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A la redécouverte de la « Grande fièvre ouvrière » (1911-14)

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Revisiting the 'Great Labour Unrest' (1911-14)

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John BELCHEM (Liverpool University)

The Liverpool general strike of 1911:
beyond the myth

Encouraged by the charismatic presence of the syndicalist Tom Mann, Liverpool workers were united in unprecedented class-based industrial militancy in 1911, a direct action 'strike wave' which brought the city 'near to revolution'. The provocative behaviour of the authorities, not least on 'Bloody Sunday', heightened the tension, ushering in a period of virtual 'class war'. Seen in retrospect, the working-class solidarity of 1911 has been imbued with mythic force, the defining inspirational point of reference for Liverpool's radical heritage. Recent research, however, which examines cultural and creative activity as well as political and industrial militancy in 1911, has shown that the progressive potential of the 'second city of empire' was to dissipate before the outbreak of the First World War.

While syndicalists heralded a new era of 'red' class solidarity above the old sectarian divisions, Orange and Green remained firmly entrenched, confessional affiliations offering collective mutuality and support (through pub, parish and informal networks) to all those of the requisite faith, reaching into parts beyond the confines of trade unions and the labour movement.

Furthermore, such class solidarity as was forged in pre-war 'radical' Liverpool is perhaps best understood in terms of the making of a 'white' working class. The determination to exclude cheap 'coloured' labour brought sharply-dressed ships' stewards and catering staff, who otherwise kept themselves apart from deck hands and those who toiled in the stokeholds, into united action. Deploying hysterical racist discourse to condemn the 'beastly' morals of the 'Chinaman', Sexton, the dockers' leader joined forces with Irish Nationalist councillors to oppose the inflow of 'alien' Asiatic labour, the 'yellow peril'. For all its impeccable ILP socialist credentials, *Liverpool Forward* gave strong support to the efforts to remove what it called cheap 'Ching-Ching' labour.

The legacy of this 'inspirational' episode of the 'great unrest' is thus deeply ambivalent.

John BELCHEM is Chancellor and Professor of History at the University of Liverpool. Much involved in the city's inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and its attainment of European Capital of Culture status, he was awarded a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship for three years, 2004-2007, enabling him to complete a set of major publications on the history of Liverpool, attesting to his status as an 'honorary scouser'. These include a second edition of *Merseypride: essays in Liverpool exceptionalism* (2006) with an introduction on 'The new Livercool'; *Liverpool 800: culture, character and history* (2006), which he edited for the City Council and the University to mark the 800th anniversary of the granting of letters patent; and *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The history of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800-1939* (2007).

Yann BELIARD (Université Paris 3)

The Peter Progress chronicles,
or the 'Great Unrest' in Hull through the Lib-Lab lens

The shape taken by the "Great Labour Unrest" in Hull has not attracted historians as much as the cases of London or Liverpool, for reasons that are understandable enough: Hull was a smaller port, where syndicalism seems to have played a negligible role and where no leaders of a national stature emerged.

Labour agitation was nonetheless rampant in England's third port and a city councillor went so far as to describe the three week strike of June 1911 as "worse than the Paris Commune". Until August 1914, with or without support from trade-union officials, industrial disputes were numerous, involving not only transport workers but also shop assistants and "factory girls".

The chain of events in Hull is therefore worth reconstructing, a task this paper would like to achieve by scrutinising a weekly chronicle entitled "Among the Workers" and written for the *Hull Times* by printer Frederick W. Booth under the pen name "Peter Progress".

Booth, a pillar of the Hull Trades Council since the 1890s, knew the local labour movement from the inside and followed the ups and downs of the workers' agitation more closely than any other observer. His observations were anything but neutral. A "Lib Lab" at heart, only recently converted to the perspective of an independent Labour Party and as wary as could be of "direct actionism", Booth expressed a disapproving vision of the "Great Unrest" that is most revealing of the way a whole generation of trade-union officials felt towards the strike wave.

Analysing Booth's comments on labour affairs between 1911 and 1914, be they local, national or international, is therefore an incomparable opportunity of revisiting that troubled period from a moderate's point of view – and of remembering that the "Great Labour Unrest" did reach the north bank of the Humber.

