Guilds at Home and Abroad: A History of Knowledge of Guild Socialism

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Eigenständigkeitserklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, Oscar Norris-Broughton

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Oscar Broughton
São Paulo, 2022

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List of Abbreviations of Organisations

American Federation of Labour (AFL)
British Advocates for Industrial Unionism (BAIU)
Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU)
Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)
Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT)
House of Industry League (HOIL)
Independent Labour Party (ILP)
Internationalen Baugildenverband (IB)
Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS)
International Workers of the World (IWW)
Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB)
New Britain Movement (NBM)
New Europe Group (NEG)
Rural Reconstruction Association (RRA)
Socialist Labor Party of America (SLPA)
Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)
Trade Union Congress (TUC)
Verband sozialer Baubetriebe (VSB)

Introduction

In 1920 three individuals with different understandings of Guild Socialism prepared for separate journeys. In May, the psychiatrist Mary Barkas made preparations to travel from the Austrian capital, Vienna, to the small English city of Norwich for the summer. For Barkas, Guild Socialism was reflected in the organisational practices of the trade unionists responsible for building swathes of new apartments in Red Vienna. These included complete trade union control over every aspect of the building process. The amalgamation of all trade unionists into a single union across the entire building industry. The prioritisation of high-quality craftsmanship over efficiency, and negotiating with tenants organisations in order to pressure the local government to release funds to pay for additional apartments.[1]

In the same month the magazine editor, Koshin Murobuse, made plans to leave his home in Tokyo for a world tour during the upcoming year. For Murobuse Guild Socialism meant something quite different from what Barkas believed. Instead of trade union practices, Guild Socialism represented a set of theoretical ideas, which produced a credible socialist alternative to the "militaristic, jingoistic and capitalist" government in Japan, that actively repressed such possibilities.[2] In June Murobuse arrived in London and gave an account of the popularity of Guild Socialism in Japan to the leftwing newspaper, *The Daily Herald.* "Socialist thought is steadily and inevitably permeating the Japanese people" Murobuse claimed, "we have, in my country, every shade of Socialist thought represented. The Socialist League embraces all schools… but the most popular organisations are those of the Guild Socialists and Communists."[3]

In July, the clerical secretary, Miss F.E. Thomas, left London to begin a new life across the Atlantic in San Francisco and in her own words, "to spread a knowledge of Guilds in California".[4] Thomas's understanding of Guild Socialism differed from Barkas and Murobuse, as for her it constituted a transmissible idea. This understanding was developed through her employment at the headquarters

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[1] M. R. Barkas to the National Guilds League, 27.05.20, Letter, Miscellaneous Items, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library, Oxford University.

[2] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, 7.5.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library, Oxford University.

[3] *Daily Herald,* How "Rebels" are made, Japan's Way of Dealing with Socialism, 7.6.1921, Newspaper Cutting, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library, Oxford University.

[4] National Guilds League Annual Report, 1920-21, p.6, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 2, Nuffield College Library, Oxford University.

of the National Guilds League in their London offices at 39 Cursitor Street. The League functioned as the institutional home of Guild Socialism and Thomas's work as a secretary brought her into direct contact with various examples of guild socialist propaganda. Including books, leaflets, newspapers and pamphlets, which familiarised her with the institutions' political ambitions and strategy. Working as a secretary Thomas would then post these materials to a large network of correspondents around the world and exchange information via letters pertinent to the League.

Collectively these three cases provide an indication of the range of meanings, locations, and different types of historical actors associated with Guild Socialism. A sense of plurality is therefore important when considering this subject because as will become apparent through the course of this thesis, no singular definition of Guild Socialism existed. Instead, most supporters congregated around overlapping understandings which collectively formed a specific version of socialism. This involved a vision of a political economy that aimed to unify workplace democracy with a planned economy through the creation of a new type of organisation known as guilds, or National Guilds, which would manage all aspects of production in a society.[5] These guilds would emerge out of trade union structures and embody practices of workers' self-management and workplace democracy, otherwise known as workers' control and industrial democracy.[6] They were designed to balance the interests of producers against the needs of consumers in society who would also be represented by new organisations, either specialised guilds, cooperatives, or a reimagined version of the state.[7] As a result, the forces of production and consumption would become balanced and a new socialist society would emerge.

This approach defined and situated Guild Socialism among other socialist ideas. For example, the focus on trade unionism as a locus for transformation and means of transition separated Guild Socialism from other socialist ideas concerned with capturing the state or forming autonomous communities. In particular, it was defined from political parties like the Labour Party and Independent Labour Party that emphasised parliamentary democracy, or groups like the Spartakusbund who embraced revolutionary vanguardism, as means towards socialism.[8]

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[5] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System* (G. Bell and Sons, 1919) p.132
[6] The National Guilds League, *National Guilds: An Appeal to Trade Unionists* (Victoria House Printing, 1915) p.7
[7] G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Re-stated* (Lenard Parsons Ltd, 1920) pp.86,119-121; S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System* p.136
[8] I. Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution: The Myth of Society Democracy and the British Left* (Athabasca University Press, 2011) pp.17-18; E.D. Weitz, "German Communism", in S. Pons and S.A. Smith's (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Communism Volume 1* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) pp.598-600

Consequently, Guild Socialism shared a close relationship with certain forms of syndicalism, which also focussed on developing trade unionism into the basis for a socialist society.[9] Furthermore, it also shared parallels with other forms of libertarian socialism, such as anarcho-communism and Council Communism, which also stressed the creation of workers councils designed to administer economic production while encouraging workers' control and industrial democracy, in a similar fashion to the guilds.[10]

The initial spark that would develop into Guild Socialism first appeared in Edwardian Britain during the final decade before the First World War. This was initiated by the architect Arthur Penty who rejected the dominant model of state socialism at the time supported by the Labour Party and the Fabian Society, which championed industrialisation and parliamentary democracy. In response, to this model of socialism Penty envisioned an alternative path for the British labour movement focussed around a revival of medieval "gilds".[11] This flicker of an idea was further developed by other socialist thinkers before the war. Including the journalist Samuel Hobson and the political scientist George Douglas Howard Cole. Together they helped to develop the meaning of Guild Socialism drawing on insights taken from Marxism, syndicalism, and industrial unionism.[12] These efforts paved the way towards the creation of the National Guilds League in 1915 which formed the new institutional home for Guild Socialism and consisted of a mixture of intellectuals, trade unionists, and political activists.

Although the membership of the League remained small, never rising above six hundred, and concentrated in Britain. It nevertheless represented a diverse array of men and women drawn from middle-class and working-class backgrounds who all contributed to the meaning of Guild Socialism through a combination of their own agency and connections to local knowledge networks. While the membership was predominantly located in Britain many members also traveled, or were otherwise located elsewhere, as the earlier examples of Barkas, Murobuse and Thomas attest. As a result, a large communication network developed around the League which also helped to advance

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[9] R. Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism: An International Comparative Analysis* (Ashgate, 2008) p.2

[10] J. Gerber, 'From Left Radicalism to Council Communism: Anton Pannekoek and German Revolutionary Marxism' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (1988), pp.169-189; P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Harper Perennial, 2008) pp.3-8

[11] A.J. Penty, *The Restoration of the Gild System* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1906) pp.vii-viii

[12] S. G. Hobson, *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System and the Way Out* (London: G. Bell, 1914) pp.5-6; G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* (London: G. Bell, 1913) p.166

the meaning of Guild Socialism. This network involved large parts of the British empire, particularly Australia, Britain, New Zealand, and South Africa, alongside other locations tied to the American, French, German, Italian, and Japanese empires.

During the early years of the interwar period, Guild Socialism reached its most vibrant and influential stage. This was characterised by the creation of numerous guilds which began to appear in various industries. These included numerous professions, such as architects, agricultural labourers, building workers, clerks, dockers, engineers, electricians, potters, tailors, furniture and instrument makers, musicians, singers, and even cricket ball makers.[13] The guilds were also accompanied by the formation of affiliated adjuncts to the League, such as the National Guilds League of Japan and the South African National Guilds League. Despite these advances, Guild Socialism declined rapidly during the remainder of the interwar period in response to turbulent political and economic conditions, which ravaged its chances for further development.

Although the development of Guild Socialism had a wide geographical reach and involved the efforts of various different types of historical actors. The majority of research on this subject has remained constrained in two ways. The first is a focus on the development of Guild Socialism primarily within the national context of Britain. This has led to the frequent use of national labels, such as British or English, to describe Guild Socialism which feature in many of the titles of studies about the subject. These include Stephan Glass's, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialists* (1966), Jack Vowles's *From Corporatism to Worker's Control: The Formation of British Guild Socialism* (1980), and Marc Stears's, *Guild Socialism and Ideological Diversity on the British left 1914-1926* (1998).[14] These works have provided detailed analysis about Guild Socialism. However, the attention they have placed on Britain as a national container has served to exclude the role of other locations towards the development of Guild Socialism. Britain certainly was the most important site for the development of Guild Socialism, but it was not the only location affected by this subject or the only place where its meaning was generated. Indeed as the cases of Barkas, Murobuse and Thomas have already suggested a variety of locations were tied to the development of Guild Socialism.

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[13] List of Guilds, Guild Socialism Collection, Boxes 4, Nuffield College Library Oxford.

[14] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialists* (Longmans, 1966); J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control: The Formation of British Guild Socialism*, PhD Thesis, The University of British Columbia (1980); M Stears, 'Guild Socialism and Ideological Diversity on the British left, 1914–1926', *Journal of Political Ideologies* Vol. 3, No. 3 (1998) pp.289-306

The second dominant feature of existing research on Guild Socialism is a focus on a small group of historical actors. In particular, the roles played by Penty, Hobson, and Cole, loom large within studies of Guild Socialism which typically pay close attention to their specific intellectual contributions towards the subject.[15] There is good reason for this approach since these individuals certainly did play major roles towards the development of Guild Socialism. However, what is seldom mentioned is the involvement of other historical actors who also played vital roles. In particular, as has already been suggested other historical actors, like Barkas, Murobuse, and Thomas, also contributed towards the wider circulation and development of Guild Socialism in a variety of different ways by helping to exchange information, form new connections, and adding their own expertise to the subject. These contributions are visible in relation to the institutional role played primarily by the National Guilds League, which these actors were affiliated with, and has so far not been emphasised in historical studies of this subject. This institutional role allowed for the further production and circulation of Guild Socialism which went beyond the intellectual contributions of a handful of intellectuals and facilitated the emergence of a political campaign involving an array of actors and different forms of knowledge.

What follows in this thesis is an argument centred around several points which include these under-researched aspects within a new historical framework. Firstly, this thesis argues that multiple versions of Guild Socialisms existed and that these meanings shifted over time. The emergence of these meanings reflected the development of a knowledge system within the National Guilds League. While changes to these meanings highlight fluctuating external circumstances and internal tensions within the League. These would also affect the afterlife of Guild Socialism following the collapse of the National Guilds League in 1923. Secondly, this thesis argues that this development was not solely the product of a small group of intellectuals. Instead, it highlights how a diverse array of men and women from middle-class and working-class backgrounds were involved in the production of Guild Socialism through their connections to the National Guilds League. Collectively they contributed a combination of different forms of practical and theoretical

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[15] M. Dawson and C. Masquelier, 'Beyond Capitalism and Liberal Democracy: On the relevance of GDH Cole's Sociological Critique and Alternative' *Current Sociology* Vol. 64 (2016) pp.3–21; K. Madden and J. Persky, 'The economic content of G D H Cole's guild socialism: Behavioural assumptions institutional structure and analytical arguments', *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, Vol.26 No.3 (2019) pp.427-463; P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms and the New Age Magazine* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); M. Swenarton, *Artisans and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought* (MacMillan Press, 1981) pp.167-188

knowledge that became institutionalised within the League and helped to define the different meanings associated with Guild Socialism. Thirdly, this thesis draws attention to how the development of these different meanings involved multiple locations around the world. Britain was an important central location to this story. However, it was not the only place connected to the National Guilds League. As a consequence, what became known as Guild Socialism was only partly constructed in Britain. This led to the incorporation of different national and international concerns within the remit of the League. Furthermore, it also produced distinct patterns of reception and integration as local actors engaged with and contributed to the development of Guild Socialism. Finally, this thesis explores the relationship between the idea of Guild Socialism and the wider context of the British Left. It examines how the changing fortunes of the National Guilds League can be seen to operate within a broader knowledge system that shaped the course of socialism in Britain. This situation reveals how even small organisations like the League within the British Left could have an impact both nationally and internationally as part of larger global reconfigurations.

As a consequence of this argument, this thesis presents a new history of Guild Socialism concerned with the production, circulation, and integration of this subject through the involvement of various actors and institutions based around the world. This produces an account that does not amount to a simple diffusion of an idea formed in Britain. Instead, it presents a narrative focussed on the ways in which the subject of Guild Socialism developed a life of its own as it was appropriated as a means towards different ends. Including making money, winning political support, and forging international cooperation. This reevaluation provides new insight into this subject by revealing how coterminous and interconnected the meanings tied to Guild Socialism were with other ideas, which also sought to remake political economy in the early twentieth century. In so doing it draws attention to how crises and opportunities produced as a consequence of the First World War reshaped ideas and changed their viability.

In order to unlock these concerns and support the overarching argument of this thesis. This thesis is guided by the following questions. What is revealed about the history of Guild Socialism by considering it in relation to the category of knowledge and knowledge systems? Why does a more focused examination of the global dimensions of Guild Socialism help to develop a better understanding of the knowledge system within the National Guilds League? How did this knowledge system reflect the wider circumstances of the British Left from the 1880s to the interwar period? In answering these questions this thesis embraces a methodology derived from two

relatively new historical fields, Global History and the History of Knowledge. This combination produces a novel means to reassess Guild Socialism which will be discussed in more detail later in the course of this introduction. As such this research aims to contribute to several subfields of history writing which have recently emerged.

Firstly, it engages with two new developments within the History of Knowledge. The effort to incorporate new objects of study that go beyond the narrow remit of scientific objects and extending the study of practical forms of knowledge.[16] The inclusion of Guild Socialism as a new object of study provides a means to engage with this first development particularly in relation to the formation and organisation of what Michael Foucault originally labelled "orders of knowledge".[17] This concept has been adopted by historians of knowledge to describe various bodies of knowledge and can also be applied to the structure of socialist ideas and institutions, such as the emergence of Guild Socialism and the National Guilds League.[18] This ultimately serves as means to expand the remit of the History of Knowledge through the application of the category of knowledge and considering the specificity of its organisation in relation to Guild Socialism and the wider British Left. Additionally, by also considering the role played by forms of practical knowledge, such as craftsmanship and financial organisation, towards the development of this subject. This thesis offers a means to reconsider Guild Socialism beyond purely considering how forms of theoretical knowledge, like the creation of National Guilds, generated by specific intellectuals shaped this idea.[19] As a consequence, this thesis contributes to both of these new vistas within the History of Knowledge while simultaneously expanding the understanding of Guild Socialism.

Secondly, this thesis extends the remit of the subfield of Global Intellectual History, also known as the Global History of Ideas. This subfield is largely concerned with the production, circulation, and reception of ideas in a global context, exemplified by Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori's edited work, *Global Intellectual History* (2013).[20] In order to expand this subfield, which so far has been heavily influenced by methodologies derived from Intellectual History and Conceptual History, this

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[16] M. Mulsow, 'History of Knowledge' in P. Burke and M. Tamm (eds.), *Debating New Approaches to History* (Bloomsbury, 2019) pp.159-160

[17] M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (Vintage Books 1980) p.114

[18] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Polity Press, 2016) p.7

[19] P. Burke, *ibid* p.8

[20] S. Moyn and A. Sartori's (eds) *Global Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2013); S. Gänger, 'Circulation: Reflections on Circularity, Entity, and Liquidity in the Language of Global History', *Journal of Global History,* No.12 (2017) pp.303-318

thesis adopts insights derived from the material turn. As such it pays attention to the relationship between ideas and materiality as a means of explaining how ideas are transported and adapted to suit local conditions.[21] This builds upon the existing discussions within the subfield regarding the transmission and re-contextualisation of ideas and the structures that both enabled and hindered these processes.[22] In particular, this thesis refocusses attention on the materiality that ideas, like Guild Socialism, are embedded within, such as letters, newspapers, and books, as well as people themselves, and how this affects their growth, stability, and transmission.

Thirdly, this thesis provides a new subject to the growing subfield of Global Histories of Socialisms. This subfield includes a range of recent studies focussed on the diversity of socialist ideas that departs from earlier nationally bound or eurocentric understandings.[23] Following these precepts provides a means to reevaluate Guild Socialism allowing this subject to be re-situated within this subfield. As such this thesis aims towards a similar outcome as has already been demonstrated in relation to other subjects, such as recent histories of anarchism and Maoism.[24] These have demonstrated how subjects can be reinvigorated by applying new conceptual tools which widen the spatial boundaries around them and shed light on different contributions made by a new cast of actors.

