Union. Nevertheless, the organisation displayed sufficient flexibility in its solution to these problems, to emerge in 1890 as a strong united body, and its strength was no more in evidence than in Leicester as the following chapter indicates - the fight in Leicester for indoor working.
CHAPTER 5

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATION OF INDOOR WORKING, LEICESTER 1891

In 1891 the Leicester shoe operatives achieved a notable victory, they demanded, and were granted the principle of indoor working.* The chapter proposes to examine the sociological processes which underlaid this principle and the consequences which its application had for the National Organisation and Leicester.

Every social system [suggests Parsons] functions in situations defined as external to it; the processes of interchange between system and situation are the focus of the functional imperatives, Goal Attainment and adaptation. Adaptation deals with the problem of controlling the environment for the purpose of attaining goal states. Since relations to the situation are problematical there arises a generalised interest in establishing and improving control over the situation in various respects. Of course, the pursuit of particular goal states involves such control. A different order of problem is involved however, on the generalisation of facilities for a variety of system, or sub-system goals, and in activity specialised to produce such facilities. When a social system has only a simply defined goal, the provision of facilities or the adaptive function is simply an undifferentiated aspect of the process of goal attainment. But in a complex system, with a plurality of goals and sub-goals the differentiation between goal attainment and adaptive processes is very clear. The policy of indoor working was a differential aspect of the process of adaptation, its adoption would increase the organisation's control over its environment, and thus aid the achievement of system goals.

An examination of industrial organisation in the shoe industry 1870-1890

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*Indoor working - principle of operatives working inside a factory or workshop provided by employer, rather than working in the home, i.e. work should be carried out in premises provided by the employer.
illustrates the necessity of such an adaptive process. Technical revolution
in the shoe trade, expanded not only factory production, but also outwork
production in the home of the operative. The growth of outworkers in the
Leicestershire rivetted and machine sewn trade, was greater than in the days
of the hand sewn trade. The organisation of outdoor work itself produced
serious problems, as frequently the outworker employed boys - usually his own
son - as their assistants. Fox suggests "As these boys grew older the problem
of choosing a trade seemed already solved. They augmented their slender
experience with a smattering of the remaining skills and joined the labour
market as adults, most of them inferior craftsmen clinging uncertainly to the
vulnerable fringes of the trade. From this position they competed desperately
for work with the men who had originally brought them into the trade." This
situation was aggravated by rural unemployment. "Many boot and shoe making
centres were all too accessible in this respect (i.e. rural unemployment)
especially the towns and villages of Leicestershire." Sedgwick in addressing
the Dublin Conference of June 1878 reported that "In towns surrounded by an
agricultural population, the evil arises from the low wages paid to the
ordinary labourer [out worker]; these in most cases, are barely sufficient to
keep the breath of life in their bodies, and as a natural consequence, they
avail themselves of the opportunity of bettering their condition by applying
themselves to anything that enables them, even for a time, to obtain relief from
the degradation and poverty of their former state. In addition to these there
are some, who, having some slight connection with the trade, practice it in
their spare hours for at first recreation and amusement, until they find
themselves able to undertake the making of the common class of goods, when they
adopt it as a permanent means of living." In Leicestershire "a mass of
displaced or impoverished framework-knitters competing hopelessly with the new

4 Fox, op.cit., p. 13.
5 Fox, op.cit., p. 17.
6 Union Agents Report to Dublin Conference of N.U.O.B. & S.R.F. June 10th, 1878 -
hosiery machinery and slowly going under, 7 further aggravated the situation, and swelled the ranks of outworkers. The necessity to control these environmental problems by the adoption of the indoor principle 8 were soon apparent to the organisation, but in the 1870's and 1880's it was not sufficiently strong to enforce the principle. These years mark the organisations probing and searching for a solution, without directly indicating their intent - the decade of the eighties produce the conditions upon which the success of the early nineties was based.

In September 1879, 8 Sedgwick representing the organisation, Kell representing Leicester Branch and Inskip the Leicester Trades Council, attended the T.U.C. Conference held at Edinburgh. Their attention was directed towards the debate on "The Inspection of Factory and Workshop Bill," during the course of which they called for an efficient staff of properly qualified Inspectors to be appointed, which they hoped, "if put into operation would confer a lasting boon, as it would have a direct influence in our present sanitary, domestic and manufacturing arrangements, these in many cases, being simply a huge blot on our humanity and civilization." At the T.U.C. Conference held in London in 1881 9 Sedgwick was "of the opinion that the appointment of Inspectors who are practically connected with the shoe trade, would have the effect of restricting the odious 'Sweating System,' reduce the great number of unskilled, incompetent apologies for shoemakers, with which our trade in some districts is flooded, and very largely conduces to compelling some of our employers to find healthy and proper workshops for their employees." In June 1882 10 the National Union was largely responsible for a deputation sent to the


*Working inside a factory or workshop rather than at home exposed the shoe operative to factory discipline and the collective ethos of factory life. This exposure to a new system of values, makes them more amenable to union organisation and consequently organisation control over the environment was enhanced.
Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, concerning Factory and Workshop inspection. Sedgwick suggested that, from reliable information there were in the shoe trade upwards of 20,000 houses being used as workshops" and he cited Leicester, Northampton and the London district as examples. In November, 1881 the Leicester Branch Report\textsuperscript{11} suggested that the finishers in that city were more or less compelled to make workshops of their homes. Thus it would appear that the National Union was attempting to promote Parliament action to improve conditions in factories and put an end to the worst abuses in workshops, it was not as yet openly advocating indoor working.

The Organisation gave impetus to its Parliamentary campaign by "blackening" the character of outworkers. In November, 1881\textsuperscript{12} Sedgwick used the medium of the Leicester School Board to condemn the system of outdoor working. He alleged that outdoor working by its very nature led to immoral practices, and he was especially concerned with the moral welfare of children. In their report to the Leicester School Board for 1881,\textsuperscript{13} the School Inspectors had reported, that during school time they had found large numbers of children out in the street. It appeared as far as the shoe trade was concerned, "not only was the fault of their non-attendance at school due to a large extent to the parents, but to a much larger extent to the employers. The branch of the shoe trade which gave most offence was the finishing department,\textsuperscript{14} the reason being that employers did not provide factory space for finishers and consequently the work was carried out in the home. This situation led to a large number of finishers' children being kept at home to assist their parents, and foregoing any formal education. Sedgwick suggested that where the shoe operative worked on the employer's premises, "the people were more respectable, the children better looked after, more cleanly, and sent to school with greater regularity. When the rivetter worked on the employer's premises, he was only

\textsuperscript{13} Op. cit.
\textsuperscript{14} Finishing - "A long series of sub-processes which involved 'paring' or knifeing the edges of the soles and heels, bevelling the waists, scouring the bottom sole and heel, inking and burnishing, and other minor processes, designed to improve the appearance of the complete shoe." Fox, History, p.11.
too happy after work to go home, knowing that it was home and not part of the manufacturing, but the finisher who worked at home was only too glad after work to get away to somewhere more genial to him." Sedgwick "hoped" that this matter would receive attention from employers, so that both rivetters and finishers could work on the premises, and then the results would be that the children would be better educated, better kept and more cleanly and the work of the School Board would be very much lightened." In 1885 Sedgwick again points to the detrimental effect of the outwork system on the health and morals of children.

Sedgwick had placed his hopes on Parliamentary Reform.

This was not to be, and in 1886 he left the organisation to become (what in fact he had been fighting for) a Factory Inspector. His regime was nonetheless important, he realised that the organisation was not sufficiently strong to force the employers to adopt indoor work, and concentrated its energies in attempting to improve the conditions in existing factories and workshops, and to advertise the immorality (especially the morals of children) produced by the outdoor system. The consequences of this policy was twofold. First it eased the transition from outdoor to indoor working by improving factory and workshop conditions, and secondly, it gained legitimacy for the indoor principle by characterising the outdoor worker as a creature of an immoral environment.

**INDOOR WORKING LEICESTER 1890-1891**

The period 1886-1889, following Sedgwick's departure were years of consolidation, by 1890 the organisation believed itself sufficiently strong to demand openly indoor working. Success first came in London, and the National Union gave the following reasons for victory: "The first cause, in our opinion

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17. The men were going to enter factories, with a minimum set of conditions laid down by law.
18. Note emphasis placed by Sedgwick upon morals and education of children.
in the state of trade . . . next the want of cohesion on their part [the employers] enabled us to attack them with greater chance of success. Again, the unanimity with which the men answered to the call enabled us to show how earnest the men were in their demands; but even beyond this, we had public sympathy on our side, because the exposure made of the cursed sweating system before the Lords Commission educated the public mind for something of this . . . "19 The claim to legitimacy by exposing the outworkers' working conditions, the unity of the men, plus the prevailing trade boom of the late eighties and early nineties, strengthened the power of the organisation. This strength was now to be tested at Leicester.

A considerable meeting of shoe hands, the *Leicester Chronicle* 20 reports, called under the auspices of the Leicester Branch of the Boot and Shoe Operatives was held at the Temperance Hall on the 12th November, 1890. The high attendance 21 reflects the degree of importance attached by the shoe operatives to the process before them. The object of the meeting in the words of Thomas Horobin - General President of the National Organisation - was to discuss, "the question of workshops, whether the Union should call in the manufacturers of the town to find workshops for all their employees." During the course of the evening the following resolution was adopted, "That in the opinion of this meeting the time has now arrived when all the work should be done on the employers' premises, and that they should provide workshops for the same." Martin Curly, a Leicester Branch official, who moved the resolution, explained that its adoption would primarily affect the lives of five classes of workmen. First, there were those workmen who were willing to work on the employer's premises but had no opportunity to do so. A second class were those who preferred to work out of doors, either because they were ill, or because they could obtain more "work" than the indoor worker. Thirdly, there were those who worked outside relying

20 *Leicester Chronicle* and Leicestershire Mercury, November 15th, 1890.
21 Rank and file members are distinguished for their apathy - the Leicester boot operatives were no exception, and a high attendance reflects considerable interest.
on the assistance of others - usually their wives and families. Curly's explanation of the preceding class was somewhat confused, it was merely an extension of class three. Finally there were the task-masters or "sweaters" who employed four to six "sweaters," both as finishers and makers. The Leicester resolution would place all these classes of workmen inside the employer's workshop.

The consequences of indoor working were far reaching and the policy was not welcomed by all classes of the Leicester shoe operatives. It meant, for the outworker, a revolution in his way of life. The basic social value that dominates factory life is that of discipline, workers once they enter the factory gate are no longer free agents, but are expected to follow explicit rules, failure to comply with rules being met with appropriate sanctions in certain cases termination of employment. It can be appreciated that many outworkers had good reason for not placing themselves inside an employer's factory. Previously "they could remain, if they chose, largely immune from Union pressures, free if necessary, to undercut factory prices in order to obtain work, free to work whatever hours they chose and to take in large orders of work which might otherwise have been shared between two or more workers, free to foster a dilution of labour by introducing into the trade cheap labour or sub-divided process." An extract from the Leicester Chronicle illustrates the grievance of a particular outworker - "S.J. Miller said he was one who worked outside and he was not afraid honestly and fairly to state his opinion. He suggested that if the workshop system was carried into force, it would injure a great many people who had been satisfied with the existing arrangements and he did not think National Union Officials or the meeting had any right to interfere with the liberties of the individual." This statement was met by hisses and cries of order from the floor. The Leicester officers displayed little sympathy over the outworkers' pleas. Horobin in the November meeting savagely

22 Fox, op.cit., p. 55.
23 Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury, February 21st 1891.
24 Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury, November 15th 1890.
attacked their system of working, which led to wage cutting, and their way of life, which undermined the moral fibre of their children. Indoor working was to be official policy in Leicester and the organisation efficiently crushed any opinions offered by the outworkers, the employers were another matter.

On Monday, 12th January 1891, a meeting of the Leicester Boot and Shoe manufacturers was held to discuss the Leicester Branch resolution. The *Leicester Chronicle* reports, "There were nearly 150 manufacturers present, including non members as well as members of the association (manufacturers' association), so that the gathering might be fairly regarded as thoroughly representative of the trade in the town." The employers accepted in principle the organisations' demands subject to certain conditions, a committee being appointed to investigate the problems created by indoor working and report its findings at a future meeting. In February 1891 the Committee presented its report before a representative body of the Leicester Boot Manufacturers' Associations, and the following conditions were adopted as official policy:

1. That this Committee agree to the date of June 20th, 1891, on condition that any case where it is impossible to comply shall be considered on its merits by the Arbitration Board, provided that any conditions in dispute has been previously settled.