Yann BELIARD is a lecturer in British studies at the Sorbonne Nouvelle (Université Paris 3). He was awarded his PhD in 2007 for a thesis on class relations in Hull (UK) in the period 1894-1910. He has published on the British labour movement in the Late Victorian and Edwardian age (notably in *Labour History Review*, *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* and *Cahiers d'Histoire*), with particular emphasis on its cross-national connections and its attitude towards empire and race.

Myriam BOUSSAHBA-BRAVARD (Université de Paris Diderot)

The Great Labour and Female Unrest

The Great Labour Unrest occurred at the apex of the suffragist campaign. Working-class females and, generally speaking, female workers made a major part of suffragist arguments, even though this dimension has often been ignored or downplayed.

If labour agitation was a symptomatic fever, infection had preceded it. The commitment of greater numbers of women as 'women' was increasingly obvious for Edwardians. Several examples of women involved in politics and female politics could show how their political involvement interconnected trade unionism, party politics and suffragist claims. This massive female participation into various political avenues generated multiple coherent activisms and contributed to the increasing democratisation of the 1910s. Women claimed their citizenship at work and at home and wanted it to be formally acknowledged through the vote.

Bearing in mind that women were still constructing their citizenship after 1910, working-class females and female workers will be discussed; then why suffragism focussed so much on working women will be examined. Finally, in their own self-claimed public space women were politicised against and despite formal political networks such as parties and unions which remained often reticent if not adverse to female emancipation at work and at home. In a puzzling way for contemporaries, gender re-enacted class perceptions for women and men.

Myriam BOUSSAHBA-BRAVARD is Professor of British political history in the British and American Studies School, University of Paris Diderot, France. Her research focuses on suffrage history and periodicals in the Edwardian period. Myriam has edited *Suffrage Outside Suffragism, Women's Vote, Britain 1880-1914* (Palgrave, 2007) and has recently contributed the following :
«'To serve and to elect': The Women's Local Government Society in Britain 1888-1914 », in Sophie Body-Gendrot, Jacques Carré & Romain Garbaye (dir.), *A City of One's Own: Blurring the Boundaries between private and public. Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Ashgate, 2008;
« Résistance passive et citoyenneté : la rébellion fiscale de la bourgeoise édouardienne », Paris, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 56-2, 2009 ;
« Frederick Billington-Greig (1875-1961) : seulement le mari de Teresa ? » », In Martine Monacelli et Michel Prum, *Ces hommes qui épousèrent la cause des femmes, dix pionniers britanniques*, Paris, l'Atelier, 2010 ;
She is currently writing a book on the feminist journalist Teresa Billington-Greig (1877-1964).

Ralph DARLINGTON (University of Salford)

The 'Labour Unrest', Trade Union Officialdom and the Syndicalist Challenge

One of the most striking features of the 'labour unrest' that swept Britain immediately before the First World War was its predominately unofficial character and hostility to the existing trade-union leadership. The perceived incorporation of full-time union officials within formalized collective bargaining and conciliation machinery led many activists to believe official union policies had tended to become cautious and conservative, with the consolidation of the unions' strength taking precedence over radical shopfloor grievances.

As a consequence, with its emphasis on 'direct action' that bypassed the orthodox bargaining machinery and 'class collaboration' of official leaders, the British syndicalist message of the South Wales Miners Unofficial Reform Committee, Tom Mann's Industrial Syndicalist Education League (ISEL) and the pre-war campaign for amalgamation and industrial unionism fell on fertile ground as rank-and-file dissatisfaction led to an increasing incidence of unofficial strikes and activity. According to J. T. Murphy: 'To be "agin" the officials was as much a part of the nature of the syndicalist-minded workers of that time as to be "agin the Government" was a part of the nature of an Irishman'.

This paper attempts to provide a rigorous examination of the analysis of, and strategy for overcoming, the bureaucratic and conservative role of trade union officialdom made from within the British syndicalist tradition in the period 1910-14. Drawing on an extensive range of existing labour history literature and the writings of syndicalists themselves, it outlines the developing theorisation of the nature of the trade union bureaucracy and the conflict between the rank-and-file members and union officialdom, and the gradual refinement of a distinctive practical means to overcome the officials' hold via independent rank-and-file organization. It attempts to add to our understanding by building on and extending the analysis provided within existing literature (including the author's own work), foregrounding hitherto neglected aspects of the subject, deploying new primary sources, revealing fresh insights, and offering a fresh assessment of both the syndicalist movement's tremendous contribution as well as its in-built limitations.