In order to understand the contributions of this thesis in greater detail. The remainder of this introduction will now consider the broader historiography of Guild Socialism. This is followed by

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[21] A. Sartori, "Intellectual History and Global History" in R. Whatmore and B. Young's (eds), *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Wiley Blackwell, 2016); F.L. Fillafer, 'A World Connecting? From the Unity of History to Global History', *History and Theory,* Vol.56 (2017)

[22] C.L. Hill, "Conceptual Universalization in the Transnational Nineteenth Century" in S. Moyn and A. Sartori's (eds) *Global Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2013) pp.134-158; S. Conrad., 'Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique', *American Historical Review,* Vol. 117 (2012) pp.999–1027

[23] M. Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins: Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s* (Bloomsbury, 2020); L. Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton University Press, 2020); C. Bantman and B. Altena, *Reassessing the Transnational Turn: Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies* (Routledge, 2015); S.J. Hirsch and L. van der Walt's (eds) *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940* (Brill, 2010); B. Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anticolonial Imagination* (Verso, 2006)

[24] J. Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London: Vintage, 2020); A.C. Cook, *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); J. Galimberti, N. de Haro Garcia; V.H.F. Scott, *Art, Global Maoism and the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020); P. Cole, D. Struthers and K. Zimmer (eds), *Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* (Pluto Press, 2017); C. Bantman and B. Altena, *Reassessing the Transnational Turn Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies* (Routledge, 2015); G. Kuhn and S. Kalicha, *Von Jakarta bis Johannesburg: Anarchismus Weltweit* (Unrast Verlag, 2010); L. van der Walt and M. Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (AK Press, 2009)

subsequent sections examining the methodology, sources, and chapter structure of this thesis which are used to answer its guiding questions.

1.1. Historiography

The existing historiography of Guild Socialism has largely converged around three points. Guild Socialism is part of a socialist tradition, the product of a small group of male intellectuals, and possessed an unmistakeable national identity. All three of these traits are clearly visible in one of the earliest accounts of the subject written by the American political scientist, Niles Carpenter, *Guild Socialism: A Historical and Critical Analysis* (1922). It seems likely that Carpenter was attracted to write about the subject precisely because at this point Guild Socialism was still a vibrant and popular force. Thus making it an obvious choice for his doctoral dissertation, which became the basis for his subsequent book. In his study Carpenter draws close attention towards a small group of figures, many of whom Carpenter was in direct contact with, who he argued had initiated and sustained the development of Guild Socialism. These included figures who have already been mentioned, in particular Penty, Hobson and Cole, as well as the newspaper editor Alfred Orage, all of whom produced various treatises about Guild Socialism. This evidence led Carpenter to identify this group as instrumental towards the creation of Guild Socialism in terms of its theory and political strategy.[25] Furthermore, he positioned this group within a broader narrative of British socialism, which he made abundantly clear in the opening pages of his thesis where he wrote, "Guild Socialism is a distinctly English development; its theories are undoubtedly relevant to continental Europe and the United States, but they are, nevertheless, peculiarly the product of English social and economic history."[26] As a result, Carpenter firmly framed Guild Socialism within a national context and the wider spatial confines of what today is called the West.

Carpenter's assessment of Guild Socialism shares parallels with another doctoral thesis written at almost exactly the same time by another young political scientist, the future French Interior minister, André Philip. Philip published his thesis, *Guild Socialisme et Trade-Unionisme* (Guild Socialism and Trade Unionism - 1923) a year after Carpenter's book and followed a similar line analysis. Like Carpenter, Philip also located Guild Socialism squarely within a national narrative

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[25] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism: A Historical and Critical Analysis* (D. Appleton Company, 1922) pp.54-96
[26] N. Carpenter, *ibid* p.7

about the development of socialism in England.[27] In fact, Philip's account was even more focussed on Britain as a national container because of its focus on the development of British trade unionism in relation to Guild Socialism, while Carpenter's account at least suggested some international connections. This framing can be explained not only on the basis of Philip's analysis of the subject but also by his unsuccessful experiences in attempting to popularise Guild Socialism in France amongst French workers in the early 1920s. Furthermore like Carpenter, Philip was also in direct contact with many of the same intellectuals tied to Guild Socialism which explains why his analysis also emphasised the importance of the same cast figures.[28]

Following these early studies, the tendency of scholars to focus attention on the same three dimensions of Guild Socialism characterised the next several decades of research. This consisted mainly of intellectual biographies and critical commentaries. For example, a short pamphlet entitled, *The Political Theory of Arthur J. Penty* (1940) gave a short summary of Penty's writings pertaining to Guild Socialism therefore continuing the focus on individual thinkers in relation to Guild Socialism.[29] Almost two decades later Guild Socialism received another appraisal in *The Shop Stewards' Movement & Workers' Control 1910-1922* (1959), which also emphasised the argument that Guild Socialism was part of a British socialist tradition and largely the product of the intellectual work of G.D.H Cole. This assessment is unsurprising given that the author was a former student of Cole and Cole's direct influence is unmistakable as he himself also provided an introduction for the book.[30] Only a few years later another account, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialists* (1966) was published, which over the course of seventy-nine pages provided a short schematic overview of Guild Socialism for university students. This account ultimately found the subject to be a form of utopian socialist thinking, which despite its impracticality should be admired. Nevertheless, this account did not depart from the principal focus on the same core intellectuals who collectively worked to advance Guild Socialism in relation to British trade unionists.[31]

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[27] A. Philip, *Guild Socialisme et Trade-Unionisme* (Paris, Les Presses universitaires de France, 1923) p.9-39

[28] A. Philip to the National Guilds League, 17.1.1923, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.

[29] A.D. Sokolow, *The Political Theory of Arthur J. Penty (*New Haven: Yale Literature Magazine, 1940)

[30] B. Pribicevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement & Workers' Control 1910-1922 (*Blackwell, 1959)

[31] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialists* (Longmans, 1966)

During the 1970s a significant revival of scholarly interest around Guild Socialism began and was also accompanied by a turn towards Intellectual History. This was produced by the combination of the popular return of the ideas of workers' control and industrial democracy at the end of the 1960s, alongside the rise of the New Left which reached a zenith in the 1970s. In particular, important figures associated with the British New Left, such as the sociologist Stewart Hall and cultural theorist Raymond Williams, were especially interested in Guild Socialism.[32] At the same time leftwing Labour Party politicians, such as Tony Benn and Ian Mikardo, embraced the New Left's mandate to move beyond the social democratic settlement created in the aftermath of the Second World War. They proposed nationalising new sectors of the economy and revivifying democratic structures within industries in a similar fashion to the ideas proposed by earlier guild socialists.[33] As a result of this zeitgeist, a rediscovery of Guild Socialism occurred among historians who approached the subject largely from the perspective of Intellectual History. This new turn was extremely productive and resulted in a range of new studies exemplified by the work of Anthony Wright who contributed several articles and a book on the subject during this period.[34] These studies deepened the source base and drew attention to the need to more carefully contextualise Guild Socialism within the development of the British working-class. As a consequence of the turn towards Intellectual History historical interest also became increasingly focused on individual figures already linked to the creation of Guild Socialism. In particular, Cole now became the main focus of scholarly attention resulting in a large number of articles, biographies, and even the republication of some of Cole's original works.[35]

According to David Blaazer, this period in the historiography of Guild Socialism must be treated with caution because of the potential it created to collapse the entire subject into individual figures like Cole. This he argues created a misleading and reductive impression of the whole subject which

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[32] S.Hall, 'The Life and Times of the First New Left' *New Left Review*, Vol 61, (2010) p.178; R. Williams, *Culture and Society* (Columbia University Press, 1963) p.19

[33] L. Panitch and C. Leys, *Searching for Socialism: The Project of the Labour New Left from Benn to Corby*n (Verso, 2020) pp.5-30

[34] A.W. Wright, "Guild Socialism Revisited", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 9, No.1 (1974) pp.165-180; "Fabianism and Guild Socialism: Two views on Democracy" *International Review of Social History*, Vol.23 (1978); *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* (Clarendon Press, 1979) p.3

[35] M.I. Cole, *The Life of G.D.H. Cole* (St Martin's Press, 1971); "Guild Socialism and the Labour Research Department", A.Briggs and J. Saville (eds.) *Essays in Labour History* (Macmillan, 1971); F. Matthews, "The Building Guilds", in A.Briggs and J. Saville's (eds.) *Essays in Labour history, 1886-1923*, (Macmillan, 1971) pp.284-321; F. Matthews, "The Ladder of Becoming: A.R. Orage, A.J. Penty and the Origins of Guild Socialism in England", in D.E. Martin and D. Rubinstein (eds), *Ideology and the Labour Movement* (Croom Helm, 1979) p.156; J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War,* (Routledge & Kegan, 1974)

would be the equivalent of reducing all of Fabianism to a few biographies about Sidney and Beatrice Webb.[36] Blaazer's argument can also be pushed further since the same warning can also be extended backward in time before the 1970s. In particular, by considering this critique in relation to earlier work produced by Carpenter and Philip who also largely reduced the development of Guild Socialism to the same core group of historical actors.

In relation to the problem of reduction Blaazer also highlights another issue that began to surface in the 1970s, the marginalisation of Guild Socialism within socialist historiographies. According to Blaazer, "Guild Socialism has never enjoyed an esteemed place in the history of socialism" primarily because of the large amount of space allocated to histories and debates centred on comparatively larger constituents of the British Left, such as the Labour Party, Fabian Society and the Communist Party of Great Britain.[37] For Blaazer, the marginalisation of Guild Socialism as a subject extends beyond downplaying its significance in institutional histories. This was clearly demonstrated in the 1970s when a large number of biographies written about early supporters of Guild Socialism were published. Including the left-leaning publisher Victor Gallancz, the philosopher Bertrand Russell, the economist R.H. Tawney and the former British Education Minister, Ellen Wilkinson, all of whose earlier affiliations with the subject were either minimised or wholly ignored by their authors.[38]

According to Blaazer, the reason behind these acts of marginalisation is tied to the ambiguous relationship between Guild Socialism and the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. This event opened up a rift in the socialist world between the binaries of reformism and revolution, neither of which Guild Socialism neatly fit into for several reasons. Firstly, guild socialists were agnostic about whether peaceful gradual means or militant revolutionary strategy were necessary in order to move towards the creation of guilds. Secondly, both categories, despite their differences more or less silently agreed on a definition of socialism that aligned with centralised state power. In contrast, Guild Socialism favoured decentralisation and the empowerment of producers through guilds.[39] This point can be pushed further because Guild Socialism was in fact not even entirely married to the idea of the state owing to the fact that different guild socialists presented divergent views about its

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[36] D. Blaazer, "Guild Socialism and the Historians" *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* Vol 44, No. 1 (1998) p.3
[37] D. Blaazer, *ibid* p.1
[38] D. Blaazer, *ibid* pp.6-8
[39] D. Blaazer, *ibid* pp.8-9

necessity.[40] This explanation is highly convincing, especially in light of the dismissive attitude towards the subject shown by Marxist historians like Eric Hobsbawm, who claimed the subject deserved, "at best a footnote in the actual history of the British Labour Movement" and James Hinton, who criticised the guild socialists attempt to fuse ideas of workers' control with nationalisation and instead favoured real revolutionaries and not leftwing, "Trade Union bureaucrats".[41]

The continued marginalisation of Guild Socialism within this historiography can also be explained by efforts to claim the subject by non-marxist socialists and the political right. Specifically, Merlin Hanbury-Tracy attempted to draw parallels between Guild Socialism and authoritarian fascist visions of political economy expressed by Charles Maurras in France and António de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal based on highly selective interpretations of G.D.H. Cole and Arthur Penty;[42] while historians of anarchism, such as Geoff Ostergaard and David Goodway have both independently focussed on the libertarian and syndicalist elements embedded within Guild Socialism and pushed towards its inclusion in anarchist frameworks.[43] In particular, Ostergaard and Goodway's efforts have attempted to reposition the subject away from either reformist or revolutionary socialist camps, which Blaazer described, or presenting it as a third-way between both. Instead, their analysis placed the subject even further outside of the state socialist framework. Ultimately, these efforts also highlight the potential to realise one aim of this thesis in terms of reevaluating Guild Socialism and connecting it with the subfield of global histories of socialisms, therefore, reversing the marginalisation of this subject and placing it in relation to a new array of history writing.

The growth of scholarly interest towards Guild Socialism in the 1970s waned significantly during the 1980s. This left only one historian, Jack Vowles, who wrote about the subject in his unpublished doctoral thesis. This account provided an Intellectual History of the early development of Guild Socialism set primarily before the founding of the National Guilds League in 1915 and focused on

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[40] G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Re-stated* pp.119-121; S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *National Guilds* p.136

[41] E. Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries* (Phoenix, 1973) p.130; J. Hinton, 'G. D. H. Cole in the Stage Army of the Good', *Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin* 28 (1974), pp. 76-83

[42] L. Sudeley, 'The Ancestry of Guild Socialism' *The Contemporary Review,* Vol.227 (September, 1975) p.134

[43] G. Ostergaard, *The Tradition of Workers Control: Selected Writings by Geoff Ostergaard* (Freedom, 1997) pp.68-70; D. Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (Liverpool University Press, 2006) pp.27-32

the intellectual development of Hobson, Orage, Penty, and to a lesser extent Cole.[44] Although this work did not break from the prevailing trends of history writing about Guild Socialism, it did nevertheless provide an extremely detailed account of the context and initial formation of the subject. Despite never publishing his thesis Vowles continued to work on the subject and published a number of book chapters and articles. Several of these marked a significant development by dramatically widening the spatial boundaries of Guild Socialism. Specifically, Vowles adopted what historians would subsequently call a transnational approach by describing the growth of Guild Socialism between Britain and New Zealand through the entangled activities of actors in both locations.[45] This hugely innovative approach has largely been overlooked by historians, due to the marginalization of the subject in historiographies and because of the subsequent scholarly work which has refocused attention in different ways. However, what Vowles implicitly demonstrates through his work is the interconnectedness of Guild Socialism not just spatially to regions beyond Britain, but also to other socialist ideas, particularly Labourism, syndicalism, and trade unionism. In this way, Vowles provided an account that has since the transnational turn become an important direction of research for historians of socialisms and in so doing contributed significantly to the research agenda of this thesis.[46]

The 1990s marked another revival of scholarly interest in Guild Socialism which both continued certain trends and took the subject in a new direction towards contextualising it alongside other political ideologies. Notably, Darrow Schecter continued the trend of attempting to widen the spatial parameters of the subject in his book, *Radical Theories: Paths Beyond Marxism and Social Democracy* (1994). Although Schecter did not depart from the traditional intellectual figures associated with the subject, he did, similarly to Vowles, expand their spatial reach by situating them

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[44] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control: The Formation of British Guild Socialism*, Ph.D. Thesis, The University of British Columbia (1980)

[45] J. Vowles, "A Guild Socialist Programme of Action", *Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin,* No.43 (1981) pp.16-21; J. Vowles, 'Ideology and the Formation of the New Zealand Labour Party' *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 16, No.1 (1982) pp.39-55; J. Vowles, "From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism: Some Neglected Aspects of the Ideology of the Labour Movement', 1914-1923", in J.E. Martin and K. Taylor (eds), *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History* (Dunmore Press, 1991) pp.283-303

[46] C. Bantman and B. Altena, *Reassessing the Transational Turn: Scales of Analysis in Anarchist and Syndicalist Studies* (Routledge, 2015); B. Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anticolonial Imagination* (Verso, 2006); T. Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (University of Illinois, 2014); M. Ramnath, *Decolonising Anarchism* (AK Press, 2011); L. van der Walt and M. Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (AK Press, 2009); L. van der Walt and S.J. Hirsch, *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940* (Brill, 2010)

in context with other currents of European anti-statist socialisms, especially anarchism, Council Communism, and syndicalism.[47]

Aside from Schecter's contribution the majority of scholars during the 1990s moved in a different direction and repositioned Guild Socialism within the tradition of pluralism. This interest in pluralism was driven primarily by sociologists and political scientists and continued to build upon the focus on a British context and the specific contributions of Cole, Hobson and Penty.[48] Although these scholars did not pursue the same instinct to widen the spatial context of Guild Socialism, like Vowles and Schecter, they did significantly deepen the analysis of the subject by revealing the diversity of ideas that fed into Guild Socialism. These works complicated the idea of a monolithic socialist tradition that Guild Socialism fit into and instead placed it within a wider continuum of socialisms, while also linking it to other ideas such as corporatism and nationalism.[49] In relation to these developments, it is important to recognise the historical circumstances that this research was produced under, namely the end of the Cold War. In this context, the turn towards pluralism and anti-statist socialism makes particular sense in light of the collapse of the USSR and the rise of third-way social democracy, both of which caused a revaluation of socialism and democratic politics. Furthermore, although this research expanded the depth and diversity of the socialist part of Guild Socialism, a major consequence of this academic turn was to largely depoliticise the subject. This is particularly noticeable in comparison to the earlier revival in the 1970s and reflected the spirit of the times which characterised the end of history thesis.[50]