2. That the limit of distance for the workmen shopping their own work be not less than 400 yards.

3. That it shall be shop regulations for the doors to be closed at five minutes after time until thirty minutes past, when the doors shall be permanently locked until the next break.

4. That the finishers shall find all necessary grinding and pay for blue light sixpence for a man, threepence for a boy.

5. That it shall be optional for each man to have one boy only, either

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*Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury*, January 17th 1891.

*Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury*, February 14th 1891 - meeting was held on 10th February 1891.

Distance between where they worked, and where they "gave" in finished article.

The employers obviously realised the freedom of the outworkers work system, they were to stand no nonsense when they entered the factory.
rivetter or finisher, with the permission of the employer, but that in cases where boys are not employed by the men the employer shall be allowed apprentices to the extent of one to five men not employing them, and that in calculating such numbers the rivetters and finishers shall be dealt with separately.

6. That any manufacturer having made provisions, they shall be at liberty to employ any one of the workmen who refuse to come indoors.

7. That a copy of the resolutions be sent to the Secretary of the Workmen's Union, and in the event of any disagreement that the question in dispute be at once submitted to the Arbitration Board.

At the Temperance Hall, Leicester 29 3,000 shoe operatives massed to consider the employers' proposals; they rejected them in toto. While in sympathy with his men's attitude, General Secretary Inskip warned, "that the whole trade was watching the results of this movement in Leicester; he also wanted them to remember that should the men be forced to an issue in this town, they probably would, as a result of that issue lose some of the trade they enjoyed and which helped to make the town as prosperous as it was." 30

This was not Inskip's only concern, the success of the organisation was also at stake, "and he did not want their organisation to be tested with the strain that would be involved in the case of a strike or a lockout in that town." The organisation was prepared to support the Leicester men in their fight for indoor working, but Inskip made it clear that he would withdraw this support if the Leicester men lost public sympathy for their cause and precipitated a confrontation with the employers. Calm was restored, Inskip defeated the militancy and a committee was empowered to negotiate with the employers, the main bones of contention being - the employment of boys, the payment of grinding

29 Monthly Report, February 1891, N.U.B.S.O. meeting held on 18th February, 1891.
30 Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury, 18th February 1891,"Report of Meeting Leicester Shoe Operatives."
and blue light and the limit concerning the shopping of work.

Throughout early March 1891\(^3\) the Leicester Arbitration Board thrashed out the problems of indoor working and on the 17th of that month a settlement was reached, the final outcome being:

1. That we (employers and Union) agree to the date of June 29th on condition that any case where it is impossible to comply shall be considered on its merits by the Arbitration Board.

2. That 200 yards be the limit for men shopping their work, except in special cases where manufacturers cannot find suitable within that limit, when not more than 300 yards shall be allowed.

3. That this Arbitration Board affirms the necessity of proper regulations for maintaining order and regularity in the workshops, and pledges itself to support the manufacturers in carrying out the same.

4. That the finishers shall find all necessary grinding and the employers to find blue light and sitting room free of charge.

5. That it shall be optional for each man to employ one boy only, either rivetter or finisher, with the permission of the employer.\(^3\)

6. That any manufacturer having made provision, they shall be at liberty to employ any of their workmen who refuse to come indoors.

7. That the resolutions be printed, and a copy sent to all manufacturers in the town.

8. That there should be a clear understanding that the rules were to have universal application, and that no manufacturers were to be omitted.

\(^3\)The Arbitration Board met 3 times:
(a) *Leicester Chronicle* and *Leicestershire Mercury*, March 7th 1891. "Workshop Question and the Arbitration Board."
(b) *Leicester Chronicle* and *Leicestershire Mercury*, March 14th 1891 - meeting held on 10th March 1891.
(c) *Leicester Chronicle* and *Leicestershire Mercury*, March 21st 1891 - meeting held on 17th March 1891.

\(^3\)The argument concerning the employment of apprentices in cases where the shoe operatives did not employ boys, was deferred by the Board of Arbitration - this was a question of extreme importance and will be dealt with elsewhere.
from their scope.33

The men had won major concessions but some difficulties still remained. At a meeting of shoe operatives held on 26th May 189134 Thomas Horobin - General President - warned that certain employers were not making sufficient preparations, and that some were "consulting the outdoor workers as to the necessity of coming inside, believing that if they could get a sufficient number of workmen to express themselves in opposition to going inside, their liability would cease, and they would not be expected to make the necessary alterations." This demonstration of solidarity reminded the employers of the organisation's vigilance, and its determination not to let victory slip through its fingers. The workshop regulations came into force on 29th June, 1891 and the Leicester Chronicle35 reported, "During the week the local shoe trade has been more or less disturbed by the new regulations. . . The introduction of more indoor work in Leicester must naturally cause considerable re-arrangement of premises or the erection of new places of shelter and although there was no evident desire on the behalf of the larger and more important manufacturer to meet the men in this matter, very few connected with the trade expected it to be carried through with no trouble." Monday, 29th June 1891, proved that there were good grounds for apprehension. Enquiries conducted by the Chronicle indicated that in some cases, "and by no means an inconsiderable section no effort whatsoever had been made to meet the demands. This was the state of things when the order came into operation, the result was that in 13 factories . . . a strike of the men was declared - each factory employing between 30-200 men - thus a considerable number of operatives were out." Several other establishments were rendered idle at the same time, "and it would be no exaggeration to say that some thousands of shoe hands found themselves on Monday out of work.36

33Monthly Report, March 1891, N.U.B.S.O.
34Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury, May 30th, 1891 - "The meeting was held at the Temperance Hall at Leicester was completely filled - General Secretary Inskip also spoke at the meeting.
35Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury, July 4th 1891.
36The major firms in Leicester, Stead and Simpson, Walker and Kempson, Stevens, Cooper and Son, Turner & Son all complied with the order.
July was a troubled month, but by August the Monthly Report\textsuperscript{37} of the organisation reflected a situation favourable to the men - "In Leicester, considerable expense has been incurred by these employers who had been granted an extension of time, still refusing to provide workshops, and their men had to be withdrawn. This has had the desired effect, as each employer in turn has now made provision, and the men have resumed work."\textsuperscript{38} Indoor working in Leicester was a reality.

The object of the National Union (at Leicester) in promoting indoor working was to increase control over its immediate environment and insofar as factory workers are more amenable to union organisation than outworkers, it succeeded. This success was limited, indoor working in the long run proved to be a two edged weapon, for its application made possible a rapid increase in the introduction of machinery. Discussing the consequence of indoor working in Leicester, the Leicester Chronicle\textsuperscript{39} stated: "No event in the history of the industry had such an effect in developing the use of machinery as this, and, perhaps under the circumstances, no action of the boot and shoe trade had such a wide reaching effect upon other trades in Leicester. It was soon discovered that to find accommodation for all the employees many of the factories and warehouses were quite insufficient in area for their work people inside the factories. It was also found to supply the extra floor space required for the workman to make room for the use of the machinery - which was more largely being introduced - double the space would be wanted. As soon as the accommodation was provided manufacturers found that to make machinery of any service to them a complete reorganisation of existing methods had to be effected, and it was then discovered that the processes in the manufacture of boots and shoes in the U.S.A. were very much more divided than they were at the time in the U.K. where perhaps, not more than 15 to 20 distinct operations had to be performed in the production of

\textsuperscript{37}Monthly Report, August 1891, N.U.B.S.O.

\textsuperscript{38}Much friction was created over the workshop application and trouble broke out among union officials and rank and file members. The President, Vice President and Secretary of Leicester Branch resigned - this will be dealt with in detail in proceeding chapter.

\textsuperscript{39}Leicester Chronicle and Leicestershire Mercury, June 5th, 1901.
a boot and shoe." By the turn of the century, the production of a shoe consisted of approximately 100 distinct processes. Indoor working, an organisation device for increasing environmental control, produced to a certain extent the very reverse effect. The widespread introduction of machinery, especially American, weakened the organisation's control over its environment, and was a factor involved in the increased militancy displayed by shoe operatives in the early nineties. Indoor working strengthened the collective spirit of shoe operatives by placing them in a factory environment, but at the same time it exposed them to a process of rapid technical change. The atmosphere in Leicester became necessarily explosive, and it is this background in which the following chapter must be set - Leicester Militancy and conflict culminating in the Great Lockout of 1895.
CHAPTER 6
VICTORY FOR ARBITRATION - LEICESTER 1891-1892

In 1891 Leicester Branch were at the height of their success; they had won the battle for indoor working, and were backed by an organisation which had grown in size from 23,459 members in 1890 to 30,046 in 1891 and 42,524 members in 1892.¹ Superficially, the Shoemakers' Organisation had solved its own major problem - that of survival - but the years 1891-1892 showed difficulties which dominate the organisation until 1895, when a disastrous lockout occurred.² The official industrial policy of the organisation, from its creation in 1874 had been one of conciliation and arbitration, in 1891 Leicester Branch attempted to abandon this policy and withdraw from the Arbitration Board, only a dramatic intervention by the General Secretary, William Inskip, averted this course of events and re-instated arbitration as official policy. This chapter examines the course of these events.

Thomas Smith, the first General Secretary of the Union appreciated the value of conciliation and arbitration, which he advocated as early as 1874, and in 1877 the first case of its kind was submitted to an independent referee during a four day sitting of an Arbitration Court.³ From 1875, in every important centre of trade, there were established Local Boards of conciliation and arbitration, formed from an equal number of Trade Unionists and manufacturers elected locally, to which had to be referred, according to the Webbs,⁴ "every question, or aspect of a question affecting the relations of employers and workmen individually and collectively. In the event of their disagreeing, the matter was referred to an independent Umpire." Arbitration procedures were fully exploited during the 1880's and in 1891 it (arbitration) facilitated the acceptance of indoor working as a practical principle. Paradoxically, this

¹ In 1892 the N.U.B.S.O. was the third largest (in terms of members) Trade Union in the country and their General Secretary Wm. Inskip was Treasurer of the T.U.C. Parliamentary Committee.
² The great lockout of 1895, the first and last national lockout/strike in the industry's history.
⁴ S. & P. Webb, Industrial Democracy, p.73.
initial success illustrated certain weaknesses of arbitration machinery, indoor working was accepted by the majority of manufacturers but certain members of their class refused to prepare their workshops in readiness for the agreed deadline,\(^5\) straining the arbitration's machine. The situation was aggravated by a display of militancy by a certain section of the Leicester shoe operatives. The General Council was alarmed, and in July, 1891\(^6\) warned the militants, "In other cases, . . . precipitate action has been taken by the men leaving their work, the . . . action seriously jeopardising the position of our side of the Board - the Leicester Board of Arbitration - the employers refusing to sit any longer unless these men resumed work . . . We cannot too strongly condemn this action on the part of our members, whether in Leicester or elsewhere, and as our Rules are not sufficiently explicit on this matter, we have decided as follows, and hereby give notice that in the event of irresponsible members advising the men to leave working without the permission of the local officers or investigators, we shall certainly act in accordance with the appended resolution viz:- 'That this Council decide to deal with those who shall be deemed working against the interests of the Union by advising the members to leave work without the sanction of the Branch officials or Investigator, as follows - for the first offence they shall be fined £1, for the second £2, and for the third offence they shall be expelled from the Union.'"

Harsh treatment, but by August, the President, Vice President and Secretary of the Leicester Branch had all resigned, in face of the increased militancy of the Leicester members. The General Council regretted this step. "In the interests alike of both the Branch and the Union, and with all the force of our experience we urge our Leicester members to think well what they are doing, or they will find - when too late - that bad trade and other conditions have so played into the employers' hands that they would welcome a struggle from which

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\(^5\) It was agreed in March, 1891 that the workshop principle thrashed out by the Leicester Arbitration Board, were to come into practice on June 29th, 1891 - see Chapter "Indoor Working Leicester 1890-1891".