Ralph DARLINGTON is Professor of Employment Relations at the University of Salford, an executive member of the British Universities Industrial Relations Association, a member of the editorial board of the journal *Work, Employment and Society*, and Secretary of the Manchester Industrial Relations Society. He has written extensively on trade union organisation and activity in both historical and contemporary contexts and is the author of *The Dynamics of Workplace Unionism* (London, 1994), *The Political Trajectory of J.T. Murphy* (Liverpool, 1998), *Glorious Summer: Class Struggle in Britain, 1972* [with Dave Lyddon] (London, 2001), and *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism: An International Comparative Analysis* (Aldershot, 2008). He also edited *What's the Point of Industrial Relations? In Defence of Critical Social Science* (Manchester, 2009).

Sam DAVIES (Liverpool John Moores University)

The State Response to 1911

The wave of strikes of 1911 in Britain posed a serious threat of civil strife and public disorder to the government of the day. The crisis reached its height in August of that year with the railwaymen's strike and associated industrial action precipitating riots across the country. In the hottest British August since 1873, police action in supporting attempts to sustain the movement of goods on and from the railways, and suppression of crowds of strikers and demonstrations, was widespread. 'Bloody Sunday' of 13 August in Liverpool is the best-known example of this, but in fact similar events took place in Lincoln, Chesterfield, Llanelli, and many other towns and cities. Huge numbers of people were injured in the disturbances, and many others arrested and imprisoned.

It was the use of the military to back up the police action, however, that made 1911 unique. An unprecedented mobilisation of military force by the government to back up the overstretched police forces available was authorised by Winston Churchill and the Home Office. Thousands of troops were mobilised across the country and despatched to the various trouble spots, while the navy sent ships to guard main ports like Liverpool and Hull. In the week following Bloody Sunday, the British army opened fire on civilians on several occasions, with two fatalities directly resulting in both Liverpool and Llanelli, and four others being killed indirectly in the disturbances in the latter. A subsequent trade union demonstration from the East India Dock in Poplar, London, carried a black-lined banner reading: 'In memory of and sympathy with our comrades in Liverpool and Llanelli, killed in the interests of capitalism. Workers remember Trafalgar-square, 1877; Mitchelstown, 1887; Featherstone, 1893; Belfast 1907; and now Liverpool and Llanelli, 1911' (*Times,* 4 Sep. 1911).

This paper will analyse the nature and scale of this state response, looking at the motivations behind it through Home Office papers and communications with Head Constables and Lord Mayors of the affected boroughs, and also the effects of police and military actions in terms of casualties and arrests. In doing so, it will raise questions as to how much Britain was 'near to revolution' in 1911.

Sam Davies is Professor of History at Liverpool John Moores University. He is the author of *Liverpool Labour: Social and Political Influences on the Development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-1939* (1996) and co-editor of, and contributor to, *Dock Workers: International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970*, 2 vols (2000).

Paula DE ANGELIS (University of Adelaide)

A Citizen of the World:
Tom Mann, international solidarity and syndicalism in Britain, 1911-14

Tom Mann is a towering figure in British labour history. A self-educated syndicalist and a highly successful organiser, he figures in the history of labour in many industrialised countries. Mann's story has largely been incorporated into the official history of the British Communist Party, which he joined later in his life. However, before World War 1 and the Russian Revolution, Mann was a syndicalist.

The great labour unrest of the period before 1914, not only in Britain but in the same industries worldwide, is only one crisis point in a movement that was a significant force from the 1880s. It was eventually countered in most countries by two related developments: government attacks on revolutionary groups on the one hand, and state intervention in the relationship between capital and labour on the other. Mann played an important role as a syndicalist agitator and a leader of the Transport Workers Union strikes in this period. He also travelled to the United States and South Africa in 1913, and had an influence on similar industrial struggles in both countries.

This paper reconstructs Mann's life in this era from a transnational perspective, exploring how he enacted the principle of international solidarity that is a cornerstone of syndicalism. It traces his participation in the international network of the revolutionary labour movement, and considers his biography in the context of a tradition of working class resistance to the forces that had been remaking the world's political landscape and economy since the Reformation.