Since the 2000s both the transnational and discursive turns have introduced new approaches to studying Guild Socialism. The transnational turn has produced several interesting articles that widened the spatial parameters of Guild Socialism. For example, Judith Smart has written an innovative account of Guild Socialism in Australia, which highlights how existing radical labour traditions in cities like Melbourne and highly gendered male trade union practices made Guild Socialism an especially attractive alternative for female labour organisers during the First World

[47] D. Schecter, *Radical Theories: Paths Beyond Marxism and Social Democracy* (Manchester University Press, 1994) pp.103-124

[48] P. Hirst, *Associative Democracy* (Polity, 1993); D. Runciman, *Pluralism and the Personality of the State* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); M Stears, *Guild Socialism and Ideological Diversity on the British left* pp.289-306

[49] G. Ostergaard, *The Tradition of Workers' Control* (Freedom Press, 1997) pp.55-80

[50] F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Penguin Books, 1992)

War.[51] Likewise, Gareth Dale has written an excellent account of the economist Karl Polanyi's role in popularising Guild Socialism in Vienna among Austro-Marxists and Hungarian refugees in the 1920s; while Marc Stears has published two books about socialist intellectuals in the United States who attempted to instrumentalise Guild Socialism.[52] Although all of these studies have contributed to an expansion of the spatial confines of Guild Socialism they have not entirely avoided the previous conventions. For example, all of these accounts still treat the subject mostly in relation to the same core group of intellectuals largely within a British socialist tradition. Furthermore, they do not entirely break down the national container surrounding Guild Socialism as they tend instead towards establishing bilateral national connections or replacing one national context for another, which only further essentialises the national framework. This is particularly true in Michael Easson's recent doctoral dissertation written in 2012, which explicitly aimed to disrupt the idea of Englishness associated with Guild Socialism by instead emphasising the Scottishness of the subject.[53]

A particularly important contribution following the transnational turn has been made by Kevin Morgan who addresses the conspicuous absence of the category of empire from histories of Guild Socialism. This absence can be largely explained by the overwhelming tendency of historians to frame the subject nationally, or to a lesser extent transnationally. However, it is nevertheless striking that empire has not played a larger role in previous analysis of this subject given that the early twentieth century was such an important phase for formal imperialism. As such Morgan provides a highly innovative account which detailed how the construction of the Panama Canal (1904-1914) was used by guild socialists as an example of socialist labour organisation. Using this exemplar Morgan is able to highlight how Guild Socialism emerged in the context of British imperialism in an era when many prominent British socialists were aligned with the empire. In this way, Morgan complicates the story of Guild Socialism and is able to show how a connection between ideas and practices in colonial settings influenced actors in the British imperial metropole.[54]

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[51] J. Smart, "Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall Commune in Melbourne, 1917" *Labour History*, No. 94 (May, 2008) pp.113-132

[52] G. Dale, 'Karl Polanyi in Vienna: Guild Socialism, Austro-Marxism and Duczynska's Alternative', *Historical Materialism,* Vol.22, No.1 (2014) pp.34-66; M. Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* (Oxford University Press, 2006); *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2010)

[53] M. Easson, *New Boots from the Old: Matthew Walker Robieson's Ideas and the Struggle for Guild Socialism*, PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales (2012)

[54] K. Morgan, 'British Guild Socialists and the exemplar of the Panama Canal' *History of Political Thought,* Vol 28, No.1 (2007) pp.129-157

The discursive turn has led to a string of new accounts about Guild Socialism understood as a form of discourse. These innovative accounts have expanded the number of actors involved in the co-production of Guild Socialism by focussing on the literary magazine, *The New Age* (1894–1938) which served as an early incubator of discussions.[55] Although the attention in these accounts largely remains focused on the same core intellectuals associated with Guild Socialism their influence is diluted within the broader discourse which emerged in this context. Furthermore, these accounts also served to widen the spatial context of Guild Socialism by entangling it within narratives of the development of other ideas, such as corporatism and fascism in Europe. In particular, Tom Villis has done excellent work to reframe Guild Socialism as a reactionary movement against liberal democracy, which shared parallels with other reactions from both the left and right in Europe;[56] while Paul Jackson has argued in the opposite direction that the subject should be treated as a modernist idea within the broader tradition of early twentieth-century modernisms.[57] These accounts are extremely innovative also because they reinvigorate the subject of Guild Socialism by placing it into the field of Cultural History, thereby marking a departure from the earlier tradition marked heavily by Intellectual History. Despite this change, it is important not to overstate this development because in several ways these studies also continued the earliest tropes of scholarship on this subject. Specifically, these accounts nevertheless overwhelmingly consider Guild Socialism as a product of a British socialists tradition firmly embedded within a national context, which only at specific moments is allowed to come into contact with a wider European context. In this sense, they mostly leave out the influence of non-British actors, towards the production and circulation of Guild Socialism and have relatively little to say about the development of Guild Socialism in non-British settings.

From this historiographical overview, it is possible to discern that the study of Guild Socialism has both changed and in other ways remained consistent. The contribution of various scholars has increased the number of actors and settings associated with the subject substantially since Carpenter's early assessment in the 1920s. Furthermore, the subject has undoubtedly been

[55] T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy In Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Tauris, 2006); P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms and the New Age Magazine* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); A.L. Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); V. Torreggiani, 'Rediscovering the Guild System: The New Age circle as a British Laboratory for Corporatist Ideas: 1906-1916' *Oficina do Historiador*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2016) pp.25-42
[56] T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde* pp.1,55-79
[57] P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms* pp.39-61

approached from multiple perspectives, which have reframed Guild Socialism and in so doing highlighted how innovative new approaches to the subject can generate substantial contributions in different fields of scholarship. However, from a more critical perspective in many ways research into Guild Socialism has also remained consistent. It has, by and large, remained focussed on the subjects relationship to a British socialist tradition and the same core group of historical actors despite substantial efforts undertaken in the last twenty years. As a result Guild Socialism still largely represents the product of what Wright called, "the kind of woolly and over-confident idealism which is the occupational hazard of young [male] middle-class intellectuals".[58]

These limitations are directly addressed by this thesis in relation to its methodology which will now be outlined. Specifically, this aims to shift attention away from the small set of individual intellectuals associated with Guild Socialism and towards the institutional settings they along with many others inhabited. Furthermore, although substantial efforts have been made to expand the spatial boundaries of the subject it is important to consider that Guild Socialism has remained mainly a nationally bound subject. This issue is also addressed by the adoption of a global perspective which seeks to reassess the development and impact of Guild Socialism both inside and outside of the context of Britain, and in so doing shifts focus onto the role of new actors, institutions, and processes. Finally, this methodology also continues the work of exploring connections between Guild Socialism and other political traditions located outside of Britain.

1.2. Methodology

This investigation into Guild Socialism adopts a methodology that combines aspects from two relatively new fields of history writing, Global History and the History of Knowledge. In order to understand this fusion, it is necessary to examine each of these approaches separately in order to understand the advantages they present. However, before this examination, it is necessary to justify why this approach is applied to the study of Guild Socialism instead of another. In recent years the study of 'isms' has become the focus of Conceptual History through a focus on 'core concepts', while more classically isms have been the concern of Social History which has tended to understand

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[58] A.W. Wright, *Guild Socialism Revisited* p.166

them in terms of 'ideologies' or 'movements'.[59] While these approaches certainly can be used to study Guild Socialism.[60] This thesis follows the recent trend of Global History writing about 'isms' concerned with connections and global structures which shape networks of actors and institutions of knowledge production to produce a new history of isms, such as feminism and neoliberalism.[61] Furthermore, this thesis adopts the position that studying knowledge can also offer the opportunity to build upon the broad and encompassing stance towards historical materials associated with Social History. As such it takes seriously Simone Lässig's inclusive suggestion that "The history of knowledge… is a form of social and cultural history that takes 'knowledge' as a phenomenon that touches on almost every sphere of human life, and… uses knowledge as a lens to take a new look at familiar historical developments and sources."[62] In this way, knowledge provides a useful analytical category to reexamine the subject of Guild Socialism, which goes beyond other categories often used when considering isms, in order to recognise how different forms of knowledge interact to produce meanings.

For Sebastian Conrad, the emergence of Global History is a response to two perceived limitations of historical research. The first of these is a tendency towards methodological nationalism which understands nation-states as the primary containers and units of analysis of societies. This has resulted in a large majority of research being framed as national history. The second is a prevalent trend of eurocentricism within history writing, which places European developments in the foreground and understands Europe as the main driving force of world history. This tendency has led towards the universalisation of experiences formed in Europe meaning that all regions of the world become extensions of European agency.[63] According to Conrad, Global History serves as a revisionist approach in response to these limitations which incorporates a range of historical approaches, including Comparative History, Post-Colonialism, Imperial/Transimperial Histories, and International/Transnational Histories, as a means towards forming new perspectives in history

[59] J. Kurunmäki & J. Marjanen, "How Ideology Became Isms: A History of a Conceptual Coupling" in H. Haara, K. Stapelbroek and M. Immanen's (eds.) *Passions, Politics and the Limits of Society* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020) pp.291-318; M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford University Press, 1996) pp.77-78; J. Kocka, *Industrial Culture and Bourgeois Society: Business, Labor, and Bureaucracy in modern Germany* (Berghahn Books, 1999) p.276; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working-Class* (Penguin Books, 1991) p.35
[60] M Stears, *Guild Socialism and Ideological Diversity on the British left* pp.289-306
[61] Q. Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism (*Harvard University Press, 2018); M. Kenny, 'A Feminist Institutionalist Approach' *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 10, No, 4 (2014) pp. 679-684
[62] S. Lässig, 'The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda' *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute Washington DC*, No. 59 (2016) p.44
[63] S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton University Press, 2016) pp.3-4

writing, which does not exclude nation-states or Europe, but instead tries to think both with and beyond them.[64]

In order to do this Global History provides a useful methodological tool kit which this thesis draws upon. These can be referred to as the three C's of Global History: contexts, connections, and comparisons. Context is perhaps the most obvious means used by global historians to express their work as moving beyond national or imperial borders. This can result in different accounts, which include the entire planet, regions, or span multiple nations and empires.[65] A global context is therefore essential to this thesis in order to understand the extent to which the impact of Guild Socialism can be measured geographically. Connections serve as another tool often used by global historians in order to explain exchanges across borders and between different locations and actors.[66] In the case of this thesis connections between individual guild socialists and the National Guilds League are an important means towards answering why Guild Socialism became so appealing for certain historical actors and how interest was sustained. Comparison is another important tool that is useful to measure cases that are not necessarily directly linked but still inhabit a shared global context. Comparisons are particularly useful in relation to this thesis because they provide a means to assess the relative differences and similarities between Guild Socialism and other ideas, such as Fabianism, which existed at the same time. Furthermore, using comparisons in combination with a global context forms a means to avoid the potential weakness of supposing that cases exist in isolation.[67]

In addition to these tools this thesis also pays attention to a fourth C often associated with Global History, the process of circulation. Circulation has become widely adopted in the language of Global History and serves an important function in this thesis which incorporates elements of contexts, connections and comparisons into its understanding.[68] Specifically, circulation is used to explain how contingent the development of Guild Socialism was on the development of a network of supporters located around the world who interacted with the subject. This process highlights

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[64] S. Conrad, *ibid* p.37-61

[65] C. Douki and P. Minard, 'Global History, Connected Histories: A Shift of Historiographical Scale?' *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine,* Vol. 54-4, Issue 5, (2007) p.ii

[66] S. Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," in V. Lieberman's (eds.), *Beyond Binary Histories: Re-imagining Eurasia to c.1830* (The University of Michigan Press, 1999) pp.289–316

[67] S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* p.52

[68] S. Gänger, 'Circulation: reflections on circularity, entity, and liquidity in the language of global history', *Journal of Global History,* No.12 (2017) pp.303–318

examples of connections in the form of the exchanges of information between actors and institutions pertinent to Guild Socialism; shared contexts in the form of settings such as the British empire or academic institutions; and comparisons between Guild Socialism and other popular ideas at the time.

These tools provide a means of understanding Guild Socialism which goes beyond the limitations identified in the existing historiography. As such, they can be used to dissolve and reforge the British national container often placed around Guild Socialism. The nation-state nevertheless remains an important category when considering this subject, after all its main institution setting was the National Guilds League and its most prominent proposal was the formation of National Guilds. However, by going beyond the physical limits of Britain to also include the British empire as well as other nation-states and empires, a new range of connections and contexts can be added to an account of Guild Socialism. These include individual figures, such as Barkas, Murobuse and Thomas described at the beginning of this introduction, who mediated the spread of Guild Socialism beyond Britain and in the process contributed to its meaning. Furthermore, this allows for the inclusion of imperial structures, communication networks, currency controls, immigration restrictions, languages, and trade tariffs, which all influenced the production and circulation of Guild Socialism.

These connections were not always stable due to imperial competition which mediated their intensity. The First World War serves as a prime example of this where before the war communication and travel were relatively easy allowing for the relatively free movement of information and individuals related to Guild Socialism across borders. These conditions changed between 1914 and 1918 due to wartime restrictions affecting figures like the Hungarian translator, Ödön Pór. Pór became affiliated with Guild Socialism before the war while working between, London, New York, and Milan, but was largely disconnected from discussions with other guild socialists for several years on account of traveling to Italy at the beginning of 1914. By the end of the war Pór had become caught up in the rise of Italian fascism, but still clung to his earlier attachment to Guild Socialism, therefore demonstrating the relevance of both stable and unstable connections to this history.[69]

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[69] G. Franzinetti, "Ödön Pór: From Socialism to Fascism, From Hungry to Italy" in I. Fried (eds.), *Prospettive cuturali fra intersezioni, sviluppi e svolte disciplinari in Italia e in Ungheria* (Ponte Alapítvány, 2018) pp.105-113

Although the subject of Guild Socialism is certainly one which developed within Europe this thesis does not attempt to reproduce the assumption that it was solely the product of Europeans, or that its influence around the world was driven entirely by European agency. Indeed as the earlier case of Murobuse suggests Guild Socialism was often instrumentalised to suit local conditions outside of Europe. This is not to discount the important advantages Guild Socialism inherited by virtue of its emergence in Europe. A particularly striking example of this is the English language itself, which owing to the influence of the British empire was widely understood and was also the main language used to express Guild Socialism in print. This provided a significant advantage in terms of circulation of propaganda which served to boost the popularity of Guild Socialism internationally. As such this thesis adopts an approach inspired by the efforts of global historians to avoid eurocentricism but nevertheless acknowledges the relative power of certain factors emanating from Europe.

In combination with these insights this study also brings to bear aspects from the History of Knowledge. In particular, the category of knowledge is applied to the subject of Guild Socialism. According to Peter Burke "knowledge" is defined as a category from "information" which it is derived from in the same way we might talk about the "raw" ingredients of food and a "cooked" meal.[70] What this simple metaphor illustrates is a process whereby knowledge is produced through the "testing, elaboration and systematisation" of information.[71] This is sometimes called "Scientification" or "Disciplining" and according to Burke involves the "elaboration of everyday practices such as observation, description and classification, making them more precise but at the same time more remote from the experience of ordinary life."[72] The distinction between knowledge and information is a useful point to consider. Primarily because it helps in order to understand the active role played by individuals and institutions towards the creation of knowledge which became associated with Guild Socialism.

In addition to being defined from the category of information, knowledge is also according to Burke often understood pluralistically. In particular, he points out the importance of two subcategories "theoretical knowledge" and "practical knowledge" which help to define different forms of knowledge. This distinction is informed by linguistic divisions between different forms of

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[70] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* pp.18-19
[71] P. Burke, *ibid* p.46
[72] P. Burke, *ibid* p.46

knowledge, such as "Erkenntnis" (knowledge from experience) and "Wissenschaft" (academic knowledge) in German.[73] In the case of Guild Socialism, an understanding of practical and theoretical knowledges is useful in order to explain the different contributions made to the meaning of the subject. For example, an array of theoretical knowledge pertaining to different understandings of political economy was incorporated into Guild Socialism. These came from different sources including anarchism, corporatism, industrial unionism, Marxism and syndicalism, which were gathered together, organised and synthesised within the institutional framework of the National Guilds League. Alongside these forms of knowledge the League also incorporated various forms of practical knowledge which became vital to the meaning of Guild Socialism, including understandings of craftsmanship, office management, publishing, and financial organisation. All of these forms of knowledge also contributed to the development and circulation of Guild Socialism and are therefore reasonable to consider. Furthermore, it is important to consider the different carriers of these forms of knowledge and their lives. In particular, the National Guilds League was extremely reliant on its members who came from a variety of middle-class and working-class backgrounds and were often members or ex-members of other political movements, such as trade unions, the Fabian Society, and the campaign for women's suffrage. This differentiated membership contributed an array of knowledges which this thesis considers.