\(^6\) Monthly Report, July 1891, N.U.B.S.O.
it is by no means certain our members would come out triumphant. When a struggle has to take place let it be when conditions are in our favour. The Report reveals an additional factor, which complicated the situation, that of bad trade, in July and August trade was slack, and the shoe workers' representatives on the Leicester Arbitration Board accused the manufacturers of using the prevailing economic conditions to cut wages. "The combination of employers," suggests Fox, "skilled and experienced in the arts of negotiation, producing their sophisticated logic-chopping classification arguments, and inexperienced militants, poised at the best of times on a hair trigger of revolt against all negotiations, soon proved an explosive mixture. Bitter words passed and a deadlock was reached." In October at a Leicester Board of Arbitration meeting - primarily called to discuss the appointment of a referee - Ward Chairman of the Board, suggested that certain elements within the workers were against arbitration, as they disliked decisions that went against them, "but the whole principle of arbitration was that when that decision was given it must be loyally abided by to the utmost extent of their power. And if either side found it had not the power to enforce the decision there was but one course... namely to retire from the Board." Arguments became heated and the Branch representatives accused the manufacturers of bringing price reductions before the Board. The temper of the militants may be judged by the reply of Clarkmead (to a manufacturer suggested as a possible referee) "he should object strongly to any capitalist or any employer of labour acting as their umpire." Leedham, a militant associate of Clarkmead, accused the manufacturers, "since the new

7 Monthly Report, August 1891, N.U.B.S.O.
8 Monthly Reports, July & August 1891, N.U.B.S.O.
9 Fox, op.cit., p. 173.
11 Ward was also Chairman of the Employers' Federation at Leicester and was considered by Day the editor of the Shoe and Leather Record to be a "moderate" in favour of arbitration procedures.
12 Price reduction meaning reduction in price (money) given to an operative on piece work, for producing or carrying out a specific task, it meant a reduction in wages for the same amount of effort.
13 Clarkmead was one of the leaders of the Leicester militants, and a socialist fully accepting the principles of New Unionism which were filling the unskilled workers with excitement and hope at the period - 2 years previous the Dockers had won their great victory under Ben Tillett and Tom Mann.
officials had come into office there had been an attempt to run a trial on them and see if they could be induced to accept reductions. The meeting ended with the disbandment of the Board, as the workers refused to meet the employers on the appointment of a referee. Ward felt that the employers had no option but to consider "ourselves as an Arbitration Board disbanded." Woolley the leader of the workers' representatives felt that the Board was inefficient, but he promised to attempt to persuade his colleagues to submit a list of names who could act as a possible referee. The Leicester Board of Arbitration had come to an end.

The Leicester Chronicle viewed the matter with some concern, an editorial announced "We could not understand the men of common sense in the trade, foreaking conciliation for brute force in the solution of trades disputes" - The General Secretary of the Union, Wm. Inskip shared this concern, and on the 26th October, 1891 a meeting of the Leicester Branch members was held, "to consider the present deadlock on the Board of Arbitration and to take such steps as may be deemed necessary either to reform the Board or to withdraw from the same." Leicester Branch President, J.H. Woolley, in his opening remarks stressed the need for unity and peace in the town's shoe trade, "they had been called together to consider a most important question affecting the peace, prosperity and progress of their Union in its relations to the employers, the gravity of which could not be overstated namely, the ending or mending of the Arbitration Board." In conclusion he urged them, "to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the signs of the times, which all point to progression, and not to retrogression. The settlement of trade disputes by arbitration meant progress, while a recourse to the old methods of brute force, which was no

14 Leicester Branch had 5 representatives on the Board who had only recently been elected to serve on the Board.
15 The employers submitted a list of names (of possible referees) before the Board, but all were rejected by the men's representatives, either as "capitalists or employers of men."
16 Ward did suggest that if the workers changed their minds and were prepared to discuss the question of referees a further meeting could be called.
17 Leicester Chronicle, 31st October 1891 and Monthly Report, October 1891, N.U.B.S.O.
18 Monthly Report, October 1891, N.U.B.S.O.
19 "Peace or War in the Leicester Boot Trade." Report of meeting, Monthly Report, October 1891.
remedy, meant putting back the clock a quarter of a century, which he was not prepared to advocate." Leedham, a member of the old Board, voiced his favour of arbitration, but with strong reservations, "it must be practical, sound and pure arbitration in the full sense of the word. Of late the Board have been one of humbug and 'rot' . . . Had there been case after case brought in which the men had come in for advances in wages what reasonable man could have refused to hold up his hand for an umpire." But unfortunately the deadlocks which were now awaiting the decision of an umpire were direct reductions, and therefore he could not conscientiously have voted for an Umpire. Martin Curly, an associate of Leedham on the Board reaffirmed the latter remarks. "No men in the Leicester Branch had spoken more strongly against arbitration than himself, but his experience on the Board had told him that if it was worked properly . . . they would receive benefit from it. Unfortunately it had not worked properly. The Chairmen had been repeatedly away, and someone else had to occupy his place, and the members had been at loggerheads for weeks. He was prepared to tender his resignation from the Board that evening." Dodge, Moore and Clarkman all objected to the Board and the latter tendered his resignation.

Whatever the interacting units in a system process [states Talcott Parsons]20 motivational units of personality (need dispositions), roles of individual persons in a social system, or roles of collectivities in a more microscopic social system - the actions of the units may be mutually supportive and hence beneficial to the functioning of the system, but also they may be mutually obstructive and conflictful. The fourth22 functional imperative for a social system is to 'maintain solidarity' in the relations between the units in the interests of effective functioning; this is the imperative of system integration.

General Secretary Inskip in his address to the October meeting attempted to solve the integrative problems of Leicester Branch, by bringing the "conflicting units" - the militants - back into the Union fold. That he succeeded - temporarily - was a demonstration of his debating powers. Inskip

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20 Parsons T. and Smelser N.J., _op. cit._, p. 18.
21 Basic social requirements which an actor has in a social situation e.g. the need to be loved and respected in a male role relationship.
22 In the introduction it was stated that a social system must solve 4 system problems, Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Latency (Pattern Maintenance and Tension Management) and fourthly, Integration.
placed the issues before them:

I say it is a question not only of 'Arbitration or no arbitration' but it is a question of 'Existence or non-existence' ... I asked the most prejudiced man in this room to ponder, to picture, to think of what I am going to tell them. If they will do that I have every confidence in believing the conclusion they come to will be that our Union may still flourish, and that the calamity which may by hasty decision, be brought upon the backs of my fellow-workers, may be staved off again and again ... I say, emphatically, the only safety valve whereby we can prevent disaster, at no far distant day, is by accepting arbitration ... I know there is a big feeling against arbitration in this meeting, but I ask those who are opposed to arbitration, as honest men, what do they propose in its stead? ... If they propose strikes, then I say they are no friends to you or to me ... It may be retorted to me - what have we won at Leicester? We have won one of the grandest things for the Union that could take place by arbitration, and that is indoor working. And we have won it at comparatively small cost, whereas it would have cost thousands of pounds to obtain it otherwise.

Inskip concluded:

It would be criminal on my part, as the most responsible officer of our Union, did I not tell you the greatest mistake you could make would be to reject arbitration tonight. It would be easy on my part to stand here and play the jingo, but when the time comes for the men to be out, I shall do my best to maintain peace ... Should, however, the time come for a struggle, I hope to be in the same position as now - shoulder to shoulder with my fellow workmen. It will not be in times of adversity or trouble that I shall leave you. I will prove, as I have done in the past, that I can remain true to those who remain true to me. If my past services, or your experience of me, have been such as to warrant your confidence, extend it a bit further; but this I say, and you must know tonight, if you reject this you reject the only possible means, in my opinion, to maintain your splendid organisation.

Inskip's call for integration was accepted, the meeting gave him full support. "The issue of 'Peace or War in the Shoe Trade' had been settled for the moment at least according to Inskip's values."²³

In 1892 Inskip succeeded in consolidating the policy of arbitration at National level. After a long dispute at Northampton,²⁴ a "National Conference"²⁵ of employers and workers was held at Leicester, under the Chairmanship of the Mayor of Leicester. During the course of the Conference a sub-committee (consisting of representatives of both sides) was established to prepare a report

²³Fox, op.cit., p. 174.
²⁴Primarily concerned with boy labour, hours of work etc.
²⁵Report of the proceedings of the National Conference, held at the Council Chambers, Town Hall, Leicester, August 10th-12th, 1892.
... "In order to prevent a strike or lockout and to secure the reference of all trade disputes to arbitration." The recommendations of this committee was to provide the structure of arbitration machinery (at local and national level) to 1895, and must be examined in some detail. In every Trade centre a permanent Board of Conciliation and Arbitration was to be established, consisting of equal numbers of employers and workmen, with one arbitrator to be elected by the employers, and one arbitrator to be elected by the workmen, "who, when appointed, shall elect a third Arbitrator or Umpire." Every question, or aspect of a question, which affected the relations of employers and workmen ... were in cases of disagreement submitted, for settlement, to a local Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. The procedure, in cases of dispute between employer and workmen was laid down as follows:

(a) "The matter should be at once reported to the Secretary of the Local Board ... who must at once call the investigators" (if any) appointed by each side.

(b) If there be no investigators, or being such they are unable to arrange terms, the Committee of Enquiry be forthwith advised of the dispute.

(c) In the event of the Committee of Enquiry being unable to settle the matter, it shall be referred to the Local Board of Conciliation and Arbitration to decide, or refer it to the Arbitrators or Umpire.

(d) ... That on no account shall there be any cessation of work, either at the instigation of Employer or Employers or workmen.

(e) ... That a Conference between the Executive Committee of the Federated Associations and a Committee of an equal number

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26 Monthly Report, August 1892, N.U.B.S.O.
27 Investigator - a man appointed by both sides, examined the nature of the dispute and, if possible, made a decision. If he made no decision, the dispute was referred to the Arbitration Board.
28 Federated Association of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers.
appointed by the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, be held at least once a year, and oftener if necessary, to consider such questions as may then be submitted to them with a reference to arbitration in case of disagreement.

(f) The Conference - or in case of differences - its Umpire shall decide that any question submitted to it is of either local or general application.

(g) That the first business of the Annual Meeting of the Conference shall be the appointment of an Umpire to act in matters arising at the Meeting, and during the ensuing year."

The first meeting of the newly constructed Leicester Arbitration Board took place on 5th January, 1892, and it set the tone for subsequent meetings, both sides coming to a deadlock over the appointment of a referee. The employers suggested that a referee should be kept in the background as much as possible, and that the Board should have every opportunity of coming to a mutual decision before referring to him. A referee should be independent of both sides, and be easily accessible. Woolley replying for the shoe operatives stated, "With respect to the appointment of a referee, he could scarcely agree with what the Chairman [Ward] had said as to having someone apart from the trade. He thought justice would be better given to both sides if someone with a practical and technical knowledge of the trade as it was at present was appointed, and he believed that a gentleman connected with the trade could be found in whom each side would have confidence." The operatives placed the names of Henry Wooding (Northampton), Lilley (London) and J. Butcher (Leicester) before the Board. The Arbitration Board was to meet on the

29 Sir Henry (later Lord) James, a former Conservative Attorney General.
31 The Chairmanship was held alternatively by the operatives and then the employers, annually.
13th January, 1892, 9th February, 1892, 1st March, 1892, 16th March, 1892, 24th May, 1892, 19th July, 1892, 28th September, 1892, and 9th November, 1892, that is on eight separate occasions and still the appointment of a referee remained unsolved. Arbitration machinery in Leicester had been re-established but would it work? Inskip's victory at Leicester in 1891 had established arbitration machinery as official Union policy at National and local levels, but almost before the machinery was installed, problems began to emerge, problems which eventually were to destroy that machinery. If 1891 - 1892 were the years of arbitration construction, 1892 - 1894 were the years of its misuse and decline. Inskip by his own personal ability had managed for a short period to bring the militant forces back within the union cause. He had stressed the need for the members to combine "together" in the interests of the organisation - he had attempted to solve the integrative problems of the organisation, by bringing the conflicting elements, the militants, back into the fold. But forces which opposed arbitration were beginning to gain momentum at Leicester, and were to completely undermine Inskip's position. Chapter Seven analyses this development.

32 Leicester Journal, January 15th, 1892 - manufacturers suggested referring appointment of referee to Mayor of Leicester Arbitration Board - the union representatives refused.
33 Leicester Journal, February 12th, 1892 - Edward Kell, a former Union President, then working as a foreman in a shoe factory, was accepted by both sides as a suitable referee. Kell refused to co-operate.
34 Leicester Journal, March 4th, 1892.
35 Leicester Journal, March 18th, 1892.
36 Leicester Journal, May 27th, 1892.
37 Leicester Journal, July 22nd, 1892 - George White of Norwich was accepted by both sides, as a suitable referee but he refused the offer.
38 Leicester Journal, September 30th, 1892.
39 Leicester Journal, November 11th, 1892.
CHAPTER 7
"MILITANT LEICESTER 1892 - 1894 - DEFEAT OF ARBITRATION"

By the summer of 1892 arbitration machinery at national and local levels had been constructed throughout the industry, less than three years later this machinery lay in ruins, and the National Union was fighting for its very existence. Leicester Branch's role during these years is of crucial importance, as it brought up, and debated issues which questioned the very nature of the organisation, and its long term aims. Arbitration became a symbol of the "liberal" policy of the General Secretary William Inskip and the General Council, whilst militant Leicester advocated policies which were the antithesis of arbitration, and attempted to re-interpret the role played by Trade Unions in the capitalist economic system.