The purpose of this is to develop a new understanding of the origins and character of internationalism amongst the revolutionary working-class. The paper also challenges some of the assumptions imposed on this subject since labour, and therefore labour history, have become linked to the nation-state, partly as a reaction to this very unrest.

Paula de Angelis is a postgraduate student in History at the University of Adelaide in South Australia, writing a thesis entitled *Travel, Toil and Trouble: the IWW and International Syndicalism in the Early 20th Century.*

Jonathan HYSLOP (University of Pretoria) - Keynote Speaker -

Were the South African general strikes and insurgencies of 1913-14 part of a global labour revolt?

South African historical writing suffers very badly from notions of exceptionalism. The country's history is often conceived of as a unique process leading inexorably to the apartheid policies of 1948. In this perspective, the early 20th century militancy of the white workers, and especially their 1922 "Rand Revolt", are construed as part of a deviant racialised trade unionism, contributing to the building of a uniquely racially discriminatory system. And certainly, the coming to power of a Boer Nationalist – White Labour alliance in 1924, and its consolidation of workplace racial discrimination in law, makes that look like a plausible account.

But this approach both exaggerates the distinctiveness of South Africa, and bestows an artificial sense of overdetermination on our readings of history. Much recent work has complicated this picture by pointing that on the one hand the white labour protectionism of South Africa was far from unique in the world trade union movement and indeed that South Africa was internationally connected in this regard; and that on the other hand, the 1913-1914 militancy in South Africa had numerous affiliations and linkages with other socialist, syndicalist and radical movements of the time. South African labour history needs to place itself in a broader world context.

This paper sets out to examine South Africa's 1913 and 1914 General Strikes in a global perspective, by demonstrating in very specific ways how local and global elements in the situation combined. It shows that there were linkages with other contemporary struggles, through mapping the mechanisms – the movement of people, the diffusion of ideas, the organizational structures – through which this took place. But it will also take account of the way in which the messages of, for example, Tom Mann, the Wobblies and other syndicalists were 'translated' into a local political vernacular, rather than taken up wholesale. Further, it will ask how events in South Africa shaped political narratives abroad. The "Strange Death of Liberal England" was accompanied by (and interleaved with) the strange birth of the very illiberal Union of South Africa.

And if we do view the Rand as linked to global developments exactly what world are we talking about? We now have strong evidence of British and British Dominion Labour connections to South Africa. But did events in South Africa also link to American and to continental European developments, and if so, how? And how she we understand these events in relation to other colonized countries?

The paper will also seek to explore other developments of the period in South Africa which may have been more indirectly linked to a local and international syndicalist upsurge. There was considerable (apparently unorganized) unrest amongst black mine workers on the Rand during the 1913 and 1914 strikes. This has been little explored by historians. In what political ways did these workers understand their actions? There is also the question of the famous late 1913 protest march by M.K. Gandhi's followers from Natal into the Transvaal. While this action tends easily to be folded into the history of *satyagraha*, it was based on a strike by Indian immigrant coal miners. The paper will ask questions not only about how Gandhi interpreted the movement and how he framed it in relation to the white labour strikes, but also problematise the connection between the official ideology of the

movement and the self-understanding of its participants. Lastly, I think it is worth examining the 1914 armed revolt of a section of Afrikaner nationalists against participation in the First World War. In putting down the January 1914 General Strike, the Botha-Smuts government relied heavily on rural Afrikaner militia. It was men from these militias, especially poor tenants and farmers from the Western Transvaal, who played the leading role in the anti-war revolt. How had the experiences of the strike shaped their actions?

The paper will also be informed by an interest in the historiographical questions raised by William Sewell in his theoretical attempt to rehabilitate the study of events. I am particularly concerned with how specific events can be produced by and affect forces beyond their immediate context. Hopefully the paper will contribute not only to situating the specificity of South African 1910-1914 developments in a global context, but also make a modest methodological contribution to debate on the question of what is that enables us to conceive of a locally based event as part of a wider global process.

Jonathan HYSLOP is Professor of Sociology and History at the University of Pretoria. He has published widely on South African social history and on transnational approaches to British Empire history. He is the author of *The Notorious Syndicalist. JT Bain: A Scottish Rebel in Colonial South Africa* (2004).