The elaboration of different forms of knowledge has been a crucial development towards defining the History of Knowledge as a field from the History of Science. According to Lorraine Daston, knowledge is a more inclusive and less eurocentric category than "science" which allows historians to consider a broader range of ideas and practices from around the world.[74] Crucially she notes it allows historians "to follow practices wherever they may lead, however remote these may be from anything resembling latter-day science."[75] For Daston this is particularly important because it allows the History of Knowledge to loosen the grip of recognised people often invoked in histories of science like "Aristotle, Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, etc" and topics that often lead towards modern science.[76] This is an especially crucial consideration to this thesis because it allows a subject like Guild Socialism, or even more broadly socialism, which would typically be beyond the remit of the History of Science to be considered in relation to the category of knowledge.

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[73] P. Burke, *ibid* p.8

[74] L. Daston, 'The History of Science and the History of Knowledge' *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* Vol. 1, No.1 (2017) pp.141-142

[75] L. Daston, *ibid* p.143

[76] L. Daston, *ibid* p.143

Furthermore, Daston's description of the inclusivity and less eurocentric character of knowledge combines clearly with Conrad's description of the remit of Global History. This provides a useful means to integrate the range of different forms of knowledge, such as translation, contributed by different actors like Pór in various locations to the meaning of Guild Socialism. Therefore helping to construct a new understanding of Guild Socialism not simply as an idea conceived in Britain and diffused around the world, but instead of an idea constructed between different locations out of range of different knowledges.

In addition to the category of knowledge this thesis also considers knowledge systems that describe the structure and relationships between different forms of knowledge embedded within a particular setting.[77] In this case, the National Guilds League served as an institutional carrier for a knowledge system that defined Guild Socialism. In the narrowest sense, Martin Mulsow points out that knowledge systems, or as he calls them "knowledge cultures", typically take the form of social groups or institutions whose primary purpose is the acquisition of knowledge. As a simple example, he cites a spy network whose function is to obtain information ascertain its usefulness and produce certain facts from raw information that constitute forms of knowledge as a consequence. In a wider sense, Mulsow, notes, that knowledge systems describe any constellation that coheres through close communication, such as a city or a trading network.[78] This understanding builds upon Ludwik Fleck's idea of a community of researchers who interact collectively towards the production of knowledge using a shared framework of cultural customs for the acquisition of knowledge.[79] Understood in these terms the League functioned as an institution that played host to a knowledge system by collecting knowledge that informed the meaning of Guild Socialism and sustained its development. More broadly the wider British Left which the League interacted with and was a constituent of can also be considered similarly as a series of knowledge systems that informed the development of other isms, such as Bolshevism, Fabianism, Labourism.

Daston adds to this understanding of knowledge systems by considering their hierarchical structure. For Daston hierarchy is a necessary feature that allows knowledge systems to prioritise certain forms of knowledge over others and distinguish what is acceptable knowledge from what is

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[77] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* p.7; L. Daston, Comment on M. Mulsow, 'History of Knowledge' in P. Burke and M. Tamm (eds.), *Debating New Approaches to History* (Bloomsbury, 2019) pp.174-177
[78] M. Muslow, "History of Knowledge" in M. Tamm and P. Burke's (eds.) *Debating New Approaches to History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) p.163
[79] L. Fleck, *The Genesis and Development of Scientific Fact* (University of Chicago Press, 1979) pp.38-51

unacceptable. Furthermore, hierarchies provide knowledge systems with a means to distinguish the difference between raw information and cooked knowledge, or to identify rival knowledge systems. In this sense, the hierarchical structures which define knowledge systems serve, according to Daston as a means to assign relative value to different types of knowledge.[80] This consideration is important in relation to the National Guilds League which also refined and excluded forms of knowledge. This served to situate the League in relation to other rival socialist institutions within the British Left, like the Fabian Society and the Communist Party of Great Britain, which produced knowledge about different models of socialism. This structural understanding is ultimately important because it allows for an awareness of the boundaries of knowledge and the interactions between different claims to knowledge.[81]

A final important feature of knowledge systems identified by Simone Lässig is their dynamic nature. According to Lässig knowledge systems are always in a state of flux as different types of knowledge jostle for dominance within hierarchical structures.[82] This is a particularly important consideration in relation to the National Guilds League and the history of Guild Socialism for two reasons. Firstly, it helps to explain the emergence of different meanings of Guild Socialism which owing to the dynamic hierarchical structure of the knowledge system within the League received different degrees of prominence. This perspective departs significantly from the majority of earlier studies of Guild Socialism that have tended to view this subject in monolithic terms.[83] Instead what is revealed by this new approach is new more varied history that accounts for the tensions and overlaps between different meanings of Guild Socialism. Secondly, a dynamic view of the knowledge system within the League helps to explain how the different meanings of Guild Socialism changed over time both in relation to each other and external circumstances. This approach, therefore, shifts attention away from the small group of intellectuals often associated with this subject in order to refocus on the changing set of meanings tied to Guild Socialism generated by contributions from a range of individuals and institutions who interacted with the League.

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[80] L. Daston, "Comment on M. Muslow's History of Knowledge" in M. Tamm and P. Burke's (eds.) *Debating New Approaches to History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) p.176

[81] L. Daston, *The History of Science* pp.141-142; S. Dupré and G. Somsen, 'The History of Knowledge and the Future of Knowledge Societies' *Wissenschaftsgeschichte* Vol.42 (2019) p.189

[82] S. Lässig, *The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda* pp.44-45, 52

[83] The only notable exception to this is trend is Marc Stears's work who has developed a methodology closely related to Conceptual History. See M Stears, *Guild Socialism and Ideological Diversity on the British left* pp.289-306

Ultimately combining these aspects of Global History and the History of Knowledge provides several means that reinvigorate the subject of Guild Socialism. Specifically, they form a new analytical framework designed to overcome the limitations of methodological nationalism and the limited number of actors typically associated with this subject. This allows this thesis to develop its core arguments and answer the central questions it seeks to address. In order to achieve this goal, it is now necessary to turn towards the empirical sources which are used to support this work.

1.3. Sources

In order to empirically ground this research, this thesis introduces into the historiography of Guild Socialism an array of new and underused sources. These include a large cache of unpublished documents produced by the National Guilds League as well as private letters sent to the League from affiliates and members based in various locations around the world. These demonstrate the spatial reach of the subject and draw attention to the range of actors entangled with the processes of production, circulation, and reception of this idea. These new sources are brought into conversation with others already present in the historiography, in particular published books, pamphlets, and newspapers written by members of the League. By bringing these different sources into contact this thesis constructs a new archive with which to understand Guild Socialism. In order to form this empirical basis four physical locations were especially important to the construction of this archive.

The materials held at Nuffield College, Oxford, in the Guild Socialism and G.D.H. Cole collections as well as the Nuffield College library have been especially useful in order to understand the workings of the National Guilds League. These sources include committee reports, draft essays, financial statements, memos, speeches, and most significantly a large number of letters, newspapers, pamphlets sent to the National Guilds League offices in London from correspondents around the world. Although a small number of these sources have already been used by historians the vast majority have not. These sources reveal a complex picture of the actors involved in the inner workings of the League as well as an array of interested affiliates and official members who were materially connected to the League by imperial and intraimpieral communication systems.

This collection of sources has been especially important to this thesis for three reasons. Firstly, they present a record of the development of the National Guilds League from a double perspective of internal documents produced within the institution that highlight internal tensions alongside other

outwardly orientated materials, such as newspaper articles, pamphlets, and study aids, produced to raise awareness about Guild Socialism. In combination, these sources produce a differentiated image of the League and provide insight into the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism. Furthermore, they also possess a great degree of information about the wider context that this process occurred within thereby highlighting external factors which contributed towards this development. Secondly, the materials sent to the League highlight to a limited extent the actors located outside of Britain who were connected to the development of Guild Socialism. Collectively their contributions highlight how a network of actors helped to circulate Guild Socialism through the use of different forms of knowledge or attempting to integrate the subject into existing knowledge systems. As a result, they also help to reveal how certain locations became more closely associated with Guild Socialism due to structural pressures leading to the local reproduction of pamphlets and vigorous newspaper exchanges with the League, while other locations remained relatively isolated in comparison. Thirdly access to the Nuffield College library has provided this thesis with a great deal of material published by members and affiliates of the League often donated from G.D.H. Cole's own personal collection. These materials have often been the basis for previous historians' work. Therefore they contribute important insight into part of the context that informed the growth of Guild Socialism, while also highlighting the limits of earlier scholarship.

Another important source of information for this thesis has been the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis in Amsterdam. This archive has contributed a rich vein of information about individual historical actors involved in translating Guild Socialism into various languages and efforts to publish books and pamphlets on the subject, particularly in Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United States. These materials have so far never been included by historians in studies about Guild Socialism and have furnished this thesis with a number of important insights. Firstly, these materials provide a means to make visible the connections and structure within which Guild Socialism was expressed, such as how individual actors navigated a complex environment of trade tariffs, publishing rights, and war, in order to stay connected with the League. Secondly, these sources also reveal how individual historical actors struggled to gain access to books and pamphlets about Guild Socialism, and also fought over the inclusion of the subject in existing knowledge systems, such as encyclopaedias and syllabi produced by trade unions and universities. As a result, they highlight different vectors through which Guild Socialism came to be integrated within different knowledge systems.

The British Library in London has provided this thesis with a complete collection of newspapers and pamphlets created by the League. These were primarily produced in Britain, but in some instances also elsewhere, such as in India. Although some of these sources have been used by historians previously they have never been used in their entirety. These sources provide a basis to consider how Guild Socialism was publicly expressed and debated. In this way, they are useful in order to understand the formation of a knowledge hierarchy within the League, as different interpretations of Guild Socialism crystallised and were organised in relation to each other. Furthermore, they also provided a view onto a shared forum in which different opinions about Guild Socialism from around the world could be expressed. In addition, these sources can be contrasted against different sources, such as letters and books, in order to highlight the multitude of ways actors around the world understood Guild Socialism.

Finally, sources located in Berlin at the Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, have provided significant insight into German and Austrian perspectives on Guild Socialism. These locations contained primary sources in the form of pamphlets, books, and newspapers, which have not featured in the wider historiography of Guild Socialism. As such, they provide an important counterweight to the large number of sources gathered in Britain, where the majority of sources used in this thesis have been gathered. This limitation is partially overcome by the use of sources from Berlin which have helped to highlight how actors in German-speaking countries viewed and contributed to the meaning of Guild Socialism. Furthermore, these institutions also house a large number of original English language published books written by guild socialists as well as German language translations, which can be analysed side by side. This is particularly useful in order to understand how translation changed and added meaning to Guild Socialism. Furthermore, it provides valuable insight into how information about Guild Socialism was translated into other languages which are beyond my own expertise.

1.4. Chapter Outline

The structure of this thesis is divided into four chapters followed by a conclusion. Chapter One examines the formation of the National Guilds League in 1915 and in so doing it examines various forms of theoretical and practical knowledge which became associated with Guild Socialism. The chapter begins with an analysis of two divergent goals of British socialists at the end of the nineteenth century: collectivism and workers' control. The tension between these two poles plus the

changing makeup of trade unionism and early vestiges of a welfare state in Britain all contributed towards the emergence of Guild Socialism in the final decade before the First World War. Initially, this development was centred around a small group of intellectuals who were concentrated on forging a new pathway for the British labour movement. These early efforts culminated with the creation of the National Guilds League which institutionalised Guild Socialism and led to the formation of a knowledge system that produce and circulate meanings attached to the subject. Although institutionalisation refined Guild Socialism through the inclusion and exclusion of certain forms of knowledge. It did not produce a singular orthodox definition of Guild Socialism. Instead, three overlapping meanings of Guild Socialism emerged based on different combinations of knowledge. These meanings occupied different positions in relation to each other within the League, thereby reflecting the diversity and hierarchical structure of the knowledge system contained within the institution.

Chapter Two explores the consequences of the creation of the League by examining the circulation of Guild Socialism internationally. In order to examine this process, this chapter focuses on the development of a communication network around the National Guilds League. As a means to model this network this chapter highlights three groups of actors: translators, journalists, and trade unionists through six individual case studies. As a result, this chapter draws attention to the ways in which these actors interacted with Guild Socialism leading to changes in the meaning of the subject through the addition of new forms of knowledge, such as its translation from English into other languages, and attempts to integrate Guild Socialism into local knowledge systems via press networks. Furthermore, it highlights the role of the National Guilds League and the ways in which it responded to these efforts by incorporating different national and international concerns into Guild Socialism. In so doing this chapter highlights the problems and advantages experienced in relation to the National Guilds League as Guild Socialism became internationally popular.

Chapter Three returns focus to the activities of the National Guilds League in Britain and contextualises the development of Guild Socialism in relation to post-war reconstruction. This chapter follows the efforts of the League to redefine the meaning of reconstruction in Britain and struggle with the consequences of the First World War. In so doing it highlights how this campaign was closely tied to other locations around the world also struggling with similar questions tied to reconstruction. These efforts created tensions within the League, which helped to transform the different meanings of Guild Socialism and alter their relationships, which almost led to the collapse

of the League. Alongside this internal crisis, this period was also marked by blossoming opportunities for Guild Socialism. New guilds mushroomed across different industries, most notably in the building sector, emerging out of trade unions across Britain and abroad. These developments seemed to validate the guild socialists' arguments and were part of an array of new solutions put forward to social problems in the interwar period. As a result, this chapter draws attention to the growing momentum behind Guild Socialism during the volatile early interwar years and examines its national and international impact in response to dynamic conditions.

Chapter Four examines the decline of Guild Socialism during the 1920s. Specifically, it uses Martin Mulsow's concept of "precarious knowledge" in order to examine the internal and external threats which emerged that challenged the stability of the National Guilds League.[84] This chapter addresses how the guild socialists responded to these threats and attempted to reverse the decline. Furthermore, it draws attention to the consequences of the 1926 general strike and miners' strikes in Britain, which largely destroyed support for Guild Socialism and subsequent efforts during the 1930s to rebuild it in new institutional forms. This chapter is particularly important because this period of decline has so far received very little scholarly attention and therefore serves to set the record straight on the marginalisation of Guild Socialism.

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[84] M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen: Eine andere Ideengeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012) pp.11-37

Chapter One: Making the National Guilds League

"Create a Monopoly of Labour, Oust the Capitalist and Take Control, Produce for Use- Not for Profit. Do you want to know how? Read the pamphlets of The National Guilds League."[85] So read one of the first leaflets produced by the National Guilds League after its creation in April 1915. Originally launched in London by a group of around forty men and women at a meeting held at the headquarters of the British Steel Smelters Association, close to King's Cross Station. Its organisers argued that the League would, "differ from other Socialist Societies in that its aims would be neither to get its members into Parliament or on to public bodies, nor to urge the passing of remedial reforms, but simply and solely to define and spread the ideas and ideals of Guild-Socialism among the organised workers."[86] True to their word within a few months members of the League made contact with trade union councils across the country with the offer to send speakers. These proposals were quickly accepted and within a year over twenty-one lectures had been conducted at trade union branches and socialist societies across Britain. In tandem with these efforts, a vigorous print media campaign was also launched. Leftwing national newspapers, including the *Daily Citizen*, *The New Age,* and the *Daily Herald,* celebrated the inauguration of the League. While small local papers, such as the *Huddersfield Worker, Leeds Weekly Citizen,* and *Glasgow Forward* printed a succession of articles about the new institution. These actions were combined with additional efforts by members of the National Guilds League who produced books, leaflets, pamphlets, and, eventually, a national newspaper, to circulate the message of Guild Socialism. These activities quickly translated into increasing support. In less than a year the membership of the League rose to 210 and regional branches of the organisation opened in Birmingham, Glasgow, Newcastle, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester.[87]

Over the next few years, the National Guilds League continued to grow. Adding new regional branches and members to its ranks, while also gaining the affiliation of trade unions and expanding its propaganda campaign. These efforts carried Guild Socialism to audiences across the country, but also to other regions both within the British empire and beyond. As one internal report produced by the League about the distribution of members from October 1916 indicated, while the majority of

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[85] *National Guilds League Leaflet No.2*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11,M/34, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[86] *A Guild Socialist League*, G.D.H. Cole Collection, D3/12/5/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[87] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1915-1916,* pp.3-7, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

members were mainly located in Britain a small minority were already present in Canada, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), France, New Zealand, and South Africa.[88] This list of countries would increase over the next several years as the number of members and affiliates flocked to the newfound prominence of Guild Socialism heralded by the emergence of the League. This situation prompts two questions this chapter seeks to address. Why was the League created in the first place? And, what effects did its creation have upon the meaning of Guild Socialism?