"As a formal analytical point of reference," stated Talcott Parsons,¹ "primacy of orientation to the attainment of a specific goal is used as a defining characteristic of an organisation which distinguishes it from other types of social systems. The attainment of a goal is defined as a relation between a system (in this case the National Union) and the relevant parts of the external situation in which it acts or operates. This relation can be conceived as the maximization, relative to the relevant conditions such as costs and obstacles of some category of output of the system to objects or systems in the external situation." That is, Unions are mutual benefit organisations which are expected to serve the interests of their rank and file.² How this interest was to be served (the goal of the organisation) lay at the core of the conflict between Inskip and the Leicester militants, and in making such a decision the very nature of the organisation's role in the social system was in question.

²In this sense the output of the organisation is the protection and enhancement of the members' welfare in the economic system - rank and file are regarded as representing the household.
The Leicester militants were attempting to re-define the long-term goal of the organisation, and in doing so they would change the nature of the organisation itself. The organisation's national leaders believed that the interests of their members was best served, by establishing negotiating machinery in combination with the employers. In committing themselves to rule out nothing from the bargaining field, and to permit negotiations and arbitration at national and local level, the leadership hoped to strengthen the organisation and increase its authority over the membership. By accepting this policy as the legitimate procedure for the attainment of long term goals (increased welfare of members) the leadership committed the organisation to a defined role within the social system.\(^3\) Arbitration institutionalised the National Union within the context of the capitalist economic system, as to arbitrate or conciliate assumed by definition that the capitalist employers and shoe operatives had some common interest, which they could discuss to their mutual benefit. Such a belief in the existence of mutual interests realised through arbitration, were rejected by the Leicester militants. They regarded Trade Unions as vehicles in the process of social change, not as organisations operating within the capitalist system. The conflict in the National Union 1892-95 was not only a question of arbitration or no arbitration, but of the actual role of Trade Unions vis-à-vis the capitalist systems of the early 1890's. This conflict must now be examined in some detail.

The 1892 General Conference at Stafford\(^4\) set the arena for the first move by the Leicester militants. T.F. Richards\(^5\) placed the following resolution before the delegates:

That the contributions be raised one penny per week for the manufacturing and retaining of boots and shoes, to be controlled

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\(^3\)Social system in this case is British Society in the 1890's.

\(^4\)Report of the proceedings of the 10th General Conference N.U.B.S.O. Stafford, June 1892.

\(^5\)T.F. Richards was the unofficial leader of the Leicester militants, a committed socialist, he was a member of the Leicester Trades Council, founder member of the Leicester Branch of the I.L.P. Leicester City Councillor, Labour M.P. for Wolverhampton 1906-1910 and was General President of the N.U.B.S.O. 1910-1929.
by a Special Committee, pay no interest on capital, all surplus profit to be used for old age funds etc., but principally to extend the business, until able to employ the whole of our members.

The implications of Richard's resolution was that the capitalist economic system could be by-passed by the creation - out of union funds - of co-operative workshops controlled by the Union. Inskip opposed Richards suggesting that co-operation on that scale would be impractical, eventually a motion allowing Branches, "if they so wished, to levy a ld. per member for co-operative purposes," was adopted. Support for co-operative enterprises found fertile ground not only in Leicester; in July, 1892, Enderby, a Leicestershire County Branch of the N.U.B.S.O. reported:

The Chairman ... referred to the proposal made by Mr. Richards at the Stafford Conference, in reference to Industrial co-operation in the boot and shoe trade, and it was resolved that this meeting emphatically endorses the principle of national industrial co-operation in the boot and shoe trade, and does everything in its power to float the concern, and trusts that every Branch will take the matter up and induce the Council to devise some scheme whereby it might become a working power in our trade.

Attempts to put co-operative principles into practice had to wait until 1893, the last 3 months of 1892 were dominated in Leicester by acute depression in the shoe trade, a depression that was to aid the militants. At a Leicester Council meeting Inskip stated: "There are 1,000 in Leicester absolutely out of employment, and I can fairly say that there are over 5,000 who are not averaging 10s. per week in wages. How they live is a mystery. They do not live, they merely exist."

Unfortunately Inskip's proposed solution to the distress was not particularly inspiring, he thought that "a few operatives could be employed making stock" - making "a certain style of shoe that the manufacturer knew

6 Richards was supported by the Leicester militants Hipwell and M. Curly.
7 Enderby Branch Report - printed Monthly Report, June 1892, N.U.B.S.O.
8 Leicester Journal, December 2nd, 1892.
had a market - and others clearing snow - those who would be willing to do such work." It would appear that Inskip's solution to the Leicester unemployment problem depended upon the "whim" of the elements. Leicester Branch were more decisive, they launched a fund for the purpose of paying the contributions of the unemployed, thus keeping them entitled to benefit and sick and strike pay. At a Branch meeting on 7th December, it was decided to provide a direct grant to the unemployed. Inskip suggested £1,000, Richards supported by Woolley and M. Curly suggested £1,500, Inskip's suggestion was adopted but the depression left its mark upon the Leicester shoe hands. An Editorial in the Leicester Journal warned:

The Leicester unemployed are beginning to show signs of an intention to demonstrate unpleasantly. Unhappily a certain number of them have placed themselves under the influence of self-appointed leaders who teach the rankest socialism, and whose only object is to create agitation for the sake of what they can make of it.

The early months of 1893 saw an improvement in trade, and Leicester Branch felt sufficient confidence to carry into practice its co-operative principles. One thousand pounds was voted from Branch funds to be invested in a Society for the "Manufacture of Boots and Shoes." Additional capital was raised by issuing shares of the value of five shillings each and within a week of issue 200 had been taken. The February Branch Report stated:

Our rules are in the hands of the Registrar, and as soon as we get them a start will be made in what we hope may prove to be a successful experiment of Trade Unionists becoming their own employers, and we have little doubt of its success if our workers only realise the importance of the experiment and the vast reforms that may be brought about, when each man recognises that everything depends upon himself.

In March, the Leicester St. Crispin Co-operative Productive Society was launched, the enterprise was designed to:

9 Leicester Journal, December 9th 1892 - report Leicester Branch Meeting.
10 Leicester Journal, December 16th, 1892.
(1) Offset seasonal fluctuations by self employment.
(2) Absorb members thrown out of work by the introduction of 
machinery and 
(3) Enable the workers concerned to receive the full value of their 
labour.

The enterprise was a financial disaster. When in 1894 Clarkmead, a 
Leicester socialist, attempted to persuade the Union to commit central funds to 
co-operative enterprises, the motion was killed by the disclosure of one of the 
Committee members of the St. Crispin Society "that so far as the takings at the 
shop were concerned it had been a miserable failure." By 1895 the Society 
had disappeared nevertheless its importance lay not on its financial 
success, but by the fact that it had been established in the first place. It 
indicated a search for a new solution, the application of an untried idea, 
its authors wished to develop a productive organisation not defined in terms 
of the profit motive, but in the welfare it could provide for its members. They 
were looking outside the capitalist economic structure; herein lay the 
significance of the Leicester St. Crispin Society.

Co-operation was only one aspect of militant Leicester's struggle, they 
questioned the principle that the National Union should be solely orientated 
towards industrial affairs, and succeeded in involving the organisation in the 
political controversy of the period - a controversy which examined in detail 
the nature (and defects) of the existing social system and the role played by 
Trade Unions and other workers' organisations, within that system. At 
the 1892 General Conference the National Union made its first tentative 
steps towards incorporating political principles within the context of Trade

12 Report of the Proceedings, 11th General Conference, Edinburgh, 1894, 
N.U.B.S.O.
13 Ibid.
14 Boot and Shoe Trade Journal, July, 1895.
15 Local Trade Council, Working Mens' Clubs, Representatives of Workmen at 
Local Council, Board of Guardians School Board etc. as well as the newly 
emerging labour party I.L.P. and Social Democratic Federation.
16 Report of the proceedings of the 10th General Conference N.U.B.S.O. Stafford, 
June 1892.
Unions Activity. A resolution placed before the Conference on Labour Representation, called for the Union to "take steps to secure labour representation on all elective bodies independent of political parties."

General support was given to the resolution, but Inskip realised the implications of the last phrase "independent of political parties;" he addressed the floor of the hall:

... To run independent of political parties - what does it mean? To my knowledge there is not a labour member in Parliament today, but has obtained his seat by the assistance of a political party... I myself made my success... by Liberal Party aid, and I say we are justified in using both political parties, so long as we obtain the object we have in view - direct labour representation. 18

The outcome was a compromise, a resolution was adopted which provided for a Union Parliamentary Agent, "to be paid £300 per year 19 and to be elected independent of political parties," but the person elected as Parliamentary Agent was William Inskip. Nevertheless the delegates, even though Inskip was elected, were looking to new political ideas, ideas outside the reference of the Liberal and Conservative parties.

In February 1893, Inskip was adopted as prospective Parliamentary candidate for Northampton. His political programme could be described as orthodox liberal, 20 and Bland, a Northampton socialist, in his reply to Inskip, voiced the opinion of what was to become a growing number of shoe hands.

Mr. Bland thought that if Mr. Inskip were put before an intelligent constituency like Northampton and stuck to what he had put before them that evening, he would be laughed at. There was scarcely an old whig in the House of Commons that would not agree to such a programme as Mr. Inskip's. It was nothing only political clap trap. 21

17 Inskip has been elected Liberal Councillor for St. Margaret's Ward, Leicester, in 1890.
18 Report of the proceedings of the 10th General Conference N.U.B.S.O., Stafford, June 1892.
19 The Agent was paid out of Union funds, and it was decided that during the Parliamentary recess, the agent (M.P.) would work as a Union Organiser.
20 Inskip advocated universal suffrage, increased factory inspection, greater number of workers' representatives in the House of Commons, an "Employers Liability Bill."
Bland's point suggests Fox\textsuperscript{22} "were well taken." "Inskip now became convinced either by himself or his advisers that a majority support by the moderates\textsuperscript{23} which remained, as it probably would, tacit and unorganised was useless against a minority opposition which was articulate and energetic." In February 1894 at a meeting of the Northampton No. 1 and 2 Branches\textsuperscript{24} he announced some important additions to his programme, nationalisation of land, mines, quarries, telephones, etc., abolition of all taxes on the necessities of life, provision of a pension by the State for old age and infirmities, free and unsectarian education, and direct employment by the state and municipal authorities whenever practicable. These concessions by Inskip to the militants, drew the following response from J. Smith, a Northampton socialist:

> That this meeting, whilst recognising the importance of labour representation, declines to accept Mr. Inskip as a candidate, but pledges itself to support a genuine labour candidate if put forward pledged to the resolution passed at the Belfast Congress\textsuperscript{25} in favour of the collective ownership of the means of production.

Smith's resolution was defeated, and a counter motion by E.L. Poulton\textsuperscript{26} expressing confidence in Inskip adopted, "but a number of those present refrained from voting." The movement towards independent working class candidates with a broadly socialist programme was beginning to gain ground throughout the trade union movement, the boot operatives were not to prove an exception.

At the 1894 Union Conference,\textsuperscript{27} the militants won a decisive victory. At first it appeared that the moderate element might win the day, and keep the Union on its orthodox path. Stanton, a Council Member, brought up the question, of the Parliamentary Agent acting "independent of political parties." The Northampton Constituency had two seats, they could only get Inskip into one of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22}Fox, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 195.
  \item \textsuperscript{23}Moderates - those supporting close associations with liberal party principles.
  \item \textsuperscript{24}\textit{Monthly Report}, February 1894, N.U.B.G.O.
  \item \textsuperscript{25}T.U.C. Belfast Congress, 1893.
  \item \textsuperscript{26}Northampton moderate who was to become General Secretary in 1909.
  \item \textsuperscript{27}\textit{Report of proceedings, 11th General Conference}, Edinburgh, 1894.
\end{itemize}
them, if he received liberal support, but in return for such support the Union would have to guarantee aid to the Liberal candidate, this they were precluded from giving by the Stafford Conference resolution on independence. Richards strongly defended independence:

He could not himself support the candidate of Liberal Associations. If a man was opposed to him as a Trades Unionist he would not work hand in hand with him. That very class of people were their enemies. Those who opposed them industrially would oppose them politically, and the persons who tried to crush the Trades Unionist in the Dock Strikes and similar events would do the same thing in Parliamentary matters. It was to the advantage of the working class to knit themselves together ... They must work out their own salvation, and not truckle and go cap in hand to any of them, but try to bring the working classes up to their meaning of independence. 28

The vote went against Richards, and the Stafford resolution was rescinded.