William KENEFICK (University of Dundee)

'Lessons in the usefulness of solidarity'. An inter-regional and transnational perspective on the 'Great Labour Unrest' in Scotland

According to the national and provisional Scottish press there were few strikes of note taking place in Scotland during 1910 - save perhaps two. The first occurred in May among 'several hundred male and female' woodyard workers at Bo'ness (on the Firth of Forth) where employers engaged 'the well-known west of Scotland strike-breaker' Graham Hunter to break the strike. Some months later as a result of national employers' lockout across Scotland, shipbuilders and engineers at Dundee rejected the boilermakers' union executive decision to return to work after a strike they did not support 'because they refused to place their union at the mercy of the [employers] federation'. These disputes were in the main not about wages which prompted *The Scotsman* to suggest that workers were being 'directed, or misdirected, by Socialistic influences' in their attempt to explain the rise in strike activity as early as May 1910.

If 1910 raised the spectre of socialism the national strikes among railwaymen, dockers, seamen and carters the following year must surely have confirmed the worst fears of the Scottish news agencies. The *Glasgow Herald* expressed their dismay in August 1911 that Scottish workers had 'come under the spell of incendiary adviser like those who made the Confederation of Labour such a menace to the structure of French society'. And it seemed that syndicalism and socialism had cast a long shadow across the east of Scotland when in early February 5000 mainly female weavers went on strike across Dundee over a reduction of squad sized from ten to eight women. It was an issue raised again one year on and between February and April 1912 a general strike and lockout saw 30000 workers out in dispute across the city and when it ended over I million days had been lost to strike activity.

In the meantime women workers in Fife embarked on a series of strikes throughout 1911 in support of the campaign for a 'living wage' with the backing of the local trades and labour council, left-wing political parties and local church groups. The key industrial dispute of 1911, however, was a strike involving 1500 carters and dockers at Dundee and for one week in September came to involve 30000 workers. The strike had city-wide support including unorganised female millworkers, the ILP, BSP, and trades and labour council, and was led by political activists who championed the use of direct action. The result was the formation of new Carters union based at Dundee in opposition to the older Scottish Horse and Motormen's Association led by the politically non-partisan and autocratic Hugh Lyons. The recently formed Scottish Union of Dock Labour were also active and armed with pledges of support from carters, dockers and seamen at Glasgow and Leith, and from Ben Tillett in London, the SUDL set about wresting the control of the port of Dundee from the Free Labour Bureau and the Shipping Federation for the first time since 1904.

The ILP *Glasgow Forward* described the events unfolding at Dundee as 'A glorious lesson in the usefulness of solidarity'. But for the mainstream press it was yet another example of how 'the vague Syndicalism of the French Socialists' had permeated the minds of Scottish workers, and it seemed clear that workers were now intent on using the 'universal strike' as a means of bringing 'capitalism to its

knees'. Many on the radical left felt likewise and Manny Shinwell asserted that use of the general strike and sympathetic action helped sow the seeds of revolution on the Clyde, while John Maclean thought Scotland to be in 'the rapids of revolution'.

This paper will consider in greater detail the role of women, local networks of community support, the activities of left radical political groups and the wider labour movement, as well as the attitude of local and national press agencies to provide and explanation for the rising tide of worker militancy and solidarity from 1910. The paper will also examine an attempted employer counter-attack on dock unionism at the Clydeside port of Ardrossan and the east coast port of Leith between 1912 and 1913, and the transnational dimension to both these disputes. This will help set the historical context for a more detailed discussion about the causes of industrial and social discontent, and the extent to which socialism, syndicalism, and the growing support for industrial unionism influenced workers during the Great Labour Unrest in Scotland.

William KENEFICK is a Senior Lecturer in modern Scottish and British history at the University of Dundee, specialising in labour and social history. He is the author of *Red Scotland! The Rise and Fall of the Radical Left, c.1872-1932* (Edinburgh, EUP, 2007) and *Rebellious and Contrary: The Glasgow Dockers c.1853 to 1932* (East Linton, Tuckwell Press, 2000). He is also the co-editor with Arthur McIvor of *The Roots of Red Clydeside 1910 to 1914?: Labour and Industrial Unrest in West Scotland* (Edinburgh, John Donald, 1996). His most recent work on the role of the Scottish radical left in the South African labour movement was published in the *International Review of Social History* in 2010.