The title of this chapter draws inspiration from E.P. Thompson's, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1961) for two reasons. Firstly, "making" describes an active process according to Thompson, which led the English working-class to be "present at its own making."[89] In the case of this chapter guild socialists too were already present when the League formed and for the active process of institutionalisation of Guild Socialism it represented. Secondly, the making of the League has so far received relatively little attention from scholars who have tended to focus on individual members and their specific intellectual contributions. This has led to a number of in-depth intellectual studies about prominent guild socialists and the broader milieus they belonged to.[90] However, has also meant that the role of the League has remained relatively obscure. This deficit in the historiography has already been noted by Jack Vowles who in 1980 called for "a full and finely balanced account" of the League.[91] This chapter aims to address this lacuna and highlight how the creation of the National Guilds League institutionalised Guild Socialism transforming it from its vaguely defined antecedents into a concrete set of meanings. As a result, a knowledge system emerged within this institutional context which generated these meanings and drew together different forms of practical and knowledge from an array of historical actors. The development of this knowledge system reflected the broader condition of the British Left during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

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[88] Report on Membership, 20.10.1916, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[89] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin, 1991) p.8
[90] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism: An Historical and Critical Analysis* (D. Appleton, 1922); S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of English Guild Socialism* (Longman, 1966); T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy In Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Tauris, 2006); P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms and the New Age Magazine* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); A.L. Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); V. Torreggiani, 'Rediscovering the Guild System: The New Age circle as a British Laboratory for Corporatist Ideas: 1906-1916' *Oficina do Historiador,* Vol. 9, No. 2 (2016) pp.25-42; M. Stears, 'Guild Socialism and Ideological Diversity on the British left, 1914–1926' *Journal of Political Ideologies* Vol. 3, No. 3 (1998) pp.289-306
[91] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control: The Formation of British Guild Socialism*, PhD Thesis, The University of British Columbia (1980) p.321

In order to examine this development, this chapter is divided into four parts. Part One begins by examining the three decades before the National Guilds League was officially founded in 1915 and focusses on the tension between two versions of socialism that defined the British Left during the period: collectivism and workers' control. These rival bodies of knowledge fought for influence over the British labour movement creating a dialectical tension out of which the first guild socialists were forged. This conflict produced a large part of the impetus behind the emergence of what later became known as Guild Socialism alongside other factors including changes in the nature of trade unionism and the emergence of a welfare state in Britain.

Part Two pays close attention to several figures who heralded the creation the National Guilds League. They responded to the growing polarisation within the British Left and a context of unrest in Britain by mobilising different forms of practical and theoretical knowledge. This gave shape to the beginnings of the guild idea and even allowed some of them to begin to identify as 'guild socialists' or 'guildsmen'. As a consequence, they helped to form the conditions for the making of the League and the beginnings of the knowledge system that would generate the various meanings attached to Guild Socialism.

Part Three examines the process of institutionalisation which accompanied the official founding of the League. Specifically, it considers two aspects of this process that defined the new organisation from the efforts which preceded it: a propaganda campaign and institutional organisation. These twin foci reveal the diversity of individuals and forms of knowledge that contributed to the knowledge system within the League. This serves to challenge the long-held assumption by some historians that what became known as Guild Socialism was only the product of a small group of middle-class, male socialist intellectuals.[92]

Part Four explores the three meanings of Guild Socialism: corporatist, medieval, and syndicalist, which developed as a consequence of the creation of the knowledge system within the League. Considering the multiplicity of these meanings is important because they help to highlight the tensions between different types of knowledge associated with Guild Socialism. Furthermore, they help to highlight the structure of the knowledge system within the League as certain meanings were more or less dominant indicating the relative importance of different forms of knowledge. These

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[92] R. Charles, *The Development of Industrial Relations in Britain 1911-1939* (Hutchinson, 1973) p.85; J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.267

considerations will become important for subsequent chapters. In particular, the multiplicity of meanings would affect different patterns of international reception of Guild Socialism and in the years to come new forms of knowledge would be added which would change the structure of the knowledge system.

2.1. The Janus Face of the British Left: Collectivism and Workers' Control

The conditions that gave rise to Guild Socialism were located at the end of the nineteenth century and primarily, although not exclusively, located in Britain. The growth of New Unionism in Britain during the 1880s was a significant precursor characterised by the creation of large industrial unions that organised workers across entire industries. Including the National Union of Dock Labourers, the National Amalgamated Union of Labour, and the National Amalgamated Sailors' and Firemen's Union. These unions were organisationally distinct from the earlier forms of trade unionism in Britain, particularly craft unions that emerged during the 1850s and organised workers on the basis of particular crafts or trades, such as carpentry or painting; and even earlier attempts to establish general unions during the 1830s that aimed to incorporate workers from every industry into a single union.[93] Industrial unions were also much larger than these earlier trade unions in terms of their memberships owing partly to the fact that they recruited skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers across entire industries, but also because of the general rise in trade union membership in Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century.[94] Furthermore, the new unions were also distinct in terms of their general militancy from early forms of unionism, particularly the more conciliatory craft unions, and were driven forward by rising numbers of successful industrial actions, such as the Match workers' strike in 1888 and the Gas workers' and Dockers' strikes of 1889. These actions were often led by individuals who identified explicitly with socialism, such as Tom Mann, Eleanor Marx, and Ben Tillet, and as a result the British labour movement became increasingly class-conscious during this period concerning itself not only with wages or working conditions, but also with issues pertaining to the distribution of wealth in society and the control of industry.[95] Alongside industrial action trade unions also began to turn their attention towards legislative means to forward the concerns of labour movement. This impetus gathered increasing force after 1884 when the political franchise was expanded to around forty percent of adult male population, which

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[93] C. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914* (Routledge, 2005) pp.148-160
[94] N. C. Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976* (Gill and Macmillan, 1978) p.49
[95] N. C. Soldon, *ibid* pp.1-9; D. Bythell, 'Benjamin Tillett (1860–1943)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36522; C. Wrigley, 'Thomas Mann (1856–1941)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34854; D. McLellan, 'Eleanor Marx' (1855–1898)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40945

created a pathway for trade unions to enter into formal politics.[96] These conditions ultimately led many trade unionists towards a form of state socialism, otherwise known as collectivism, during this period.[97]

Collectivism was the dominant form of socialism in Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and characterised largely by a social-democratic program for state ownership and control of the means of production. In most of continental Europe collectivism was often heavily informed by the intellectual legacy of Marxism during this period following the breakup of the First International 1876, such as the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) in Germany. However, this was not the case in Britain where revolutionary thought exerted relatively little influence over socialists and trade unionists.[98] Instead, collectivism in Britain was largely defined by a doctrine of gradual transition to socialism, which emphasised efficient production and egalitarian distribution through control of the state represented most recognisably by the Fabian Society.[99]

The Fabian Society was formed in 1884 in the midst of the socialist revival in Britain during the 1880s and 1890s. This revival accompanied the growth of New Unionism and saw the growth of various new socialist organisations in Britain, including the Social Democratic Federation in 1881, the Socialist League in 1885, and the Independent Labour Party in 1893.[100] The Fabian Society rapidly superseded these other organisations by publishing its ideas widely and became a dominant influence over the labour movement. It was predominantly a middle-class institution devoted to research into all manner of social and political questions, and its membership included prominent figures who were drawn to the society's socialist cause. Including the writers George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, the political activist Annie Besant, who had been heavily involved with the 1888 Match workers strike, and the well-respected sociologists Sidney and Beatrice Webb. As such the Fabian Society represented an important site for the production and validation of forms of knowledge pertaining to collectivism.[101]

This role was stressed in 1887 when the Fabian Society set out its rules for achieving socialism, "by the general dissemination of knowledge as to the relation between the individual and society in its

[96] C. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century* p.68
[97] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* (Appleton, 1922) pp.55-56
[98] R. McKibbin, 'Why Was There No Marxism in Great Britain?' *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 391 (Apr., 1984), pp. 297-331
[99] T. Wright, *Socialisms: New and Old* (Florence Taylor and Francis, 2006) p.81
[100] M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton University Press, 2017) p.15
[101] S. Lässig, 'The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda' *Bulletin of the GHI Washington*, Issue 59 (Autumn, 2016) p.36

economic, ethical and political aspects."[102] Soon afterwards the society published a detailed outline of its ideas under the title, *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (1889) which sold 25,000 copies by March 1893.[103] This text offered a clear statement of state-led intervention in society, which could be achieved through the use of parliamentary means by the labour movement. As such, it included endorsements of taxation on income, inheritance, and rent, alongside bringing industries into public control and ownership. These policies were accompanied by advocacy for redistributing collective wealth to the poorer sections of society through a public insurance system and the introduction of a minimum wage and employment exchanges.[104] Alongside this text the Fabians published a wide array of other books which promoted the same model of socialism and were equally well received. The Webbs, for example, published *Industrial Democracy* (1887), which Eric Hobsbawm once described as the best book ever written on the British trade unions, as well as, *The History of Trade Unionism* (1884) that provided a detailed theory and historical narrative for the British labour movement.[105]

Fabianism, as it also became known, was a gradualist approach to socialism that aimed to bring about a socialist state through parliamentary reform and collectivise ownership. Parliamentary democracy, as opposed to industrial militancy, was deeply engrained in Fabian collectivism. This strategy was reflected in the title of the Fabian Society, which was derived from the Roman strategy of winning battles through attrition rather than pitched battles and the same principle was applied to politics. As such the society often supported campaigns that increased the strength of the British state by increasing its ability to represent the population, such as extending political suffrage to all men and women and the payment of wages to members of parliament.[106] It was for this reason that the Fabians alongside trade unions supported the creation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, which aimed to increase the representation of labour interests in parliament, and changed its name to the Labour Party in 1906 after it won its first parliamentary seats. The importance of parliamentary means to drive forward collectivism was solidified in 1901 following the Taff-Vale court ruling. This judgment meant that trade unions could now be sued for damages caused by their members during industrial actions and followed the successful trial brought by the Taff Vale Railway Company against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. This event strengthened

[102] Quoted in M. Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism* (Stanford University Press, 1969) p.338
[103] K. Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain: 1881-1951* (Thrupp, 1997) p.23
[104] G.B. Shaw, *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (Humboldt Publishing, 1889)
[105] E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The Fabians reconsidered' in *Labouring Men* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968) p.255
[106] M. Minion, 'The Fabian Society and Europe during the 1940s: The Search for a 'Socialist Foreign Policy'' *European History Quarterly,* Vol.30 (2000) pp.237-240

the idea for many British socialists and trade unionists that the only way to advance socialism was through passing legislation by political representatives and not through industrial action.[107]

The growth of Fabian collectivism was also closely related to the development of New Liberalism in late nineteenth-century Britain, which emerged around a group of intellectuals known as the New Liberals. This group made the case against *laissez-faire* classical liberalism and argued in favour of state intervention in order to promote individual liberty through the creation of favourable social and economic circumstances.[108] The emergence of New Liberalism was conspicuous after the 1906 general election, which saw the governing Liberal Party with the support of the newly elected Labour Party, introduce a series of reforms that marked the early beginnings of a welfare state in Britain. These reforms included increasing access to schools through the Education Act (1907), the introduction of pensions for anyone over the age of 70 via the Old-Pensions Act (1908), addressing unemployment through the Labour Exchanges Act (1909), providing rescue aid and fire precautions in mines by The Mines Accident Act (1910), and the introduction of compulsory health insurance through the National Insurance Act (1911).

The trigger for these reforms was an economic depression in Britain that began in 1906 and lasted until the start of the First World War. The depression was caused by rising levels of inflation in Britain, caused by the economic consequences of the Russo-Japanese War, the Boer War, and an increase in global gold production, resulting in the decline of real wages and escalating unemployment figures.[109] In response to the worsening economic conditions, many trade unionists now began to question the efficacy of collectivism, due to the limited relief provided by the welfare reforms, and started to turn away from parliamentary means and return to industrial action as means to win economic concessions. This heralded the beginning of the Great Unrest, an unprecedented period of labour militancy in Britain characterised by rising numbers of strikes and waining support for the Labour Party.[110] Indicative of this period was the increasing number of strikes per year, which rose from around 480 annually between 1907 and 1910 to 873 in 1911, 834 in 1912, 1459 in 1913, and 972 in 1914.[111] These strikes were accompanied by growing numbers of workers participating in these actions, which resulted in greater economic disruption. For example, the 1911 transport worker strikes involved close to 1.5 million dockers, seamen, and railway workers which

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[107] C. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914* p.157
[108] M. Freeden, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Clarendon Press, 1978) pp.1-25
[109] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.68-78
[110] C. Bantman, 'The Franco-British Syndicalist Connection and the Great Labour Unrest, 1880s-1914' *Labour History Review*, Vol.79 No.1. (2014) p.81
[111] S. Meacham, 'The sense of an impending clash: English working class unrest before the First World War', *American Historical Review*, Vol.77 (1972) p.1344

incurred a loss of three million working days. In 1912, forty million working days were lost due to industrial actions surpassing all previous records.[112] These strikes sent panic through the British establishment and often proved successful in winning concessions and building increasing support between unions. For example, at the start of 1911 sailors and firemen successfully struck followed in July and August by a series of other transport workers disputes which resulted in a national railway strike. This forced the government to establish a Royal Commission to discuss industrial relations in the railways and led to three of the railway unions merging to form the National Union of Railwaymen in 1913. Furthermore, in February 1912 the Miners' Federation of Great Britain began a national strike, which lasted for 37 days and forced the government to hastily pass the Coal Mine Act (1912) that guaranteed miners a minimum wage, and clearly demonstrated to many trade unionists the efficacy of industrial action to win concessions over parliamentary means.[113]

The growing divide now forming between Fabian collectivism and many trade unionists was also visible to middle-class political commentators in Britain. These voices found expression in national newspapers, such as *New Witness* and *The New Age*, where they gave favour to the labour unrest and sympathy to the strikers. In particular, they shared the trade unionists disappointment with the Labour Party, due to its slow pace of winning political power and alliance with the Liberal government.[114] This support became particularly visible after 1908 when Walter Osborne, branch secretary for the Railway Servants Union, sued his own trade union for demanding that he pay a contribution to the Labour Party. This led to the legal ruling in 1909 which prevented trade unions from collecting funds directly for the Labour Party that threatened its existence, due to the party's reliance on trade union funds.[115] After this judgment, trade unionists and sympathetic political commentators began to argue for the liberation of trade unions from governmental regulation and to openly threaten syndicalism, arguing that industries should be controlled by workers and operate independently of the direction of either employers or the state.[116]

The demand for workers' control represented a very different socialist tradition brewing beneath the surface of mainstream collectivism in Britain. Often associated with anti-statist forms of socialism,

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[112] G.H. Perris, *Industrial History of Modern England* (New York, 1914) p.510; Y. Béliard, 'Introduction: Revisiting the Great Labour Unrest, 1911–1914' *Labour History Review,* Vol. 79, No. 1 (2014) p.1
[113] B.R. Mitchell, *Economic Development of the British Coal Industry, 1800-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1984) p.190
[114] T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde* pp.41-55
[115] H. Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) pp.128-131
[116] M. Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* p.90-93

such as anarchism, syndicalism, and types of early utopian socialism.[117] The demand for workers'
control represented an alternative socialist project to collectivism, which called for the replacement
of capitalist-controlled industries by the direct control, either partly or completely, of production by
workers employed in those industries.[118] Advocates of these proposals did not look to the state as a
means to deliver socialism instead they saw trade unions as the basis for sustaining and
transitioning to a new form of socialist political economy; and concerned themselves with
restructuring existing trade unions with the intention they would first win full control over the
means of production and undermine capitalism through industrial action. Setting themselves in
opposition to the idea of solely taking control of the state advocates of workers' control rejected
both capitalism and collectivism.[119] Additionally, it is important to recognise that this idea was
formed before the seismic events of the 1917 Russian revolutions, which divided socialists around
the world explicitly over the binary question of whether reformism or revolution was the best means
to transition to socialism. This meant a wide degree of variation and discussion over the ways in
which unions could be restructured and organised, as well as the type of society a worker-managed
society could support.[120]

The growth of the demand for workers' control was driven by the circumstances tied to the Second
Industrial Revolution (1870-1914). Characterised by the introduction of new machinery powered by
novel sources of electricity, such as refined internal combustion engines which increased levels of
electrification. The Second Industrial Revolution greatly affected casual, seasonal and project
workers, and those working in key industries like mining and railways via these innovations. This
shifted the relative importance of existing industries due to the increased speed and efficiency and
particularly affected mining, railways and factory production as their relative importance to national
economies increased alongside changes in working conditions caused by the new technology and
new systems of management. It was precisely these circumstances that motivated the rise of many