The only restriction placed upon the Parliamentary agent was that he should be committed to any specific Conference instructions. A committee consisting of Frank (London), Poulton (Northampton), Richards and Woolley (Leicester) and Bradley (Kettering) was appointed to draw up a programme. Richards now proposed "an object which they, the workers, had at heart" - "Nationalisation of the land, and the implements of production and distribution":

As a democrat he believed these things should be held in common by all, and not by the privileged classes to the detriment of the many. This subject was one they had inserted at their May Day resolution at Leicester, and was unanimously carried. It would give what they were all driving for - that was, in his own estimation the absolute remedy for poverty. 29

The resolution was carried unanimously.

For Inskip worse was to come. When Woolley introduced the political programme drawn up by the Committee he announced they had taken Inskip's programme as a basis, but they "had made a few alterations and additions.

The decisive addition for Inskip was "Nationalisation not only of land, mines, quarries, telephones etc. but of all means of production and distribution."

29. Ibid.
Richards' resolution on nationalisation now became the official policy of the Parliamentary Agent. This was too much for Inskip and in the May Monthly Report he announced his resignation as Parliamentary Candidate.

At the recent Edinburgh Conference, the Stafford resolution was rescinded, but another has been substituted which alters my position entirely. I refer to the decision to make nationalisation of the land and Implements of Production and their distribution an object of the Union. . . when the Committee was appointed to draft a Parliamentary programme (to which the agent must pledge himself) and they inserted 'Collective Ownership of the Means of Production and its Distribution,' then I felt I could not agree to do so and raised my protest. . .

I therefore ask you most respectfully to permit me to appeal to my many supporters in Northampton to release me from my pledge to stand as their Candidate at the forthcoming election. . . I feel I should be able to use more influence and do more real good to the Union and its members by remaining outside the house, than by placing myself at the mercy of any hare-brained Member who choose to bring in a Bill of Confiscation.

The militants had tasted victory, and at Leicester the attack upon the moderates, represented by Inskip, was pressed home with increasing vigour. In August, 1894, Picton, the Liberal M.P. for Leicester resigned, and a bye-election became necessary. The Leicester Trades Council, a body in which the shoe operatives, especially Richards were prominent, requested Burgess, a Manchester socialist to stand as the Independent Labour candidate for Leicester - his programme being based on the principles laid down by the shoe operatives at the Edinburgh Conference. On 27th August the nomination papers of the Candidates were received at Leicester Town Hall. Burgess was nominated by Israel Bert, Shoe Hand, J. Cobely, shoe laster, B. Halliday, shoe finisher, William Roper, shoe rivetter and T.F. Richards, boot laster. Broadhurst, the Liberal candidate, was also nominated by representatives of the shoe operatives, namely Wm. Inskip and R. Cort. The political division was brought

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30 Monthly Report, May 1894, N.U.B.S.O.
32 Leicester Journal, August 17th, 1894.
33 Leicester Journal, August 31st, 1894.
34 Burgess was closely associated with the Leicester shoe operatives, his campaign had as its H.Q. the offices of Leicester No. 1 Branch.
35 It is interesting to note that Broadhurst was also nominated by Griffin Ward, Chairman of the Leicester Employers' Federation.
into the open. On 12th September, 1894 a Branch of the Independent Labour Party was established at Leicester, T.F. Richards, Beck and Woolley acting as Vice-Presidents, the previous day a special meeting of the Leicester Trades Council severely censured Inskip and Cort for supporting Broadhurst in the Leicester bye-election. A copy of the following resolution was sent to the two offenders:

That, in the opinion of this Council, Mr. Burgess' chances of being returned to Parliament as Labour member for Leicester was considerably hindered by the action of Messrs. Inskip and Cort and seeing that this Council had declared itself favourable to Mr. Burgess and also to independent action whenever a favourable opportunity occurred we feel bound to condemn these gentlemen for their hostility to the Labour Candidate.

In November Inskip resigned his aldermanic seat on the Leicester City Council, in a letter to the Mayor he gave the following reasons for this retirement:

I have given offence in many quarters as to my political action of late, and whilst nobody has had the courage to come and openly charge me with anything derogatory, yet there is no denying the fact that there are rumours, absolutely and utterly unfounded, circulating about, which it shall be my study to trace to their origin.

In 1892 Inskip was the Parliamentary agent of the National Union, a Leicester Alderman, and committed to Liberal principles, two years later he had resigned from both posts, and liberal principles within the unions had

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36 Although Burgess came bottom of the poll, the London Standard observed "The amount of support given to the independent champion of labour must be looked upon as the most significant feature of this election."

37 Leicester Journal, September 14th, 1894.

38 The objects of the Party were to be "The nationalisation of the whole of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The Party shall devote itself to securing the election of members to all representative bodies for the purpose of realising the programme of the party. No members of any organisation connected with the Liberal, Liberal Unionist or Conservative parties shall be eligible for membership in this party."


40 At the same meeting Richards called for closer co-operation between the I.L.P. and the Leicester Trades Council and 6 delegates from the Council were appointed to attend the next I.L.P. meeting.

41 Leicester Journal, November 16th, 1894.

42 Inskip also gave pressure of work as an additional reason for his resignation.
been supplanted by the socialism of the Leicester militants. The Union had taken the important step away from the social and political attitudes of the mid-Victorian organised working class. The implications of these new beliefs, introduced by the socialists, must now be examined in relation to the organisation's industrial policy.

The pressures shaping the attitudes of the official leaders (Inskip and the General Council) were vastly different from those affecting the attitudes of the rank and file. National arbitration had meant the institutionalisation of decision making procedures in specialised machinery which regarded strike action as a last resort, on the other hand, the philosophy of socialism incorporated by the Leicester shoe operatives, called for greater militancy in industrial affairs. The natural outcome of these beliefs, was the adoption by the militant element, of anti-arbitration policy. "By arbitration was meant the whole machinery of negotiations and dispute settlement embodied in the Rules for the Prevention of Strikes and Lockouts, and operated through the Local Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration. For the ... workers concerned, referring the dispute to the Board (instead of striking) meant putting the dispute to arbitration whether it went before the arbitrators or not. Those who opposed arbitration were really demanding that the Union should no longer participate in the Local Boards, but should use strike action to settle these minor disputes whenever the employer refused to give way." The socialists adopted this policy in its extreme form, and regarded the strike, as an ideal weapon in dealing with the class enemy. At a delegate meeting at Leicester in 1893 Richards admitted:

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43 As stated in Chapter 3, Arbitration rules and procedure had been laid down for the whole industry at Local and National level and a complete procedure was adopted in consequence of a dispute.

44 Drawn up by the N.U.B.S.O. and the Employers Federation at the First National Conference 1892.

45 Fox, op. cit., p. 175.

46 Report of the proceedings, Special Delegate Meeting, Leicester, April 17th, 1893.
He was not a lover of arbitration, because, as he contended, it had never been fairly carried out in Leicester... There were manufacturers in Leicester who deserved fighting, men who had defied the Boards of Arbitration on several occasions... The members of the Leicester Arbitration Board, on the employers' side, were simply unpredictable, and they had one gentleman on the Board who boasted of never having held his hand up in favour of the men... He honestly believed that if the question of Arbitration was fairly put before the Leicester men, then down would go Arbitration.

Thus the new doctrine of socialism was associated with a policy of anti-arbitration, but it must be remembered that socialist beliefs were only held by a minority of members. This minority was highly vocal, and drew support from many members who were not opposed to arbitration in principle, but whose attitudes - towards their job, Union policy etc. - were being influenced by the rapid process of technical change which occurred in the early 1890's. The introduction of machinery, on a large scale - becoming an economic proposition following the adoption of indoor working at Leicester and London - created worker grievances, which led large numbers of shoe hands to give, at least tacit support, to the militants.

In March, 1892 the General Council warned:

With regard to the wholesale introductions of machinery, now being accomplished, these must be closely watched, so that our members may be induced to work in conjunction therewith, otherwise we shall find our membership rapidly decreases, and a compact body of men or youths working against our interests.

Lasting and finishing machinery was now beginning to come into the major shoe centres, as early as 1891. Day, the editor of a leading trade journal declared:

... the lesson of perfect organisation and perfected machinery must be taken seriously to heart. For years labour has been so cheap and has been content to work under such conditions as to render it a matter of small importance as to the mechanical assistance with which it should be furnished... Men have been cheaper than machines. Today... men are getting dear and machines are getting cheap.

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47 Majority of rank and file members distinguished for their apathy, this allows a small aggressive minority to easily seize control of a Branch.
48 Period is often termed the American Invasion.
49 Leicester and London were the two largest Branches in the Union, in 1893 Northampton, 3rd largest Branch, gained indoor working.
50 Monthly Report, March 1892, N.U.B.S.O.
51 Shoe and Leather Record, March 27th, 1891.
This fact was not lost to the manufacturers. In January 1893 the General Council admitted that "the introduction of machinery is displacing a large amount of labour."\(^{52}\) In May of the same year Leicester Branch reported, "With respect of lasting machines, they are being introduced as fast as they can be brought to suit local conditions, all of which goes to show that trade will be carried on under much different circumstances in the future, than it has been in the past."\(^{53}\) Job security, an issue which affected the shoe operative's social and economic standing in the community was too "popular" a cause for the militants to neglect and they seized upon it readily. "In Leicester," states Fox,\(^{54}\) "particularly the local Socialist Branch Leaders became identified with a hostility towards machinery which was markedly more single-minded and unequivocal than that displayed by Inskip and the General Council." In the major centres, under the guidance of local branch leaders, there began to develop a policy of output restriction, at Leicester it became an organised policy. As early as 1892 Day warned:

> There exists among workmen a tacit understanding that only so much work shall be done within a certain time, and no matter what machines are introduced, the men conspire to prevent any saving being effected by their aid... The Unions are engaged in a gigantic conspiracy to hinder and retard the development of labour-saving appliances in this country.\(^{55}\)

At a Leicester Arbitration Board meeting in 1893 T.F. Richards admitted to Ward (Chairman, Employers' Federation) that the Branch was operating a policy of output restriction.\(^{56}\)

As the industry moved into 1894 Inskip's problems had increased, the socialists among the Leicester Branch were dominating the scene, and attempting

\(^{52}\)Monthly Report, January 1893, N.U.B.S.O.

\(^{53}\)Leicester Branch Report - Monthly Report, May 1893, N.U.B.S.O.

\(^{54}\)Fox, op.cit., p. 207.

\(^{55}\)Shoe and Leather Record, February 19th 1892.

\(^{56}\)Shoe and Leather Record, March 31st 1893: Fox describes the policy as such: "The mode of payment being... day wages, branch committees calculated what output the prevailing day wage represented in terms of the old hand work piece rates. They then instructed their members on the machines to produce that much output and no more. The effect, was of course, to completely nullify all the economic advantages of the machine to the employers. Labour costs per pair remained the same instead of being sharply reduced, by the machinery. Members who consistently exceeded the output quota were summoned before Branch officials and find some varying between 2s.6d and 20s."
to wrest the initiative from the official decision makers. Inskip himself, realised that the Leicester Socialists had released forces which were influencing the nature of the organisation, and his attitude "towards the manufacturers became more and more truculent." In places where local feelings erupted into a strike he sometimes supported the strikes even when their action was flatly in defiance of the Rules for the prevention of Strikes and Lockouts. In other cases, where he considered there was a prima facie justification for a strike, he waged battle with a belligerence that seemed disproportionate to the importance of the issue. 57 At the 1894 Union Conference 58 Inskip proposed a "fighting fund" with a target of £15,000 to be raised as a reserve against possible conflict with the employers. 59 The action and demands of the Leicester militants had permeated down through the rank and file of the organisation, they called for new policies, a new type of organisation, and Inskip, although completely opposed to these suggestions, was forced to adopt a more aggressive attitude towards the employers, if he was to remain at the head of the organisation. Early in 1894 the realities of the situation were made clear by a further attempt on the part of Leicester Branch leadership to throw off arbitration:

At Leicester, a vote was carried by 358 to 325 asking us to take a vote of the members of the Union, on the advisability of dispensing with Arbitration. From the same it will be seen, firstly, that a . . . small number of votes were recorded, secondly, that the majority was most insignificant; thirdly, the resolution does not say, WHAT THEY WOULD SUBSTITUTE FOR ARBITRATION. Under these circumstances and in view of the nearness of the Conference, we have decided not to accede to the request. 61