Lewis MATES (Durham University)

The 'Great Labour Unrest' in the Durham coalfield: rank-and-file movements and political change

The ferment in the coal miner's district unions and its national federation (the MFGB) was crucial in informing the nature of the 1910-1914 'labour revolt' in Britain. Yet remarkably little detailed research has been conducted on developments outside South Wales, the scene of the bitter Cambrian Combine dispute, the birthplace of The Miners' Next Step and apparently the most fertile soil for revolutionary syndicalist ideas among Britain's miners.

This paper will examine events in the Durham coalfield, which, after South Wales employed the largest number of workers of any of the British mining districts. In socio-economic terms, too, the two coal mining areas were remarkably similar and, as in South Wales, there emerged in Durham vigorous and militant rank-and-file movements intent on industrial and political change.

Essentially there were two movements competing for rank-and-file support; one revolutionary syndicalist, the second led by activists of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). This paper explores the nature of these hitherto undocumented movements, their respective size and organisations, their aims, successes and failures. It argues that rank-and-file anger with the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) leaders and with the coal owners could have been harnessed by either movement but that the ILP's approach was far more effective than that of the syndicalists.

Furthermore, the ILP were able to divert rank-and-file miners' desires to improve wages and conditions towards bolstering support for the Labour Party in Parliament, effectively challenging the Liberals' ideological hegemony in the Durham coalfield. The result was that the ILP activists, through their rank-and-file movement, won the DMA institutionally for their political project. In doing this they marginalised the older generation of Liberal and Lib.-Lab. miners' leaders who had hitherto been an obstacle to the emergence of the Labour Party as the major progressive force in the coalfield.

Lewis MATES is a tutor in History and Politics at Durham University. He has published several journal articles and book chapters on aspects of inter-war British political history and a monograph; *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007). He is currently working on two projects: membership and activism in the Labour and Conservative parties (1945–1974) and rank-and-file movements and political change in the Durham coalfield before 1914.

Emmet O'CONNOR (University of Ulster) - Keynote Speaker -

Syndicalism and the 'Great Labour Unrest', 1911-14

No conceptual tool is as useful or as controversial for analysing the 'Great labour unrest' as syndicalism. This is not to say that syndicalism explains the militancy, but that it offers a prism through which we can examine its characteristics and the ideas behind it, and cut to the core of the historiographical debate.

There is a curious congruity between far left interpretations of the unrest and those of some liberal historians. The former stress the importance of syndicalists in triggering action, and of distinctive features of the militancy like violence, sympathetic action, rank and file spontaneity, 'workerism', and the 'rebel' attack on union officialdom and Labour Party leaders. One can find Sorelian undertones in the liberal histories. Elie Halevy's *The Rule of Democracy, 1905-1914* (1932) wrote of Britain 'On the brink of catastrophe'. George Dangerfield's *The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910-1914* (1934) linked strikes, suffragists, and the constitutional crises as forces driven by a rejection of rationality. Norman Stone's *Europe Transformed, 1878-1919* (1983) referred to Europe generally being overtaken by irrationality. By contrast, most British labour historians see the unrest as generated by more immediate, material concerns – rising prices, speed-up, and mechanization – and argue that the coincidence of industrial, social, and political unrest was unconnected.

Is it possible to reconcile idealist 'catastrophism' with a materialist analysis of events, square the cliched 'pragmatism' of British trade unionists with the undoubted influence of syndicalism in certain quarters of the British Labour movement, resolve the contradiction between the incrementalism of wage strikes and the spirit of revolt, and explain the relation of industrial unrest to the constitutional crisis (including events in Ireland)?

It will be argued first that there was a correlation between the growth of syndicalism and of militancy throughout the industrial world from 1900, and that these shaped the context of the British unrest; secondly, that the influence of syndicalism was not due to the lure of irrationality, but to the practical appeal of industrial unionism as a strategy and of sympathetic action as a method of struggle; thirdly, that characteristics like violence and workerism were responses to the use of state force and disillusionment with the perceived inadequacy of the TUC and the Labour Party in defending workers; and fourthly, that the myth of socialism provided an essential credibility to the unrest.