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[117] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control 1910-1922* (Blackwell, 1959) p.1; L. van der
Walt and S.J. Hirsch, *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870–1940* (Brill, 2010)
p.xxxvi; R. Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism: An International Comparative Analysis*
(Ashgate, 2008) pp.4-7
[118] Anarchism and Syndicalism are both understood as offshoots from the socialist tradition, which in the history of
European socialisms dates back to the split between anarchism and marxism resulting in the breakdown of the First
International, and both follow an anti-statist tradition. Looking beyond this European tradition both anarchism and.
syndicalism were not confined to European origins and have diverse origins around the world particularly in late
nineteenth and early twentieth century. This approach is informed by understanding syndicalism in relation to ideas and
practices, rather than following a strictly European lineage. For an examples of this approach see: S. Konishi, *Anarchist
Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese- Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan* (Harvard University Press,
2013)
[119] S.T. Glass, *Responsible Society* pp.1-2
[120] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* pp.10-24

syndicalist movements and specifically the demand for workers control around the world in response.[121]

Tellingly the 1880s and 1890s saw the formation of a myriad of anarcho-syndicalist organisations devoted to workers' control around the world. These included the French Confédération Générale du Travail, the Cuban Federación de Trabajadores de la Habana, Pacto de Unión y Solidaridad in Spain, and the Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat in the Netherlands; furthermore the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of even more organisations including the Argentinean Federación Obrera regional Argentina, the Brazilian La Confederação Operária Brasileira, the Paraguayan Federación Obrera Regional Paraguaya, and in the United States' the International Workers of the World; while the 1910s saw the founding of the Spanish Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, the Swedish Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation, Britain's Industrial Syndicalist Education League, the Italian Unione Sindacale Italiana, the Syndicalist League of North America, the Uniâo Operaria Nacional in Portugal, the Casa del Obrero Mundial in Mexico, in China The League for Prosperity in China and Asia, and Nihon kokushoku seinen renmei in Japan.[122]

In Britain, the demand for workers' control first emerged in association with the growth of trade unionism in the 1830s.[123] However, it was not until the late nineteenth century and early twentieth

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[121] G. Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought* (Croom Helm, 1985) p.85; C.R. Littler, *Development of the Labour Process* (Aldershot,1986) pp. 79, 96; W.H. Lazonick, 'Technological Changes and the Control of Work: The Development of Capital-Labour Relations in US Mass Production Industries', in H.F. Gospel and C.R. Littler (eds), *Managerial Strategies and Industrial Relations. An Historical and Comparative Study,* (Heinemann, 1983) p.126; M. van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History* p.53-54

[122] L. van der Walt, "Anarchism and Syndicalism in South Africa, 1904-1921:Rethinking the history of labour and the left", PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand (2007) p.178; F. Fernandez, *Cuban Anarchism: The History of a Movement* (Sharp Press, 2001) pp. 39–59; L. van der Walt and M. Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (AK Press, 2009) p.136, 139, 155, 274; S.J. Hirsch, "Peruvian Anarcho-Syndicalism: Adapting transnational influences and forging counter hegemonic practices 1905–1930" in L. van der Walt and S.J. Hirsch's (eds) *Anarchism and Syndicalism* p.244; E. Toledo and L. Biondi, "Constructing Syndicalism and Anarchism Globally: the transnational making of the syndicalist movement in São Paulo, Brazil, 1895–1935" in L. van der Walt and S.J. Hirsch's (eds) *Anarchism and Syndicalism* p.367; A. Nickson, "Paraguay" in J. Carrière and N. Haworth's (eds) *The State, Industrial Relations and the Labour Movement in Latin America, Volume 1* (Macmillan, 1989) p.70; S.J. Hirsch, *Peruvian Anarcho-Syndicalism* p.231; P. Cole, D. Struthers and K. Zimmer, *Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* (Pluto Press, 2017); J. White, "Syndicalism in a Mature Industrial Setting: The Case of Britain", in M. van der Linden and W. Thorpe's (eds) *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective*, Aldershot: (Scolar Press, 1990) p. 101; W. Thorpe, "Revolutionary Syndicalist Internationalism, 1913-1923: the origins of the International Working Men's Association" PhD Thesis, The University of British Columbia (1979) p.27; J. Garner, *Goals and Means: Anarchism, Syndicalism, and Internationalism in the Origins* (AK Press, 2016) p.216; K. Shaffer, "Tropical Libertarians: anarchist movements and networks in the Caribbean, Southern United States, and Mexico 1890s–1920s" in L. van der Walt and S.J. Hirsch's (eds) *Anarchism and Syndicalism* p.304; A. Dirlik, "Anarchism and the Question of Place: thoughts from the Chinese experience" in L. van der Walt and S.J. Hirsch's (eds) *Anarchism and Syndicalism* p.139; D. Hwang, "Korean Anarchism Before 1945: A Regional and Transnational Approach" in L. van der Walt and S.J. Hirsch's (eds) *Anarchism and Syndicalism* p.110

[123] B. Altena, "Analysing Revolutionary Syndicalism: The Importance of Community" in C. Bantman and D. Berry (eds.) *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour, and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) p.197

century that it began to flourish in relation to the growth of New Unionism, the Great Unrest, and contact with two independent workers' control movements in France and the United States.[124]

In the United States, the demand for workers' control was tied to a distinct program of industrial unionism devised by Daniel De Leon, Eugene Debs, and other leaders of the Socialist Labor Party of America (SLPA). This doctrine was conceived in the context of mass immigration to the United States and proposed a peaceful transition to socialism through industrial and political organisation. Concretely, this meant the creation of industrial unions often referred to as the "One Big Union" strategy, while simultaneously workers would be organised into a political party that fulfilled two functions: eventually returning a parliamentary majority and promoting industrial unionism.[125] The objective was for these efforts to culminate in parallel in a moment where workers would elect a socialist political party and simultaneously industrial unions would physically lock-out employers from the workplaces thereby taking control of industries. Political power would prevent the military from being used to remove the unions' control, but would only be temporary because after the unions had secured control its function would be obsolete, and a new society organised along industrial lines in which industries were administered by industrial unions would emerge. For the SLPA this was seen as the only way to ensure workers' emancipation, while collectivist projects such as nationalisation were dismissed as only swapping one form of exploitation by the capitalists to another administered by state bureaucrats.[126]

In 1903 a group of socialists in Glasgow led by the Irish republican James Connolly were inspired by this doctrine and formed the Socialist Labour Party. The influence of the party was mostly contained in Scotland and predominantly around industrial regions along the river Clyde. In 1905 American industrial unionists established a new organisation in Chicago, the International Workers of the World (IWW), which led their counterparts in Glasgow to form a similar organisation, the British Advocates for Industrial Unionism (BAIU).[127] The BAIU was essentially a propaganda organisation aimed towards encouraging trade unionists to form revolutionary industrial unions. In 1908 the IWW split following internal tensions with anarchist members opposed to any kind of parliamentary action, which triggered a similar division within the BAIU and led anarchist former members to create a new organisation, the Industrial League.[128] The Industrial League claimed to

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[124] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* p.2; N. Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1959) p.77; M. Beech and K. Hickson, *Labour's Thinkers: The Intellectual Roots of the Labour Party from Tawney to Gordon Brown* (Taurus, 2007) pp.40-44
[125] S.T. Glass, *ibid* p.3; D. De Leon, The Preamble of the IWW (1905) https://www.marxists.org/archive/deleon/works/1905/050710.htm
[126] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* p.14
[127] C. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century* p.160
[128] R. Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism* p.133

represent 'pure' industrial unionism in Britain, which meant endorsing industrial sabotage, constant conflict with employers and non-revolutionary trade unions, and the rejection of formal political parties.[129] Although failing to gain much national influence over the labour movement the Industrial League was successful at developing international links with the Chicago branch of the IWW.[130] In contrast, the remainder of the BAIU continued to work alongside the Socialist Labour Party and reformed itself in 1909 into the Industrial Workers of Great Britain, which prioritised a new strategy of recruiting members in order to develop itself into an industrial union in reflection of the One Big Union strategy.[131]

Independently of these larger socialist institutions, industrial unionists in Britain also formed smaller groups, such as the Industrial Group in Sheffield, the IWW in Birmingham, and the Revolutionary Industrialists in Liverpool.[132] Although these groups had little influence they were nevertheless also constituents of the British Left and were propelled forward by the voices of influential activists, such as the Irish republican, James Larkin, who like Connolly affiliated with the IWW and preached loudly to thousands of Irish workers in Britain and Ireland.[133]

In spite of their vigorous efforts, industrial unionist organisations made little impact on the labour movement in Britain. According to Branko Pribićevic although industrial unionists put forward a form of workers' control, they nevertheless neglected many questions, such as price-fixing, national and local administration, coordinating economic development, and financing social activities, which leads him to call their theory of workers' control ultimately "naive and superficial". Additionally, Pribićevic also notes that the dogmatism of these industrial unionists, reflected in their negative attitude towards many trade unionists considered to be supportive of capitalism by not adopting a revolutionary position and rejection of improving working conditions because all efforts should be directed towards forming industrial unions, made their cause unattractive to potential supporters.[134] Likewise, Stephan Glass argues that the conditions of the labour movement in Britain were substantially different to the United States highlighting in particular how the issue of mass immigration which fuelled the growth of the IWW and split the SLPA was not a factor to the same extent in Britain.[135]

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[129] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* p.13
[130] P. Barberis, J. McHugh and M. Tyldesley, *Encyclopaedia of British and Irish Political Organisations* (Pinter, 2000) p.151
[131] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* p.13
[132] B. Pribićevic, *ibid* p.13
[133] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.78
[134] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* pp.15-16
[135] S.T. Glass, *Responsible Society* p.5

In France, the demand for workers' control developed within the Confédération Générale du Travail (General Confederation of Labour — CGT). Unlike other trade union movements which developed in relation to political parties, such as the Labour Party in Britain, the SPD in Germany, and the SPLA in the United States, the CGT possessed no such relation even with socialist parties. Instead, it promoted revolutionary syndicalism characterised by autonomous trade unions that united workers in their workplaces rather than as voters within political parties. For the CGT unions should remain independent of political parties because of the belief that class conflict was primarily economic and therefore direct action through trade unions against employers was more effective than indirect political action mediated through parliaments at winning both short term concerns, like wage increases, and long term goals, such as the formation of worker-managed society.[136]

Organisationally the CGT was not heavily centralised. Instead, power was located at the bottom in the 'syndicats', which consisted of local groups of workers in the same trade or industry which were federated locally through the 'Bourses du Travail' that were originally labour exchanges but became centres of trade unionism. This organisational structure gave plausibility to the plans of French syndicalists, such as Fernand Peloutier the secretary of the Féderation des Bourses du Travail, for the replacement of the centrally organised political system by a new system of locally organised producers. Where as far as possible every syndicat would send delegates to their local Bourses du Travail, which would serve as a centres for organisation and coordinate wider administration through the CGT. This system emerged due to the relative weakness of trade unionism in France, the legacy of insurrectionary politics, workers' distrust of politicians, and residual class-consciousness from the experiences of the 1871 Paris Commune, which helped to foster the emergence of a militant trade union movement dedicated to overthrowing capitalism.[137]

According to Constance Bantman the influence of French syndicalism upon Britain can be traced back to the 1890s. At this point anarchist periodicals including, *Freedom* and *The Torch,* began to write about the activism of a small number of international militants in order to promote revolutionary ideas among trade unionists. After 1907 as the Great Unrest took hold, syndicalist propaganda arguing in favour of trade union amalgamation to form industrial unions, general strikes, sabotage, and explicit reference to the CGT gained increasing prominence in the British labour movement. According to Bantman these materials travelled via two main sources. First, *The Voice of Labour* a weekly publication whose title was a direct translation of the CGT's own

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[136] W. Thorpe, "Uneasy Family: Revolutionary Syndicalism in Europe from the Charte d'Amiens to World War I" in C. Bantman and D. Berry (eds.) *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour, and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) pp. 16–17.
[137] S.T. Glass, *Responsible Society* pp.2-3

publication, *La Voix du Peuple*, and then after 1910 from the most widely known figure associate with British syndicalism, Tom Mann, who helped to establish the Industrial Syndicalist Education League. Furthermore, the translation of French syndicalist books into English accompanied these developments, such as Emile Pouget and Emile Pataud's, *Comment nous ferons la révolution* (Syndicalism and the Co-operative Commonwealth. How we shall bring about the Revolution - 1913) published with a foreword written by Mann.[138]

Although Mann was the principal figure of British syndicalism in 1910. Before this moment he had previously professed industrial unionism, which he encountered while in New Zealand and Australia via the IWW.[139] This changed after Mann met with syndicalist leaders in Paris and when he returned to London he now declared that the "French Policy" would suit Britain much better than industrial unionism.[140] Plans to found the Industrial Syndicalist Education League were finalised at a conference in Manchester at the end of 1910 and the League defined its purpose, as "To educate Trade Unionists and the workers generally in the principles of Industrial Syndicalism for the purpose of conducting class struggle on non-parliamentary lines."[141]

Despite the fact that British syndicalism shared clear connections with French syndicalism significant differences also existed between the two. For example, Bantman points out that British syndicalists did not entirely reject the idea of political action through cooperation with the state and notes the far less hostile attitude they showed towards the state than their French counterparts.[142] This lack of hostility towards the state was significant, according to Pribićevic, who highlights how the British syndicalists were divided over the question of whether unions would own, or simply control industries. Furthermore, Pribićevic points out given the failure of the British syndicalists to completely adopt an anti-parliamentary position due to the entangled tradition of collectivism with trade unionism in Britain and that violence in industrial disputes was much less popular, marked a substantial difference with their counterparts in France. This leads towards the important conclusion that although both industrial unionism and syndicalism argued for workers' control in Britain. They nevertheless differed over several important doctrinal issues, including the value of political and industrial action, violence, and the general strike. Additionally, in Britain both were also often in

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[138] C. Bantman, *The Franco–British Syndicalist Connection* pp.82-83

[139] J. T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia* (Macmillan & Co, 1921) p.156; S.T. Glass, *Responsible Society* p.5; V. Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.112; T. Mann, *The Way to Win: Industrial Unionism* (Barrier Daily Truth Press, 1909)

[140] *The Industrial Syndicalist,* July, 1910, p.17; C. Bantman, *The Franco–British Syndicalist Connection* p.85

[141] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* p.17

[142] C. Bantman, *The Franco–British Syndicalist Connection* p.88

direct conflict with each other, such as in the case of both the Socialist Labour Party and Industrial Workers of Great Britain eagerness to denounce Tom Mann and syndicalism.[143]

The failure of either industrial unionists or syndicalism to become hegemonic within the British labour movement did not indicate that the demand for workers' control was impractical in Britain. Indeed the lack of success of both of these attempts can largely be explained in relation to the different sets of conditions, which helped to form them and were not present to the same degree in Britain. For example, unlike France, there was no deep-rooted hostility towards the State, or division in the same way over immigration as there was in the United States. Nevertheless, as Glass points out, the impact of both these projects for workers' control in Britain pointed towards the possibility that a movement better suited to local conditions could win support and it was precisely this opportunity that was seized by Guild Socialism.[144] It was therefore in this context that Guild Socialism emerged in Britain caught between the tension in the labour movement over collectivism and workers' control, alongside the emergence of the welfare state and the industrial unrest that characterised the final years before the First World War.

2.2. The Beginnings of the Guild Idea

2.2.1. Arthur Penty

The emergence of Guild Socialism was first heralded by the publication of a short polemical text entitled, *The Restoration of the Gild System* (1906) by the architect Arthur Joseph Penty. This work was an explicit call for workers' control, which examined the devaluation of craftsmanship after industrialisation. Here Penty criticised Fabian collectivism for encouraging this process and opposed what he saw as its consequences: the centralisation of industry, cheap mass-production and valorisation of efficiency. In response, he proposed a radical alternative through the resurrection of the medieval guild system, which he saw as a means to overcome the problems inherent in collectivism.[145] This argument combined aspects of practical and theoretical knowledge, which were not informed directly by either French or American syndicalism but was nevertheless motivated by similar circumstances. Instead Penty derived his approach largely from his training as an architect, which imbued him with practical knowledge about the building industry, alongside

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[143] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* pp.20-21
[144] S.T. Glass, *Responsible Society* p.5
[145] A.J. Penty, *The Restoration of the Gild System* (Swan Sonnenchein, 1906) pp.1-31

theoretical knowledge from his study of nineteenth-century corporatist and socialist sources that informed his understanding of political economy.