The request was turned down, but that it was made in the first place

57 Fox, op. cit., p. 209.
59 Paradoxically, the militants opposed the fighting funds, pointing out that the rank and file would not appreciate a demand for more union payments (dues) - perhaps the militants feared a loss of support from the rank and file if their policies were associated with increased payments?
60 Considering the great deal of membership apathy, nearly 700 votes is quite an achievement, indicating a certain interest.
61 Monthly Report, March 1894, N.U.B.S.O.
indicated that it was only a matter of time before a clash with the employers occurred. The development which convinced a sufficient number of manufacturers that committing themselves to arbitration on all issues had failed and must now be abandoned, was the seizing of initiative by the Leicester No. 1 Branch in the matter of a piece work statement for machinery. The Branch leadership adopted a policy of piece work statements designed to nullify the economic advantage of machinery for the employers. Richards was the driving force and the method adopted according to Fox:

Was to take over the old piece work statement of hand lasting and finishing and merely deduct from each price a percentage exactly equivalent to the interest on the cost of the new machinery. On such a basis the employer stood to gain nothing from its introduction.62

This policy was motivated from socialist principles - the belief that the shoe worker should receive the whole advantage of any improvement in productive techniques - and as an employment protecting mechanism. "Power and initiative seemed to be slipping away from Inskip and the Council and effective leadership passing into the hands of the socialist leaders of the Leicester No. 1 Branch."63

When the General Council failed to attack strongly the Leicester piece work statement, many manufacturers considered that the Union moderates had lost control of the organisation, and that a policy of appeasement and concessions was unworkable. The rapid introduction of American machinery (and imports of shoes) meant that any attempt to restrict the economic gains from machinery, would undermine the industry itself. "Militant Union Leadership in Leicester, the most important centre of the industry, was forcing the issue on a principle of the utmost importance for the manufacturers, and the one which most closely affected all the influential members of the Federation Executive. Collision seemed inevitable; the only point in doubt appeared to be just how and when it would occur."64

62 Fox, op.cit., p. 213.
63 Ibid., p. 214.
64 Ibid., p. 214.
Orientation to the attainment of specific goals is used by Parsons as the defining characteristic of an organisation, which distinguishes it from other types of social systems. It was just this "orientation to the attainment of specific goals," that underwent dramatic change in the shoe makers' organisation 1892-1894. The adoption of socialist principles by the largest branch in the organisations - Leicester - at a period when the industry was experiencing rapid technical change, stimulated argument and controversy within the Union, controversy that was to influence its role vis-à-vis the capitalist economic system. The conception of a Trade Union advocated by the official leadership was symbolised in the national and local arbitration machinery which Inskip strove to develop in the early 1890's. He believed that the interest of the organisations' rank and file would be enhanced by a policy of conciliation and negotiation with the employers. The Leicester socialists - motivated by the new ideas concerning society, and by the rapid technical changes occurring within the industry - rejected the concept of mutual interest between employers and workers institutionalised in arbitration machinery, and interpreted the role of the organisation as a vehicle in the process of social change, involved not only in industrial affairs, but also in a political and social context. Such an interpretation of Trade Union action was bound to result in a clash with the employers, Ward, the Chairman of the Employers' Federation at Leicester was under no illusion as to the development occurring within the organisation. In November, 1894, he wrote to Inskip:

For some time past, the operations of our General Conference and Local Arbitration Boards, as you must be aware have not been satisfactory. Instead of remaining Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration, they have been largely used as a vehicle for the general abuse of manufacturers, and the introduction of propositions based upon extreme Socialist doctrines, encroaching upon the individual rights of manufacturers.

The clash came in 1895; its course and aftermath will be developed in the next Chapter.

65 See Parsons, Structure and Process in Modern Society, p. 22.
66 Should be noted that in the early 1890's (1890-1892), Inskip had full support from the Employers' Federation in establishing arbitration machinery.
67 Correspondence between Ward and Inskip, November 7th, 1894 - printed in Monthly Report, November, 1894, N.U.B.S.O.
CHAPTER 8
"THE GENERAL LOCKOUT 1895 AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE R.U.B.S.O."

In the autumn of 1894 the Employers' Federation of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers submitted seven proposals before the National Union which were to form the basis of negotiation between the two sides. In January, 1895 the Union rejected these proposals and by March of the same year the industry was involved in a General Lockout, with approximately 46,000 operatives idle. While the previous chapter analysed the long term factors involved in the conflict, this chapter examines the immediate events which furnished the lock-out, and the implications of the dispute for the National Union during the remaining years of the nineties.

The activities of the Leicester militants during the early 1890's had set the organisation on a collision path with the employers, and it was the employers who made the first positive act. In November, 1894 the Employers' Federation submitted the following proposition before the National Union, as a condition for the continuance of the Local Boards of Arbitration and the National Conference:

"1. That there shall be no advance or reduction of the present minimum rate of Wages or Piece work statement, or alterations of the hours of labour applying to a town or district within two years of the 31st December, 1894, or within two years of the date of any subsequent award.

2. That the present is not an opportune time for the introduction of piece work in connection with lasting and finishing machinery.

3. That every employer is entitled (a) to the fullest control over the management of his factory and to make such regulations as he deems necessary for time-keeping and good order; (b) to pay either the recognised price or day rates of wages; (c) to introduce machinery at any time without notice.

The seven proposals were termed by the operatives as the "Seven Commandments."
4. That there shall be no interference with the output either from Machine or Hand-labour by the Union or its officials, and instructions shall not be given by them to restrict the amount of work to be performed by workmen in connection therewith.

5. That every Employer is entitled to have his work, or any part of it, made in any town or place, provided he pays (a) the recognised rate of wages in such town or place, or, if no rate of wages has been fixed, then (b) such wages as may be fixed by mutual arrangement with his work people.

6. That each Employer has the sole right to determine what workmen he shall employ.

7. That the statement of the Secretary of an Association, or of a Branch of the Union shall be accepted on either side as proof of Membership for Federation purposes.2

The militancy of the Leicester operatives had been countered by the aggression of the Employers' Federation, but this was an inopportune time for the National Union to act; Autumn was a period of slack trade, and it was not until January, 1895, that the organisation denounced the proposals as..."of tyrannical deposition."3 With the approach of Spring, trade improved, and in late February, 1895, Inskip placed the following motion before the Leicester Arbitration Board.

That this Board decides that all work cut in Leicester shall be made and finished in Leicester, and paid for in accordance with the prices and conditions at present in operation in Leicester.

Ward, the Chairman of the employers answered:

We say distinctly that this is one of a number of questions that are being mooted on the workmen's side that have necessitated the manufacturers, in order to maintain control over their own

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2 Monthly Report, November, 1894, N.U.B.S.O.

3 Monthly Report, January, 1895, N.U.B.S.O.
business, by which they have to stand or fall, to take a resolution that they will not be compelled to submit these questions that interfere with the management of their business to arbitration, either to this Board or to an Umpire, because they are personal matters, which tend very much as to whether a manufacturer will make a profit or a loss. We say it is contrary to the best interests of the country, and contrary to our own personal rights, and we are determined that we will not have questions which interfere with the regulations of our business discussed here.  

The employers backed their determination by steadfastly refusing to discuss the motion, and the Leicester Board of Arbitration was disbanded. The Union had no course but to strike and notices were served on six firms in Leicester and three in Northampton; on 6th March, 1895, the Federation countered the strike by imposing a general lockout - the conflict had begun. "The way in which the matter came about," suggests Brunner, "shows Leicester the headquarters of the Union, acting as the most influential district at that time."  

Approximately 46,000 operatives were affected in Leicester, Leicestershire, Northampton, London, Bristol and Kingswood and Leeds. The counties not affiliated to the Federation - Scotland, Stafford, Stone, Norwich and Hinckley were not involved. The persistent refusal of the Employers to agree to arbitration prolonged the conflict, and it was not until the intervention of Sir Courtenay Boyle, Permanent Secretary of the Board of Trade that the two sides came to an agreement - the "Terms of Settlement."  

The Terms of Settlement stated that, "a piece work Statement or Statements for lasting and finishing machine, and those working in connection therewith, are desirable." Each manufacturer was given the option... "of adopting piece work or continuing day work, it being understood that the whole of the operatives working on any one process shall be put on one or the other system..." One vital clause, suggests Fox, attempted to lay down the basis of the piece work statements:

4Leicester Daily Post, March 1st, 1895 - at the same time as the Leicester proposals, Northampton demanded a minimum wage for clickers and pressmen.


6At the meeting at the Board of Trade the employers and the workers represented sat in different rooms; Sir Courtenay had to commute between the two sides.

7"Terms of Settlement" - printed Monthly Report, May, 1895, N.U.B.S.O.
"The Federation had been determined to destroy the Leicester No. 1. . . principle of maintaining the cost of production by machining on a par with the cost of hand methods."\(^8\) This determination was embodied in the Terms of settlement by means of one of those vague indeterminate phrases which so often figure in such settlements, and which have only symbolic importance for those in the industry and not even that for outside observers. Wages for the various piece operations were to be based upon "the actual capacity of an average workman." Meaningless, though this phrase appears, the Union leaders knew, just as the Federation Leaders wished them to know that the Richards principle had been killed by the lock out."\(^9\) A joint committee was established to determine "the principle and methods of arrangements and classification"\(^10\) on which statements were to be based, with an umpire deciding on unresolved issues. The Local Boards of Arbitration were reconstructed with, "full powers to settle all questions submitted to them concerning wages, hours of labour, and the condition of the employment of all classes of workpeople represented therein within their districts . . .", but there was to be no bargaining on the following issues:

(a) "No board shall require the employer to employ any particular workman." This meant that the employers refused to accept victimization grievances as negotiation issues.

(b) "No board shall claim jurisdiction over the conditions and terms of employment of workpeople outside its district, providing that no actual work shall be sent out of the districts which has been subject to award in that district." This was a reference to the "county" work issue, thus with the exception of the "work" being the subject of an award by the Board, the employers were free to send work away to a cheap labour district without being challenged by the Union representatives on the Board.

\(^8\) Principle work of T.F. Richards.
\(^10\) "Terms of Settlement"
(c) "No board shall interfere with the right of an employer to make reasonable regulations for time-keeping and the preservation of order in his factory or workshops."

(d) "No board shall put restriction on the introduction of machinery or the output therefrom, or on the adoption of day or piece work wages by an employer in cases in which both systems have been sanctioned . . .\(^{11}\)

Referring to the Terms of Settlement the General Council stated:

**THE RESULTS HAVE JUSTIFIED OUR FIGHT.** In the first place it will be observed that the seven proposals (or commandments) sought to be imposed have been withdrawn. This in itself shows A VICTORY FOR THE CAUSE OF TRADES UNIONISM for had these proposals been permitted it would have been impossible to exercise personal liberty or the liberty of concerted action by combination.\(^{12}\)

The reaction of the Leicester rank and file was not so enthusiastic, at a mass meeting of Leicester operatives T.F. Richards, the militant leader stated:

In regard to these resolutions, he certainly said that five and a half out of the employers' seven resolutions had been obtained. The remainder - the first resolution and part of the second - were referred to arbitration. Some people had said they had won, but he could not see what they had won . . . He could not say that the Terms were satisfactory and he felt that it was his duty to tell them so . . .\(^{13}\)

The meeting ended in disruption, Stanton, a Council member, was shouted down, and no vote was taken on the resolutions before the meeting. The employers had considerably reduced the Union's area of control in the running of the industry and resolution five defining the functions of local boards "meant that before a local board could discuss, say, a particular workers' entitlement to the minimum wage . . . or indeed, any innovation whatever in terms of and condition of employment, the worker or workers affected had to make individual applications for the desired change . . . A dispute had to

\(^{11}\)"Terms of Settlement."

\(^{12}\)Monthly Report, May, 1895, N.U.B.S.O.

\(^{13}\)Leicester Daily Post, April 23rd, 1895. T.F. Richards' position was somewhat undermined, as a week before he had voted in support of the Council's acceptance of the Terms of Settlement.
originate at factory level for it to be within the proper jurisdiction of the Board. In June, 1895, an unofficial strike at a Leicester firm brought the following comment from Day: "The spirit of rebellion against constituted authority is still rife among Leicester shoehands, the lesson of the big lockout notwithstanding." But outside the anti-arbitration areas of Leicester and London, the rank and file attitude was that the outcome might have been much worse, and that Inskip had done well in getting the "two year standstill" lifted. The militantes had always been a small (but highly vocal) minority within the organisation, and the lockout had illustrated that industrial conflict could produce a reversal in operative working conditions. Furthermore, the dispute had severely strained the organisation's financial resources, as well as the personal savings (if any) of the individual worker.