Finally, it will be argued that the relatively greater success of syndicalism in Ireland was due to the marginality of Irish Labour within the UK, that Ireland was typical of syndicalist tendencies, such as those in the United States, Canada, Italy, and South Africa, which organized on the periphery of established Labour movements, and that these tendencies tended to be more successful than those which sought to 'bore from within'.

Emmet O'CONNOR is a Senior Lecturer in History at Magee College, University of Ulster. His publications include *A Labour History of Ireland* (1992), *James Larkin* (2002) and *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia and the Communist Internationals, 1919-1943* (2004).

Olivette OTELE (Université Paris 13)

The 'Labour Unrest' in South Wales:
Tonypandy, a model for Glamorgan and Gwent workers?

The coal mining town of Tonypandy opened a new chapter in labour unrest in Wales in 1910. Aggravated by Cambrian Combine owners' decision to lockout the entrances of one of their colliery pits in the small town of Penygraig, miners decided to take action. Prior to that decision, both parties had been engaged in a bitter dispute over a new payment system. Miners' pay depended upon the amount of coal each individual worker extracted. Failure to extract a certain amount was nonetheless compensated by an agreed minimum wage. In 1910, a new seam was opened and 80 workers were involved in the pit for a trial period. Measuring their progress became crucial as the amount of coal extracted was to determine the new wage they would receive. After the trial period, their wages were lower than what they had previously been entitled to. Miners protested and refused those working conditions. Owners responded with a lockout notice that was aimed not only at the 80 miners initially involved but also at the 800 miners who had been working in the colliery. Picketing was followed by marches and by the occupation of pit entrances. The police intervened. The struggle escalated into a riot. The local then regional police force proved to be inadequate. Winston Churchill allowed extra troops to go to Wales. The riot was ended but the background and the impact of the strike still need to be examined. Cambrian Combine workers had seen their fathers involved in the Welsh Coal Strike in 1898. The Tonypandy Riot seems to have ignited labour unrest in the railway and naval industries in Glamorgan and Gwent.

This presentation will be articulated around three key points: the role played by early unionists in paving the way for the Combine Strike; the relationship between owners and the police, prior to and during the strike and the subsequent riot; labour unrest as both a model for black seamen in Cardiff and as a catalyst for attacks against ethnic communities such as people of Chinese descent in Cardiff and the Jewish community in Tredegar in the 1910s.

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Lydia REDMAN (University of Cambridge)

Industrial Mediation in the Age of the New Liberalism:
The London Dock Strike of 1911-1912

The London Dock strike of 1911- 1912 has been documented in histories of the labour movement or by those dealing with the Edwardian period. However, there has been no specific analysis of the authorities involved in mediating the dispute: members of the Cabinet and civil servants from the Board of Trade tried to do so, as did the newly established Port of London Authority, but with little success. The overlapping role of members of the government and civil servants, and their failure to divide responsibility for intervention during the conflict, limited the effectiveness of mediation.

There has also been little work on the Port of London Authority that took administrative control of the docks in 1909, and was supposed to be an independent body. Whilst the Authority did not always side with port employers, as the dispute continued, it took an increasingly hard line against the strikers. However, it also clashed with members of the government, civil servants and port employers over the handling of the disturbances and the conflicts between these authorities affected both the course of the strikes and their outcome.

This paper will examine the ad-hoc nature of negotiations in 1911 and 1912, arguing that the failure of these authorities to agree on a course of action was indicative of broader failures to create consistent policies for intervention during industrial disputes. It sets the strikes in the context of the decline of the 'neutral state,' as the increased intervention of the Liberal government alienated employers and sections of organized labour.

Lydia REDMAN is a postgraduate student at the University of Cambridge funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. She is working on a thesis entitled "Industrial Conflict Under the New Liberalism: the Tripartite Relationship Between the Government, Employers and Labour, 1906-1914".

James THOMPSON (University of Bristol)

Revisiting and rethinking syndicalism, 1911-14

This paper proposes to revisit the syndicalism of the pre-First World War labour unrest. Historians have debated the scale and political significance of syndicalism within the labour unrest of 1911-14, but less attention has been devoted to its arguments. This paper revisits the thinking behind *The Miners' Next Step* and Tom Mann's *Industrial Syndicalist* to rethink the origins and character of syndicalism in Britain.