Penty was born in 1875 in the northern English city of York in Yorkshire and left school at thirteen to become an apprentice draughtsman at his father's architecture firm. During the 1890s Penty earned early notoriety in York for several houses he designed and his work even featured in a study of British architecture published in Germany while he was still in his twenties.[146] Simultaneously, Penty was keen to fill in the gaps in his formal education and joined several groups to educate himself, including The Young Men's Self-Improvement Society and the Leeds branch of the Theosophical Society. As a result, he was awakened to socialism during this period particularly by the poverty he witnessed in York and a suspicion that economic competition would not increase welfare, which drew him to join the Fabian Society in 1898 and the Independent Labour Party in 1899.[147] Penty's embrace of socialism was also motivated by the constant struggle to make a living from architecture despite his early notoriety. In fact, financial precarity would affect him throughout his life, which meant that he was forced to also take up furniture design and restoration in order to financially support himself.[148] This was tied to his coming of age at the height of the Second Industrial Revolution which greatly affected casual, seasonal, and project workers, such as builders and architects like Penty.

During this period Penty's professional and intellectual interests coalesced in his support for the Arts and Crafts Movement. This movement first emerged in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century in response to industrialisation and subsequently spread throughout the British Empire, across Europe, Asia, and North America.[149] As its name suggests the movement's primary focus was the relationship between art and labour and initially concerned itself with the perceived decline of the decorative arts and the conditions they were produced under. These ideas were formed around a disparate group of artists and designers who found a common cause in the equality of fine and

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[146] H. Muthesius, *Das Englische Haus: Entwicklung, Bedingungen, Anlage, Aufbau, Einrichtung und Innenraum: Bande 3* (Berlin, 1904) p.198

[147] D. Reisman, introduction to A.J. Penty, *Old Worlds for New* (Pickering & Chatto, 1996) p.vii; P.C. Grosvenor, 'Arthur Joseph Penty (1875–1937)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/53509

[148] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.82 J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.103

[149] Y. Yamamoto and B. Smith, 'Phases of the arts & crafts movement in Japan' *Style 1900* Vol. 16, No. 3 (2003) p.34; M. Meister, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: History and Heritage in New England* (University Press of New England, 2014); W. Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America: Design for the Modern World 1880-1920* (Thames and Hudson, 2004)

applied arts in the third quarter of the nineteenth century which led to a proliferation of artisanal guilds that brought together designers and craftsmen in Britain.[150]

The Arts and Craft Movement was influenced by the intellectual legacy of the artist and critic John Ruskin and the designer William Morris. Both of whom Penty would cite as sources of inspiration in his book.[151] Ruskin and Morris were both concerned with the alienating effects caused by industrialisation and specifically, the division of labour, increasing specialisation of work, and the fragmentation of individual experience.[152] For Ruskin who was born at the beginning of the nineteenth century during an earlier phase of industrialisation the newly emerging political economy of capitalism, which valued material wealth above all else and disregarded all of the beautiful, creative and satisfying aspects of labour, represented the antithesis of his thinking about art. As an artist, Ruskin maintained that great art was the product of a creative process at work which was present not only in fine arts, but throughout all forms of human labour. He, therefore, rejected the idea of reducing workers to single increasingly specialised functions in factories because it disconnected labour and the people performing it from the other non-material aspects of their production, which he viewed as ultimately destructive towards the creation of art and society more generally.[153] Ruskin compared his own times with a romantic vision of the medieval past in which he found an alternative version of an agricultural society where the use of machinery for industrial production was severely limited and labour not so specialised.[154] These ideas were modelled on the early nineteenth-century Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle who had similarly idealised the medieval past against the value capitalism placed on profit, while also criticising the utilitarian ethic that claimed maximising consumption was the greatest human good.[155] As a result, Ruskin's followers in the Arts and Craft Movement drew from his thought an idea of the superiority of production by workers who oversaw the complete processes of production over industrial manufacture, and while also concerned about the loss of artisanal skills were more generally worried about the effects of the factory system on all human beings.

Deeply influenced by Ruskin's ideas William Morris subsequently developed them further during the second half of the nineteenth century. Although Morris was also nostalgic for the past unlike Ruskin he did not propose that industrialisation should be entirely abandoned. Instead he hoped that

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[150] B. M. King, *Silk and Empire* (Manchester University Press, 2005) pp.152-166; E. Cumming and W. Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (Thames and Hudson, 1991) pp. 17-28
[151] A.J. Penty, *The Restoration of the Gild System* pp.vii-viii, 7
[152] D. Schecter, *Radical Theories* p.104
[153] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.30
[154] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.97
[155] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* p.6

in the future a place for the production of beautiful things which did not disconnect humans from the fruits of their labour could be found.[156] In this regard, Morris developed the idea of 'handicrafts', which was taken up by the Arts and Craft Movement and proposed the reintroduction into industry of medieval standards of hand production and aesthetic beauty to create a modern idea of craftsmanship.[157] Morris himself insisted that no work should be carried out in his workshops before he had personally mastered the appropriate techniques and materials, arguing that "without dignified, creative human occupation people became disconnected from life."[158] Handicrafts therefore proposed an alternative model of production to the division of labour while not completely rejecting all machinery. Morris put this idea into practice by learning and reproducing many medieval crafts, such as glass-making, weaving and bookbinding, alongside assisting in establishing of the Art Workers' Guild in 1884 and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1887, which promoted the unity of all artistic labour and denied the distinction between fine and applied arts.[159]

Modern socialist ideas were central to Morris's thought despite his clear affiliation with a romantic vision of the past. Indeed while Morris remained committed to medievalism and romanticism these were also a clear expression his rejection of the dominance of Victorian capitalism during this period. For Morris, the Middle Ages represented an era of chivalric values and an organic, pre-capitalist sense of community which he deemed preferable to his own time.[160] However, while Ruskin and Carlyle were adherents of corporatism. An anti-democratic elitist body of ideas which emerged after the French Revolution in opposition to industrialisation because of the threat it posed to the traditional structure of society. Instead favouring the organisation of society around corporate groups with shared interests, rather than individuals, that embraced a hierarchical structure which privileged existing elites.[161] Morris was opposed to corporatism, although he was nevertheless inspired by Ruskin and Carlyle, and instead belonged to a democratic socialist tradition. During the 1880s Morris joined both the Social Democratic Federation and the subsequent breakaway group the Socialist League.[162] At this point, Morris wrote explicitly in favour of a vision of democratic socialism which was opposed to parliamentary government alongside the leader of the Social Democratic Federation Henry Hyndmann in *A Summary of the Principles of Socialism* (1884). As a result Morris soon emerged as the leader of the Socialist League.[163] His commitment to a non-statist

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[156] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* pp.101-102
[157] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.46
[158] F. MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (Faber and Faber, 1995) p.129
[159] B. M. King, *Silk and Empire* pp.148-153
[160] E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (Merlin Press, 2019) pp.9-10, 28
[161] P.C. Schmitter, 'Still the Century of Corporatism?', *The Review of Politics* Vol.36 (January, 1974), pp.93-98; H.J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and Comparative Politics: The Other Great "Ism"* (M.E. Shape, 1997) p.35
[162] J. Callaghan, *Socialism in Britain Since 1884* (Wiley–Blackwell, 1990) p.16
[163] F. MacCarthy, 'William Morris (1834–1896)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19322

version of socialism was clearly stamped on his utopian novel, *News From Nowhere* (1890) which was written in direct criticism of the earlier socialist novel, *Looking Backward* (1888) by Edward Carpenter that posited a state-centric collectivist vision of socialism.[164] In contrast to Bellamy's collectivist vision defined purely by urbanism, industry, and state-centric socialism. Morris's book pictured a pastoral society that utilised machines only to alleviate the burdens that people might find tedious and celebrated the withering away of the state.[165]

Penty's own idea of an alternative model of political economy to capitalism was heavily informed by Morris and Ruskin whose influence upon him constituted examples of theoretical knowledge. This complemented his practical knowledge derived from architecture. In particular, both of these forms of knowledge began to crystallise around the idea of craftsmanship in Penty's work. As a result of this fusion of politics and aesthetics Penty was gradually separated from his earlier political attachments to the Fabian Society and collectivism and began to move towards an idea of workers' control.

Unemployed and seeking to further his interests in the Arts and Craft Movement Penty left York and moved to London in 1902. After first trying unsuccessfully to find work as an architect he took up furniture design and writing. In London, Penty was soon approached by members of the local branch of the Independent Labour Party to write a short essay on the relationship between architecture and socialism. In this piece, Penty planned to argue that creativity and socialism were two halves of the same whole, but that architecture ultimately could not be reconciled with centralised state planning.[166] However, after accepting this request Penty quickly abandon this project and cut ties to Fabian collectivism, due to an event that happened soon afterward. Not long after Penty received his commission with the Independent Labour Party he was also asked by the secretary of the Fabian Society, Edward R. Pease, to comment on the proposals for designs of a new building at the London School of Economics because of his architectural expertise. Penty gladly agreed but was soon outraged when Pease informed him that the winning design had been chosen solely on the basis that it maximised the amount of floor space. Penty's reaction to this news was later recounted in his unpublished autobiography where he described his response.

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[164] M. Holzman, 'Anarchism and Utopia: William Morris's News from Nowhere' *ELH,* Vol. 51 No. 3 (1984) pp.589–603

[165] D. Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-libertarian thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (Liverpool University Press, 2006) pp.20-21

[166] D. Reisman, introduction to A.J. Penty, *Old Worlds for New* p.viii

"That did it; it got me on the raw. It was a bad start for the School of Economics. I had been attracted to Socialism by the writings of William Morris and I had somehow managed to persuade myself that the Socialism of Morris and that of the Fabian Society had something in common. But any illusions I might have had were now entirely dispelled… I saw Fabianism as it was, naked, empty, ugly, complacent, and arrogant; its ideal could be defined as efficient emptiness."[167]

For Penty, this experience typified the Fabian obsession with efficiency and convinced him that architecture could not flourish under collectivism. In response, he withdrew his promise to write for the Independent Labour Party. Instead in 1903 he began to write his response to collectivism, *The Restoration of the Gild System* which was completed three years later after around forty drafts.[168]

The Restoration of the Gild System summarised Penty's rejection of Fabian collectivism and put forward an alternative vision of a socialist political economy. The use of the spelling 'gild' emphasised the continuity of the program with the medieval past, which was also stressed in the books preface where Penty made clear that the idea of restoring the medieval guild system had originally been proposed by Ruskin in *Time and Tide* (1867), as a means to solve the problems created by industrialisation. However, while Ruskin had failed to explain how such a system could be established. Penty argued that now such a system was possible based on the recognition that conditions had shifted since the nineteenth century. In particular, Penty emphasised that Fabian collectivism was now dominant over the labour movement and parts of the liberal establishment which offered its own solution to mitigating the effects of capitalism and industrialisation through the welfare state. This situation displaced Ruskin's original idea and meant that before laying out his own vision, Penty argued it was first necessary to unpick Fabian collectivism.[169]

Penty began his critique by attacking the strict materialism promoted by Fabian collectivism, which he argued supported the division of labour under industrial production. Drawing of Ruskin and Morris, Penty challenged this idea on the basis that it separated individuals from the artistic and spiritual dimensions of their work.[170] Here Penty developed a historical argument in which the Middle Ages represented a period when labour was not only a material activity, but also incorporated into other spheres of social life. According to Penty, this baroque unity became disconnected after the Renaissance leading to a distinction between craftsmen and artists and a spiritual decline.[171] Penty saw this division as the beginning of a tendency that became exacerbated

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[167] Quoted in D. Reisman introduction to A.J. Penty, *Old Worlds for New* p.x
[168] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.83; D. Reisman, introduction to A.J. Penty, *Old Worlds for New* p.ix
[169] A.J. Penty, *The Restoration of the Gild System* p.vii-viii; J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* pp.96-98
[170] A.J. Penty, *ibid* p.17
[171] A.J. Penty, *ibid* p.18

over time and led towards the current situation where individuals were understood simply as either consumers with material needs or as producers who fulfilled those needs, thereby reducing all labour to a mere mechanical function in service of consumption. This created the paradoxical situation where individuals lived double lives in constant tension between their asymmetric roles as consumers and producers.[172] It was on this basis that Penty concluded that industrialisation dehumanised workers, "turning men into machines" forcing them even more so into a productive role and distancing them from the fruits of their labour.[173] In order to overcome this dislocation Penty argued for a restoration of the medieval guild system, which he reasoned offered a means to return to the premodern unity of work, due to his understanding of guilds as functioning as, "social, religious and political as well as industrial institutions" which "postulated in their organisation the essential unity of life".[174]

Alongside this critique Penty also challenged the importance of centralisation and efficiency promoted by Fabian collectivism. This support was premised on a theoretical understanding of the tendency of capitalism to centralise ownership and industrial production in order to produce monopolies. Consequently, the Fabians supported the idea of nationalisation, in the form of national industries controlled by states, which would provide the most efficient means to deliver collective benefit to a whole society.[175] Penty refuted this idea using his knowledge of the building industry tied to his own experiences as an architect and his connections to the Arts and Craft Movement. While he acknowledged that in some cases monopolies were likely to emerge, particularly in extractive or distributive industries, such as mining or railways, which were tied to global markets and reliant on advanced technology. He nevertheless refuted that it was the case in all industries. In particular, Penty drew attention to those industries reliant on local markets like the building trade, or when consumer taste was an important factor as in the case of furniture or clothing. In these industries, although large companies existed, they did so side-by-side with smaller producers, which catered to specialist demands. Penty therefore rejected the inevitability of centralisation in all industries and the idea of efficiency as a result. Instead he offered the guild system as an alternative to nationalisation; which implied a vision of decentralised workers' control based on a plurality of guilds. These guilds would independently administer industries via skilled artisans who would control markets and ensure higher value for products created by skilled craftsmanship rather than

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[172] A.J. Penty, *ibid* pp.4-5
[173] A.J. Penty, *ibid* pp.29-31
[174] A.J. Penty, *ibid* p.25
[175] A.J. Penty, *ibid* pp.4-5

more efficient industrial production. These guilds would cooperate in relation to their shared needs thus alleviating the need for central authority.[176] In this sense, the guild system did not ultimately oppose market competition but instead rejected the centralisation of control and priority of efficiency. In contrast, the guilds would promote high-quality craftsmanship conducted by skilled workers who were organised neither by capitalists or the state, but autonomously along the lines of their craft.

For Penty two obvious means existed in Edwardian Britain to develop his new guild system, the trade unions and the Arts and Crafts Movement. Although the latter was by Penty's own admission already in decline it nevertheless promoted a positive ideal of social reconstruction through the promotion of the revival of handicrafts and reunion of artists and craftspeople.[177] In contrast, trade unionism was ascendant since the 1880s and was where Penty identified the most likely avenue for the emergence of guilds. This was because unions already performed many of the same functions he envisioned the guilds would control, such as the organisation of workers through regulating their wages, hours and sick-pay. Despite these features, Penty also conceded that the unions did not yet fully embody guilds since they did not yet accept responsibility for the quality of work, prevented managers from becoming members, and did not possess complete control over their industries.[178]

In response to Penty's view of trade unions the historian Frank Matthews has correctly argued that Penty "hit on the use of trade unionism as a way which implied forms of workers control while it did not actually suggest them."[179] This verdict is also shared by Jack Vowles who extends this argument by suggesting that Penty's proposals for the use of trade unions could only imply forms of workers control to those who years later under the influence of syndicalism read Penty as recommending all aspects of production be controlled democratically by workers via trade unions and subsequently guilds. In fact, Vowles points out that Penty's intentions were far more conservative and argues that his vision was for a strict hierarchy of master-craftspeople who would administer the guild system. Vowles continues that these guilds were not meant to become national managing bodies of production in fact at most they would simply regulate and protect production against consumption. This leads him to conclude, "Penty was not therefore a syndicalist, nor did he

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[176] A.J. Penty, *ibid* pp.5-6, 8, 16
[177] A.J. Penty, *ibid* pp.29-31
[178] A.J. Penty, *ibid* p.29
[179] F. Matthews, 'The Ladder of Becoming: A.R. Orage, A.J. Penty, and the Origins of Guild Socialism in England' in J. Saville, D.E. Martin and D. Rubinstein's (eds.) *Ideology and the Labour Movement* (Croom Helm, 1979) p.156

anticipate the key elements of later guild socialism."[180] A similar conclusion is also reached by Glass who argues that while Penty sketched out many of themes that would later become central to Guild Socialism, such as raising the condition of production under industry, "he was not a syndicalist and did not intend that the producers should exercise a predominant influence on social policy."[181] Indeed given Penty's corporatist ties which implied an elitist view of society and complete omission of the subject of democracy in his book, which were central to syndicalism and industrial unionism, this verdict appears to be largely justified.