**TABLE 20. TRADE DEPARTMENT INCOME EXPENDITURE 1894-1895**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCOME</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE</th>
<th>TOTAL FUND</th>
<th>TOTAL FUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Half yr. end.</td>
<td>Half yr. end. 1895</td>
<td>Half yr. end.</td>
<td>Half yr. end. Dec. 31st 1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30th 1895</td>
<td>£32,110.16. 5.</td>
<td>£59,628. 3. 1.</td>
<td>£2,933.15. 9d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total funds in hand of the Trade Department decrease by £27,717. 6. 8. between December 31st, 1894 and June 30th, 1895. In June, 1895, the financial structure of the organisation suffered a further setback, during the General Lockout a levy of 6 pence per member was imposed, and the Council wishing to extend the period of the levy, placed the issue before the body of the Union, the result:

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14 Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 233. Fox notes in many cases where operatives made an application he was often invited into the "office" where the employer might bully him with threats of dismissal.

15 Shoe and Leather Record, July 5th, 1895.

16 Compiled from Monthly Report, July 1895, N.U.B.S.O.

17 At the half year ending 30th June, 1895 - balance in the sick fund was £7,678. 6. 6.
In favour of the continuance of the levy 3,397
Against 3,506
Majority against 111

These figures indicated appalling apathy, only 6,905 voted out of a total financial membership of 33,000, the majority of members were not interested in the financial security of the Union. The Lockout had taken the steam and fire from the militants' attack, the docile rank and file were more interested in gaining some financial security (no matter how small) rather than renewing the contest. But the lockout had other important consequences. The Leicester militants had attempted to re-interpret the role of the organisation in the capitalist economic system, it was to act as a mechanism of change, attack the attitudes and citadels of economic power, and help in the ushering of a new social order. The Lockout and its aftermath, "The Terms of Settlement," firmly institutionalised the Union within the context of the existing economic system. The settlement defined strict limits of Trade Union activity within the industry, gave greater rigidity to Arbitration Boards, and set out explicit procedures to be followed in the event of a dispute. The Settlement even empowered the Union (and the Federation) to deposit a sum of £1,000 in a trust fund, which was to be forfeited if the dispute procedure was broken. A pattern of industrial relations had been forged, a pattern which was to serve the industry, apart from minor revisions, well into the twentieth century. The power of the Employers' Federation, and the limiting effects of the "settlement" (on Trade Union activity) was demonstrated (in Leicester) by a deadlock on the Leicester Arbitration Board.

... brought about by a difference of opinion as to what title the Board should take, whether it should follow the title which heads the statements of wages, and which is in five instances referred to in the Terms of Settlement and twice in the revised rules, which would mean, 'Leicester and Districts,' or whether it should simply read 'The Leicester Board of Arbitration' thus confining the area over which the Board would have jurisdiction to the town of Leicester. The real reason we [N.U.E.S.O.] had in requiring it to be 'Leicester and District' was the fact that in a number of instances we

192,000 of these votes were from Leicester.
could name an employer at Leicester, under the jurisdiction of the Board, has gone to the Board with uppers for adjudication, and has had a verdict given against him, but no sooner has that particular quantity of work been made, than they have sent the bulk of it into the country districts, thus evading paying the proper wage, and robbing the workmen in the town of that quantity of work, which otherwise they would have had. Consequently it places the operatives at a double disadvantage.

For a long time the employers refused, not only to submit the issue before an umpire, but even to discuss the matter, subsequently the Board remained in abeyance for a considerable period of 1896, eventually the two sides met and it was decided to submit to Lord James the question, for his decision.

He found:

First, in respect of the rules for the Leicester Board I was asked by Mr. Lennard and Mr. Inskip to determine the form of Rule 1. I determine that it shall be as follows: The Board shall be named the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration for Leicester.

The organisation at Leicester suffered a considerable reversal, a direct attack upon an employer, if not provoking retaliation, might mean the transference of the work to the country districts and thus placing the Leicester operatives on the streets.

A further consequence of the pattern of industrial relations produced by the "Settlement" was that the organisation was considerably weakened in face of a sharp rise in the pace of mechanisation. Fox writes, "The Great Lockout of 1895 . . . Besides crippling the Union financially . . . reduced the scope of collective bargaining in ways which gave employers a freer hand in such matters as introducing machinery, substituting young labour for old, and enforcing closer supervision to get higher output for machine. Union challenge on these
matters now carried the threat of massive retaliation by the Federation. Rather than act as agents of the social revolution the Leicester militants were forced to direct their attention towards the threat of machinery, (to the rank and file), a threat which gathered momentum during the late 1890's. In December, 1895, the General Council referred to... "the marvellous increase which had taken place in machinery, put down for the purpose of superseding it no one can doubt." A year later Leicester Branch reported, "Manufacturers are still adding to their plants of machinery, both finishing and lasting, with the result that we have more of our members out of work at present than at the end of 1896." Action was required, but the organisation's room for manoeuvre in the face of adaptive changes - changes in the organisation's relationship vis-à-vis its environment induced by technical change - was limited by the "Terms of Settlement," the direct militancy of the Leicester socialists would only lead to disaster, a more subtle approach was required. Before a meeting of Leicester operatives Inskip outlined the organisation's policy towards machinery:

... let me call your attention ... to the most important fact that we have had to deal with during the last few years, and one that has caused more anxiety, more thought, and one which more care has been bestowed than on anything else, and that is the question of machinery. Truly, this has been the 'bogey man' and continued strife has been the order of the day where machinery has been introduced, but we have in all instances advised our men not to oppose machinery, but to be themselves the first to take situations on the same, and seek to make machinery advantageous alike to the workmen as well as the employer. We have been repeatedly charged with restricting the output of the same but we could with great truth retort and say the employers have been repeatedly charged with forcing the pace, making the lives of the men miserable in the extreme ... if the employers want £2 worth of work doing, let them pay a man who is competent to do it £2, and not offer him the magnificent sum of 28s. as is frequently the case. When this is done we openly state we advise the men to do 28s. worth of work for 28s. and £2 worth of work for £2. So much for the restriction of the output.

26 Fox, op.cit., p. 246.
27 Monthly Report, December 1895, N.U.B.S.O.
29 Inskip did not speak at the meeting due to illness, his speech was read by Leicester No. 1 Secretary Richard Cort.
30 Report of Mass Meeting, Leicester Shoe Operatives, October 27th, 1897.
Output restriction was adopted in Leicester, in the Spring of 1899, Leicester Branch reported:

The employers made a big cry about restricting the output from machinery, but by their action in preventing men from utilising their full earning powers and getting better wages, they have shown themselves in their true position, viz. of screwing every bit of labour out of the workmen, and are not prepared to pay for it, should the men refuse they are discharged by the firm, and prevented from getting work elsewhere by use of the character note.31

The organisation at Leicester justified its policy of output restriction by suggesting that the employers, by underpaying their men could not expect in return the required work rate; it was not the lack of production but the lack of adequate wages that was creating the problem. The adoption of output restrictions and supplementary policies was of extreme importance at Leicester; according to Parsons' scheme all social systems must solve four basic problems - adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latency.32 Latency involves the maintenance overtime of the system's motivational and cultural patterns. The rapid introduction of machinery was undermining the traditional cultural pattern, by introducing new systems of work relations and new classes of workers, output restriction allowed the organisation to a limited extent to exercise some control over work relations, and protect the worker from the worst exigencies of the new machinery. A policy of outright output restrictions, given the conditions following the General Lockout would not be tolerated long by the employers and such a policy was tacitly employed by the Leicester operatives. In 1898 this policy was supplemented by a more sophisticated approach to the problem, that was the adoption of what was known as "Quantity" or "Quantities Statement." This statement would enable both employer and worker to determine the quantity of work which could be demanded, in each operation, for a given wage per day or per week. The statement would be negotiated in the

31Leicester Branch Report - Monthly Report, March 1899 N.U.D.S.O. Character note refers to note which employers gave or withheld from operatives when leaving employment; such a practice was deeply resented by the men and the Union Officials.
32Latency sub-system sub-divided into Pattern Maintenance and Tension Management.
usual way, and would constitute the indispensable standard of reference, without which ordinary day work was productive of so much uncertainty and dispute."

Two Leicester statements for machine work in lasting and finishing pioneered their new approach, the lasting Statement of August, 1898, and the Finishing Statement, September, 1904. These Statements allowed the organisation to exercise some control over the social patterns of work (disrupted by machinery) and protect the workers' interests, without adopting illegal tactics. (Which always carried the possibility of retaliation on the behalf of the employer).
The adoption of the Statements were a success. In November, 1899 the General Council reported:

LEICESTER is the only centre that, up to the present has successfully dealt with the difficulties surrounding the new system of labour in connection with machinery. That being so we strongly recommend to members in Branches that have no recognised list of prices for the different divisions of labour, that they should, until a definite price list be established in their districts, base their wages upon the LEICESTER list of prices, which are recognised by both employers and workmen as being as fair a list as at the present time it is possible to obtain. We are of the opinion that if this is done there will be less friction than at present exists in some of our Branches.

The success of the Leicester quantitative statement was further aided by the decline in the pace of mechanisation in Leicester during the first early years of the twentieth century. Fox supports this view:

Leicester had always been technically more advanced than other centres - her very existence as a centre of the industry derived from her readiness to use techniques which were much slower of acceptance in Northampton and Stafford. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the levelling up of technical methods to American standards which was now proceeding [1900's] had far less to go in Leicester than elsewhere. Union membership began rising again in Leicester in 1900, continued rising slowly during 1901... and rose sharply during 1904 to nearly 10,000.

This, it must be remembered, was at a time when Union membership nationally was declining.

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33 Fox, op.cit., p. 267.
34 Monthly Report, November 1899, N.U.B.S.O.
35 Fox, op.cit., p. 271.
Three major problems faced the organisation following the General Lockout of 1895. The conflict had seriously undermined the financial structure of the Union, the Terms of Settlement had limited the area of Trade Union activity and institutionalised the organisation within the context of the existing economic system, and the rapid introduction of American machinery threatened to disrupt old patterns of work as well as displace operatives. The militancy of the early 1890's offered no solution to these problems, a policy of output restriction supplemented increasingly by sophisticated statement planning at Leicester was adopted in an attempt to protect workers' interests from the far reaching social and economic consequences of rapid mechanisation. The financial structure of the organisation, at Leicester at least, was aided by a vigorous policy of union organisations of non members, and membership (and financial dues) began to increase by the turn of the century. Looking in retrospect the most important sociological consequences of the general lockout and the Terms of Settlement was the creation of a pattern of industrial relations, a pattern which institutionalised the organisation within the context of the existing economic system, and directed it on a path of industrial peace not conflict. While the militants still continued to argue socialist principles at Union Conferences, the application of these principles to industrial matters was no longer advocated with force, or found a large body of support within the Union. The reality of the industrial environment during the late 1890's, meant that Union survival would be enhanced by acting in combination with the employers, not by engaging in industrial warfare. The Terms of Settlement institutionalised this belief within a set pattern of industrial relations, a pattern which countered the militancy of the early 1890's, and laid the origins of industrial peace in the Boot and Shoe Trade.

36 Organisation of non-members became official policy in Leicester in 1898.
37 During the late 1890's, for affiliation to Labour Party, H.U.D.S.O. one of the first T.U. affiliated to the Labour Representative Committee.
CONCLUSION

The principal aim of this thesis has been to relate the historical development of a formal organisation - N.U.B.S.O. - in terms of Talcott Parsons' framework of social systems. The procedure adopted was first, to outline the economic and social background in which the organisation operated and then to analyse the sociological contexts of its development for the latter period of the 19th century.

The boot and shoe industry of the mid-19th century was centred at Northampton, and was organised on the putting out system, that is, the production unit was the home rather than the factory or workshop. A quarter of a century later Northampton had been supplanted by Leicester as the main boot and shoe producing area, and the industry was increasingly based on machine orientated factory units. By the turn of the century boot and shoe production at Leicester was almost entirely a factory industry. The traditional explanation of Leicester's rise to prominence as a boot centre, was that resistance to technological developments at Northampton caused workers and manufacturers to move to the former town where conditions were more favourable. Although this was undoubtedly a factor in Leicester's growth, the declining hosiery and glove industries of that town, releasing workers adapted to operating machinery - machinery which did not call for a great deal of skill - and capital which could be invested in new enterprises, created a favourable climate in which the industry could grow. Also the important breakthrough in boot technology, the application of the swing machine to boot manufacture, was first adopted in England, at Leicester, by T. Crick; this prompted other manufacturers to establish themselves in the town. It was internal factors at Leicester, creating an environment favourable to growth rather than external factors at Northampton, which stimulated the growth of the boot and shoe industry in that town. The rapid development of the industry at Leicester, was accompanied by increasing social problems. The conditions of many workshops before the 1890's was appalling, and the nature of certain types of shoe manufacture were dangerous
to health; chest T.B. being prominent among Leicester shoe operatives. In the poor areas of the town, housing was defective, sanitary conditions left much to be desired and drink was the main leisure activity of the shoe operative. It was not until the late 1880's and early 1890's when agencies such as Medical Officer of Health Reports, the Leicester Domestic Mission, and Local Government - stimulated to action through widening franchises - revealed the conditions of the Leicester poor, that rapid improvement took place. It was against this background, of an industry undergoing rapid technological change, and where work people were amongst the most "socially unfortunate" in Leicester that the sociological context of the operatives' organisation was examined.