Much of my previous work has charted debates within the labour movement over the respective claims of producers and consumers, and over the relationship between the 'labour' interest and broader entities such as the public or the nation, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These debates provide the crucial intellectual context for understanding the nature of British syndicalism.

The rich complexity of intellectual debate amongst labour activists and sympathisers in Britain has been historically neglected, in part because of unhelpful labels like 'labourism', and in part through unjustified assumptions about the narrowness and insularity of British debates. This paper brings out the diversity and depth of British debates about industrial unionism and labour strategy

James THOMPSON is a lecturer in Modern British History at the University of Bristol. Interested in the political and intellectual history of Britain since 1870, he has written on class, popular political economy, Victorian scandals and trade union legislation. His current research examines pictorial propaganda in modern British politics. His publications include: "Pictorial lies? : posters and politics in Britain, 1880-1914", *Past and Present*, 197 (November 2007); 'L'histoire sociale de la Grande-Bretagne du XIX siecle entre crise et renouveau', *Revue européenne d'histoire sociale* 2 (2002) ; 'The genesis of the 1906 Trades Disputes Act', *Twentieth Century British History* 9, 2 (1998).

Tri TRAN (Université François Rabelais – Tours)

The 1911 'Great Strike' in the port of London: motives, tactics, impacts

In 1911, the workers of the port of London were called out by the newly formed National Federation of Transport Workers. The latter aimed at opposing employers' federations like the Shipping Federation, and the Port of London Authority. Relationships were forged between the unions representing the different trades of the port and the seamen's union. The confrontation between the management and the unions resulted in numerous outbreaks of violence and intimidatory tactics used by both unionists and strikebreakers.

Through parliamentary papers, Home Office records, and contemporary press accounts, this contribution will attempt to explain the motives of this short strike, the tactics of unions and employers, and assess its political and mental impact.

Tri TRAN is Senior Lecturer ("maître de conférences habilité à diriger des recherches") in British civilization at the University of Tours. After completing a doctoral dissertation on "labourers in the port of London in the 19th century" (1995), he then specialized in British social history, with particular interest in the history of migrations, labour militancy and protest crime. He has published thirty papers in scholarly journals (notably *Etudes Anglaises*, *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*, *Revue d'Histoire Maritime*, *Civilisations*) and a book on labour migrations : *Les Migrations assistées et forcées des Britanniques au XIXe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010).

Sjaak VAN DER VELDEN (International Institute of Social History)

The Great Labour Unrest in the Netherlands

In my paper I investigate whether there was a wave of strikes in the Netherlands like the one that developed in the United Kingdom.

The number of strikes grew from 151 in 1910, via 234 and 307 in the years that followed to an unprecedented 446 in 1913. In the first eight months of 1914 a total of 290 strikes broke out but then the growth stopped in reaction to the outbreak of the First World War

The labour movement as a whole was feeling strong in those days. It started with the participation of Dutch sailors in the international seamen's strike of 1911 and quickly spread throughout Dutch society. Membership of all labour unions doubled between 1907 and 1914 and in 1913 the number of socialist members of parliament grew from seven to sixteen. After the elections the labour party was even offered a seat in the new government.

In Dutch historiography it is commonly accepted that the growth of the labour movement and the growth of the movement of the labourers were possible because of the economic conjuncture. The economy grew rapidly in those years which made victories for striking workers possible. Capital hardly resisted as can be shown from the number of lockouts which hardly grew in the same period.

The peak in strike activity is however not only related to the economic growth. It also coincides with the upcoming end of the expansion phase of the long economic cycle and the international political unrest that resulted in the Great War. As I concluded in my thesis 'the uncertainty of changes probably explain the periodical growth of strike activity than the fact that unemployment rises of wages are lowered.'

Sjaak VAN DER VELDEN was born in Rotterdam in 1954. He studied social and economic history at Leiden University (1972-1982), started his career as a carpenter (1980-2000) and wrote a thesis on strikes in the Netherlands. He graduated at Leiden University in 2000 and has been working for the Historical Sample of the Netherlands (HSN) from 2000 to 2007. Since 2007 he has been working with the Scientific Bureau of the Socialist Party. In 2007 he was also offered a part-time job at the IISH to build an international HUB on labour conflicts. Since the beginning of 2010 Sjaak is an affiliated fellow at the institute and masters the repository on labour conflicts hosted by the IISH.