Adopting T. Parsons' framework, the organisation was defined as a social system, which is organised for the attainment of a specific goal - in this case the increased bargaining strength of labour vis-à-vis the employers. Parsons introduces a general classification for the functional imperatives of social systems, and with this it is possible to identify the principal mechanism necessary to bring about the attainment of the goal or the organisational purpose. The classification distinguishes four main categories: the adaptive mechanism which concerns the mobilisation of resources, the operative code concerned with the process of goal attainment and implementation, the integrative function concerning unifying mechanisms, and finally the value system which defines and legitimises (mobilises members' support) the goals of the organisations - Latency function. The value system was examined in Chapter Three. In 1863 the shoemakers' Craft Organisation, the Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association, decided to allow unskilled shoe operatives to join their ranks, in doing so it failed to win support - legitimise - from either group, the Craft Shoeworkers believing the unskilled workers would undermine their status, the unskilled workers believing that the organisation was still primarily orientated towards the needs of the craft workers. This failure to accept the value system as legitimate undermined the whole functioning of the organisation, and after a decade of troubled existence - in 1867 the unskilled workers were expelled, to be accepted again in 1870 - it was destroyed mainly
by the efforts of the Leicester operatives in 1873 - the unskilled workers then formed the National Union of Operative Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers, with its headquarters at Leicester. The remainder of the chapter was devoted to the analysis of the policy adopted by the organisation in the difficult formative years. The organisation's leadership in the early years displayed imagination and courage in decision making, and policy implementation. The adoption of conciliation - based on rank and file support - allowed the development of a sound financial base, and by presenting itself as an organisation concerned with the industrial peace, the union gained much needed legitimacy from wider society. Close vigilance of union officials at Branch level enabled the hierarchy to maintain a reasonably efficient administrative machine - this was certainly the case at Leicester, by far the largest Branch. The attempt to mitigate the effects of member apathy, plus a vigorous policy of recruitment of non-union members instilled the belief in union officials and the rank and file that the organisation was concerned with the protection of their welfare and interests. By the early 1880's the N.U.O.B.S.R.F. had achieved what the Amalgamated Cordwainers Association had failed to do, it had gained the support (legitimacy) of its members for the value system of the organisation.

While Chapter Three examined the social system of the organisation as a whole, and how it reacted to environmental changes, Chapter Four examined a sub-system of the organisation and how this specific sub-system met the problem of technological change. This approach demonstrated that what may be functional for one specific sub-system may be dysfunctional for another, or for the system as a whole. The sub-system examined was Leicester branch of the N.U.O.B.S.R.F. and the specific case the effect of machinery on the wage system in the industry. The traditional wage system, payment of income by the piece, was being undermined by the introduction of new types of machinery which made it more profitable for employers to pay by the "day" rather than by the piece. The encroachment of the day payment system was deeply resented by the Leicester operatives, and created serious problems for Leicester Branch. The Branch
attempted to solve this problem by placing a total ban on day labour in the industry, and it succeeded in getting such policy endorsed by the organisation, on a national scale, in 1881. Whilst the day labour ban solved the resentment - tension management - of the Leicester operatives, who were the most highly organised in the industry, it was not so readily acceptable in other areas. At Leeds where machinery, calling for day labour, was being rapidly increased, the Leicester ban on day work, meant that many potential unionists were prevented from joining the organisation, thus creating adaptive problems for the Leeds sub-system and the organisation as a whole. Due to pressure brought to bear by Leeds, in 1883 the Leicester Amendment on Day Labour was modified, allowing day workers to become members of the organisation, provided they then agreed to work, in company with their fellow unionists, on a piece wage system. Throughout the 1880's Leicester vigorously campaigned against day labour and at various union conferences attempted to re-instate the total ban of 1881. Other branches, not enjoying Leicester's size and degree of organisational strength, did not share its bitter resistance to wage change and by the end of the decade, even the 1883 rule was becoming a serious embarrassment to various branches (and to the organisation as a whole) and in 1889 certain types of day workers were allowed to join the union, and stay on the day wage system. The chapter illustrates that the problems facing a sub-system of an organisation do not necessarily coincide with those of the organisation, of which it is a part, but if the organisation is going to survive as an on going system, its needs must prevail over those of a specific sub-system.

By 1890 the organisation was firmly established in the industry, and nowhere was it more firmly entrenched than at Leicester. But it still faced serious problems, the industry's basic structure was based on the outdoor system of working, a system which made it difficult for the Union to recruit potential members, and the outworkers remaining outside union control presented an economic threat - especially during the seasonal down turn of activity - to loyal unionist. A policy of indoor working would bring operatives together under one roof, thus easing organisational recruitment, and giving it greater control
over its immediate environment - Panonian adaptive process. The demand for indoor working at Leicester and its implication for the organisation was discussed in Chapter Five. Throughout the early 1880's Sedgwick, the Union General Secretary, had stressed the need for indoor working, but during this period the organisation had not sufficient resources at its disposal to make an open demand to the employers, and Sedgwick argued the need for indoor working by indirect methods - hoping for Parliamentary action, advocating improved conditions in existing factories and workshops, and focussing attention on the adverse conditions of outworkers. The consequence of Sedgwick's policy was twofold; it eased the transition from home to factory by improving factory conditions, and secondly it gained support for the indoor principle by characterising the outworker as a creature of an immoral environment. Sedgwick's policy had cleared the ground and by 1890 the organisation was sufficiently strong to demand the application of the indoor principle at Leicester. The organisation placed its demands before the manufacturers in November, 1890, by June 1891 the indoor principle (excluded a minority of employers) was accepted at Leicester. By the application of this principle the organisation's control over its immediate environment - Leicester - was enhanced insofar as factory workers are amenable to organisational recruitment and control and it represented an improvement in the organisation's available resources. But this success was limited, the adoption of a factory system at Leicester meant that greater economies could be accrued by the manufacturers, increasing their rate of machinery absorption, and in the later 1890's American machinery was introduced on a rapid scale, creating serious problems for the organisation.

These problems are examined in later chapters. In 1891 Leicester branch was at the height of its success; the battle for indoor working had been won, swelling the Leicester membership, and it was an integral sub-system of an organisation which had grown to the third largest Trade Union in Great Britain. Superficially the organisation had solved its major problem, that of survival, but problems still remained. In October, 1890 the Leicester Local Branch of Arbitration was disbanded, and conciliation which had been the accepted union
policy - in Parsonian terms conciliation acts as a mechanism for the achievement of goal states; the goal assumed as increased bargaining strength, the mechanism, conciliation - was in danger of being supplanted by industrial anarchy. Inskip, the Union's General Secretary (1886-1899) by demonstrating the severe difficulty of the situation - he stressed the damaging effect of strike action for the organisation's resources - persuaded the Leicester operatives that arbitration would serve their interest, rather than strike action. Inskip's support for arbitration and conciliation was a model of the Parsonian integrative process, the stressing of the need of members to combine "together" in the interests of the organisation as a whole, persuaded the militant members to come back into the Union fold and accept official policy. His success was short lived, the forces which opposed arbitration were systematically gaining ground at Leicester, and were by 1895 to completely undermine Inskip's position.

"As a formal analytical point of reference," states Talcott Parsons, "primacy of orientation to the attainment of a specific goal is used as a defining characteristic of an organisation, which distinguishes from other social systems. Arbitration as a mechanism adopted for achieving goal states defined the organisation within the context of the existing economic system, for to arbitrate assumes by definition that both Labour and Capital have a common interest which they can negotiate to their mutual benefit. The acceptance by Inskip of this fact led him in 1891 to construct, with the cooperation of the Shoe Manufacturers, a sophisticated arbitration machine for the whole industry; the organisation was to operate within a climate of peaceful co-existence with the employers. Such a definition of the organisation's role was completely unacceptable to the militant shoe operatives at Leicester. A belief in a common interest between employer and worker, realised through arbitration, was rejected by the Leicester militants, who regarded the organisations as a vehicle in the process of social change, not as operating within the capitalist economic system of the 1890's. The conflict in the N.U.S.S.O. 1892-95 was not only a question of arbitration or no arbitration, but the actual role of the organisation
vis-à-vis the existing economic framework. This conflict provided the main theme of Chapter Seven plus an analysis of the forces, which produced militant elements at Leicester. Militancy at Leicester was a combination of the new ideas of socialisms and new unionisms, the threat of unemployment and resentment and fear of the new wave of machinery, the introduction of which was simplified and stimulated by the adoption of the factory system at Leicester. The concept of socialism and new unionism captured the interest of a small vocal minority at Leicester, and the forces of unemployment and technological change provided the essential backing of rank and file members, and gave the militants the strength and determination to radically change the role of the organisation. Throughout 1893 and 1894 the militant's position within the organisation was steadily strengthened, whilst General Secretary Inskip's power was gradually undermined. In 1892 the General Secretary had been Parliamentary Agent of the National Union a Leicester alderman and committed to orthodox liberal principles; two years later he had resigned from both posts, and orthodox liberalism within the organisation had been supplemented by the socialism of the Leicester militants. The organisation had taken the important step away from the social and political attitudes of the mid-Victorian working classes. The militants had re-interpreted the role of the national union, it was a vehicle which, in combination with other working class agencies, was to usher in a new age of socialism, and the policy adopted to achieve this goal, was strike action. Arbitration with the employers had no place in the militants' policy, and a clash with them became inevitable; in 1895 the clash came.

The activities of the Leicester Militants during the early 1890's had set the organisation on a collision path with the employers. In March 1895, the employers closed their factories to the operatives, and 46,000 men were made idle. The dispute was bitter, neither side would agree to meet, and it was not until the intervention of Sir Courtenay Boyle, Permanent Secretary of the Board of Trade that the two sides came to a settlement - "The Terms of Settlement." The Terms of Settlement was a clear victory for the employers, the organisation was forced to submit a number of important concessions. The resources of the
organisation had been seriously depleted, and the conflict also had taken the steam and fire from the militants' attack; they had always been a small vocal minority, depending upon rank and file support for their momentum, but after the lock-out the rank and file were more interested in gaining some financial security (no matter how small) rather than renewing the context. But in Parsonian terms the Terms of Settlement had a more important consequence, it firmly institutionalised the organisation within the context of the existing economic system. The Settlement defined strict limits of Trade Union Activity within the industry, gave greater rigidity to Arbitration Boards, and set out explicit procedures to be followed in the event of a dispute. Arbitration once more was to become the organisation's official mechanism to be adopted in the pursuit of goals, but now that mechanism had been in fact shaped by the Employers' Federation. The militants' attempt to change the role of the organisation had been short lived, the reality of the industrial environment during the late 1890's meant that Union survival would be enhanced by acting in combination with the employers, not by engaging in industrial warfare.

The sociological analysis of organisational behaviour is of increasing importance in modern sociology, but of no less importance is the application of such theory to a historical context. Parsonian analysis sheds new light on Trade Union activity in the late 19th century, and reveals the importance of certain Trade Union actions and policy decisions, which previously were regarded as of little importance or irrelevant. A theory which outlines the sociological framework in which an organisation operates, enables a more clear examination of the interplay between environmental factors, and organisational reaction to such environmental stimuli.

By defining the organisation as a social system, a specific area or sub-system can be examined in detail, and its relation to its own environment, and to the social system as a whole analysed. Thus the examination of Leicester's role within the N.U.B.S.C. becomes more relevant, for in the Parsonian framework it forms a sub-system of the larger social system, and must - as the larger system must - solve the four basic system problems if it is to survive as an
ongoing system. The charge that the scheme has a built-in conservative bias, and is insufficient to explain "change" is refuted. The analysis demonstrates that what may be functional for one sub-system may be disfunctional for other sub-systems, or the total social system, the organisation, is in a constant state of flux, the characteristic of survival being that total social system needs must be given priority over the needs of specific sub-systems. Thus the examination of organisational change is given a new emphasis, internal factors within the organisation as well as the relation to its environment become integral parts of its historical development. Studies of Trade Union activity in the late 19th century have almost exclusively been confined to the examination of economic and political relationships, but such an approach is narrow, a Trade Union must be placed in its sociological context only then can one fully examine the relationship between economic - technology - and social phenomena, and a clear explanation of historical change emerge.
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