In Britain, the reception of *The Restoration of the Gild System* was initially disappointing. The Independent Labour Party's journal *Labour Leader* called it "grotesque", while Penty's own attempts in London to form a group of artists and craftspeople into the Guild Restoration League in May 1906 failed almost immediately.[182] The situation was not helped when Penty left Britain at the end of 1906 to work briefly in the United States where he designed and built furniture until he return to Britain the following year. Despite his book's poor initial reception in Britain, *The Restoration of the Gild System* nevertheless presupposed a wider movement that coincided with the growth of movements in France and the United States and shared a similar although not identical demand workers' control. Furthermore, it was not long after that the book became central to a wider discussion about industrial democracy taking shape in Britain within the pages of the literary magazine *The New Age.*

2.2.2. Alfred Orage and *The New Age*

The New Age acted like a petri dish for the development of Guild Socialism. It was here where the words "Guild Socialism" were first printed in 1912 and the impetus for a far more rigorous statement promoting guilds as an alternative to state socialism developed.[183] In order for this to happen, *The New Age* channeled growing hostility towards collectivism in Britain and the possibilities presented by syndicalism to create the conditions for Guild Socialism to emerge.

Originally launched in 1894 as a Christian socialist journal, *The New Age* was taken over in 1907 by Alfred Richard Orage. Orage shared much in common with Penty and knew him personally after

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[180] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.116
[181] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* p.20
[182] S.T. Glass, *ibid* p.19
[183] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* p.21

having first met him in 1900 at a meeting of the Leeds branch of the Theosophical Society.[184] Similarly to Penty, Orage grew up in Yorkshire amidst the same changing socio-economic landscape. Born to a poor family in 1873 he initially became a school teacher in 1894 and helped to found the local branch of the Independent Labour Party where he wrote a weekly column in the *Labour Leader* between 1895 and 1897.[185] Here he developed a commitment to socialism, which stressed camaraderie alongside aesthetic and spiritual concerns as well as disdain for capitalism that he held responsible for the degradation of all facets of life.[186]

By 1901, Orage and Penty were in regular lengthy discussions about many of the themes that would later be incorporated into *The Restoration of the Gild System*.[187] According to Orage's biographer Tom Stelle his influence upon Penty cannot be discounted especially after 1903 when Penty began writing his book. In particular, Stelle notes how the two collaborated to found the Leeds Arts Club, which became a hub for avant-garde weekly discussions that connected art, politics, philosophy and spiritualism. These discussions helped Penty to refine his ideas by serving as a forum to discuss cultural reform which informed his later aesthetic critiques of industrial society.[188] Additionally Orage was also an active member of the doomed attempt to found the Restoration of the Gild League after moving to London from Leeds in 1906. Here he stayed temporarily at Penty's house in Hammersmith and was drawn into the circle of artists and craftspeople working in the area. Soon after his arrival Orage gave a lecture entitled 'Gilds and Guilds' to a local group the Junior Art Workers' Guild. Here he highlighted his support for Penty's ideas and drew a strict distinction between gilds and guilds. For Orage, the latter described his audience, "little hole and corner self-governing arts workshops that called themselves guilds", which were common among artists and craftsmen at that time. In contrast gilds, he explained denoted a quite different kind of institution under which control of all aspects of production would be handled by master-craftspeople who would decide standards of quality, quantity, and prices, alongside managing an educational system of apprenticeship. Thereby reflecting the view of gilds promoted by Penty and the objective of the Gild Restoration League.[189]

[184] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.103
[185] P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms and the New Age Magazine* p.22
[186] J. Vowes, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.64
[187] J. Vowles, *ibid* p.106
[188] T. Steele, *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Arts Club 1893-1923* (Orage Press, 2009); T. Steele, 'From Gentleman to Superman: Alfred Orage and Aristocratic Socialism' in C. Shaw and M. Chase (eds.), *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester University Press, 1989) p.112
[189] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* pp.116,121-122

In 1907 Orage along with another founder of the Leeds Arts Club, George Holbrook Jackson, took over the editorship of *The New Age*. At the time both were closely associated with the Fabian Society and were able to buy the paper with the help of another of its members, George Bernard Shaw, and an anonymous donation of £1000.[190] After less than a year Orage became the sole editor of the paper and gradually became increasingly critical of Fabian collectivism. In addition, the paper also began to actively endorse workers' control and eventually Guild Socialism.[191]

Despite Orage's retrospective claim in 1926 that, "already in the earliest issues of the New Age I recall articles advocating for the trade unions a return to the guild system."[192] *The New Age* did not initially endorse Penty's gild idea, or any other similar version of workers' control, and was broadly supportive of collectivism. In fact, during the first year of his editorship, Orage gave his support to the Labour Party and openly opposed critics who endorsed the creation of a new socialist party, similarly to the Fabians.[193] In addition, he was also critical of the idea of trade unions direct involvement in politics, especially outside of industrial concerns, and believed they should instead concern themselves with "the craft side of their demands."[194]

The rift between *The New Age* and collectivism began to appear around the end of Orage's first year as editor at the start of the economic depression and the Great Unrest. In response to the welfare reforms introduced by the government to alleviate the effects of unemployment criticisms about their consequences began to appear within the paper. Chief among the critics of the reforms were the liberal writers, Hilaire Belloc and Gilbert Keith Chesterton, who between 1907 and 1908 took an anti-collectivist stance against Fabian defenders of the reforms, such as H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw.[195] According to Belloc and Chesterton, the reforms posed a threat to individual liberty by allowing people to become dependent on the state. This would result in a situation, which Belloc called the "Servile State", where the general population due to its reliance on state welfare would become easy to manipulate by a small governing elite.[196] Although Belloc and Chesterton were opposed to collectivism they also rejected capitalist exploitation. As they claimed that the

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[190] S.T. Glass, *Responsible Society* p.26
[191] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.152
[192] *The New Age,* 18.3.26, pp. 235-236
[193] S.T. Glass, *Responsible Society* p.26
[194] *The New Age*, 12.9.07, p. 312
[195] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* pp.61-62
[196] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.179-181

destruction of individual liberty through welfare would make workers slaves not to the state, but ultimately to the capitalist system which was merely administered by the state.[197]

Criticisms of collectivism became increasingly common within *The New Age* during the next several years and sought to create a divide between trade unionists on the one hand and the Fabians and the Labour Party on the other. In particular, these criticisms largely focussed on the wedge issue of what would happen to trade unions' right to strike under a collectivist government and whether it would be possible for trade unions to resist such a system? This aroused particularly strong consideration in 1907 when railway unions threatened to strike over the right to official recognition. Although the strike was averted at the last minute due to government intervention. This incident highlighted a divide between trade unions and collectivism. While Orage and *The New Age* had supported the right to strike the Fabian Society instead endorsed the government and published a public letter, which explicitly denied the trade unionists right to strike because of the greater national importance of the railways. For Orage and the other critics of collectivism at *The New Age* these actions placed the Fabian Society firmly at odds with trade unions.[198] This situation was further aggravated by the fiasco caused by the Osborne court ruling in 1909, which led sympathetic commentators at *The New Age* with Orage's support to begin to argue more forcefully for the liberation of trade unions from governmental regulation.[199]

Alongside these criticisms, *The New Age* also incorporated dissenting voices from within the Labour Party who were beginning to question collectivism. These had been growing particularly since the passing of the Trades Disputes Act in 1906, which effectively nullified the Taff-Vale decision. This produced a crisis of legitimacy within the Labour Party between two sides. On the one hand, those members who were broadly satisfied with the governments' welfare reforms and endorsed the decision to support the ruling Liberal Party. While on the other hand, a more radical group believed that the party shouldn't simply support the government, but should work to gain a majority and become fully in control of parliament. This divide stoked fears that the Labour Party might split into two parties. While other supporters went even further and completely abandoned

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[197] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.63
[198] N. Carpenter *idid* pp.63-64
[199] M. Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* p.90-93

the collectivist faith in parliamentary democracy and instead turned fully towards industrial action, which *The New Age* endorsed as early as October 1909.[200]

The demand for workers' control began to solidify within the pages of *The New Age* around 1909. At this point due to the ongoing economic depression and increasing momentum behind trade union militancy the paper now began to openly endorse workers' control as a concrete alternative to Fabian collectivism. Crucially, although the paper endorsed international syndicalism, by supporting the Swedish general strike and French postal strike in 1909 and celebrating the French general strike 1910, rarely did it advocate syndicalism in the context of Britain.[201] Instead, the paper expressed its support for workers' control in national terms which first became apparent as part of the gradual move away from support for collectivism. Indeed as early as 1907 the paper had urged British trade unions to assume greater control over the means of production and provocatively asked, "should workshop control be in the hands of commercial travellers or of master workmen?"[202] By 1909 these calls had become more explicit and intertwined with Penty's medievalist vision expressed in *The Restoration of the Gild System.* As a result the paper now began to advocate "the creation of gilds … with all the privileges as well as all the responsibilities of the ancient guildsmen" as a viable British alternative to syndicalism.[203] This national framing was an important pivot which marked the future expression of Guild Socialism. This has led Tom Villis to argue that Guild Socialism was, "rather than being a direct copy of syndicalism" instead "a particularly British manifestation" of a similar trend across Europe.[204] Crucially this urge to define Guild Socialism in national terms and against both syndicalism and Fabian collectivism was now undertaken by a writer at *The New Age* who would do the most to develop its meaning, Samuel George Hobson.

2.2.3. Samuel Hobson

Born in 1870 Hobson grew up in the small village of Bessbrook in the north of Ireland. In the late 1880s, he moved to Cardiff and became an active socialist at around the same time as Orage and Penty. He joined the Fabian Society in 1891, helped to found the Independent Labour Party in 1893, and was elected to the executive committee of the Fabian Society in 1900. Similarly to Orage and

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[200] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.73
[201] *The New Age,* May 20 1909, p.67; June 3 1909, p.109; August 12, 1909 p.295; October 20 1910, pp.577-579
[202] *The New Age,* September 12 1907, p.312
[203] *The New Age,* June 3 1909, p.109
[204] T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde* p.60

Penty, Hobson began to drift away from Fabian collectivism over the next ten years and became increasingly frustrated with the timidity of the Labour Party.[205] In 1910 he resigned from the Fabian Society and became a columnist at *The New Age* in 1912 where he began to write a series of articles under the title, "An Inquiry into the Wage System", which attacked the wage system as a vital component of capitalism for being both morally unjust and economically inefficient. Instead, he proposed a new system of political economy in which pay and working conditions would be decided democratically by workers themselves and the control of industries reorganised into a system self-governing, "National Guilds".[206]

In 1912 the main editorial focus of *The New Age* was on syndicalism as a response to the Great Unrest. Although the paper supported instances of international syndicalism and recognised the right of workers to a measure of industrial self-government, it generally rejected the wider syndicalist claim that workers should have complete control over production on the basis that this would not serve the interests of wider society any better than under capitalism. The collectivist alternative supported by state socialists, like the Fabians, was no better because of the bureaucratic-led control it implied rather than workers' control. This dilemma consumed the paper until Hobson published his series of articles, which ran from the 25th of April until the 29th of August, and offered a solution in the form of a new partnership between the state and the trade unions.[207] This series of articles was followed by another entitled, 'Guild Socialism' between the 10th of October 1912 to the 25th of December 1913. The following year both series were republished as a book under the title, *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System* (1914) which became the first coherent statement of Guild Socialism.[208]

At the core of *National Guilds* was a new model of political economy which began, as the subtitle suggested, with a critical analysis of the wage system. For Hobson the relationship between workers and employers in which workers sell their labour to employers was not only unjust but also a barrier to any attempt by the labour movement to win concessions via political reform. This was because the wage system negated parliamentary democracy by producing unequal class relations, which prevented equal political representation due to the underlying economic inequality.[209] In order to form this argument, Hobson drew upon theoretical knowledge derived from another branch of socialism, specifically Karl Marx's critique of political economy as outlined in *Zur Judenfrage*

[205] M. Stears, 'Samuel George Hobson (1870–1940)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/45909; J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* pp.161-170
[206] B. Pribićevic, *The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers Control* pp.21-22
[207] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* p.28
[208] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* pp.215-216
[209] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System* (G. Bell and Sons, 1919) p.21,44

(1844) which made the same argument.[210] Furthermore, Hobson also adopted Marx's famous reproach to trade unions that it was now necessary to abandon the slogan, 'A Fair Days's Work for a Fair Day's Pay' and to substitute it with, 'For the Overthrow of the Wage System'.[211] As Hobson pointed out in reference to recent welfare reforms in Britain all of these policies despite proposing to treat poverty and inequality nevertheless did nothing to challenge the underlying wage system which was accepted as the basis of working life.[212] This conclusion led Hobson towards a class analysis of society based on labour, which also followed Marx, as he claimed that society was divided between two classes, those who own land and the means of production and those whose sole possession is their labour. Similarly to Penty, Hobson objected to the collectivist argument put forward by the Fabians that the way to overcome this situation was for the state to simply nationalise industries because the amount of money this would cost would ultimately be passed to workers in the form of tax and be equivalent to continuing the existing system of inequality.[213] In this way, Hobson highlighted the centrality of the wage system to collectivism whether in the form of welfare reforms or nationalisation, which he condemned equally for not challenging the underlying inequality produced by wage relations under capitalism and led him to argue that, "state socialism is state capitalism".[214]

Hobson's adoption of theoretical knowledge derived from Marx led him towards an understanding that politics was located downstream from economics, or as he described it "EPPPP", short for "Economic Power Precedes Political Power."[215] This idea was refashioned into another critique directed squarely against collectivism and the Fabian Society. In 1912 the Fabians had defended the wage system against syndicalism and understood the context of the Great Unrest as proof of the necessity of parliamentary socialism to rein in capitalism through a program of better wages and improved working conditions.[216]

Against this argument Hobson envisaged a new model of political economy organised around National Guilds, which as Penty had previously described would emerge out of trade unions. This system would address the fundamental class inequality in society, therefore, allowing democratic

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[210] K. Marx, *On the Jewish Question* (1844) https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/

[211] K. Coates and A. Topham, *Industrial Democracy in Great Britain* (Macgibbon & Kee, 1968) p.38

[212] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *National Guilds* pp.4-5

[213] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, "The Bondage of Wagery" in K. Coates and A. Topham, (eds.) *Industrial Democracy in Great Britain* (Macgibbon & Kee, 1968) p.41

[214] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *National Guilds* p.21

[215] S.G. Hobson, *ibid* pp.50,60-64

[216] B. Webb and S. Webb, *What Syndicalism Means: An Examination of the Origins and Motives of the Movement with Analysis of its Proposals for the Control of Industry* (National Committee for the Prevention of Destitution, 1912) pp.138-141

politics to function by beginning with the abolition of the wage system and its replacement with a new system of economic exchange administered by the guilds based on service instead of profit. In order to illustrate this model, Hobson argued it was akin to when a soldier receives pay, "whether playing or working" similarly "every member of a guild would receive pay whether working or playing, employed or unemployed."[217] Hobson was quick to recognise that this model appeared to be similar to syndicalism and led to the argument that trade unions should take possession of the means of production. However, he rejected this idea on the basis that all wealth should belong to society generally, not solely to producers.[218] In this way, he built upon one of Penty's ideas articulated in *The Restoration of the Gild System* namely the need to reconcile consumer and producer relations. In order to achieve this, and to counter the potential accusation of syndicalism, Hobson proposed a new partnership between the state and National Guilds that would represent the interests of consumers and producers respectively. In this way Hobson envisaged a new society based around this agreement which would, "vest all industrial assets in the State, to be leased by the State to the appropriate guilds."[219]

Although Hobson built upon Penty's earlier ideas he also clearly departed from them in several ways. Firstly, Hobson abandoned the medievalist meaning of guilds and instead adopted a radically modern formulation. In order to do this Hobson abandoned Penty's archaic spelling of 'gilds' and instead adopted the new spelling 'guilds'. Furthermore, Hobson's outline for a system of National Guilds paralleled the existing system of industrial unionism and bore clear similarities to the partnership envisaged by industrial unionists via their One Big Union strategy. According to Paul Jackson this sense of modernity became a centrepiece of Guild Socialism. As Jackson argues that while in part this idea idealised the past this was necessary in order to sketch out a vision of a radically different socialist modernity that would break from decadent capitalist modern life.[220] This tension between the past and the future will be returned to later in the course of this chapter, but for now serves to focus attention on the different meanings being attached to the emergent idea of Guild Socialism tied to different sources of knowledge.

Secondly, Hobson envisaged a more systematic understanding of guilds than Penty had described. This took the form of a clear means of transition through the abolition of the wage system and a

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[217] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *National Guilds* p.4; S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *The Bondage of Wagery* p.41
[218] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *ibid* pp.297-298
[219] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *The Bondage of Wagery* p.41
[220] P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms and the New Age Magazine* p.21

detailed plan for the creation and management of at least fourteen different guilds across different sectors of the economy including, agriculture, construction, medicine, and transport.[221] In particular, Hobson stressed the need for these institutions to be constructed on the basis of what he called "industrial democracy" which would replace the current class relation with new a system of workers' control in which all workers would participate democratically in the management of their respective industries.[222] This concept distanced the idea of National Guilds from Penty's vision of a guild system controlled by master craftspeople as it introduced an explicitly democratic thrust into the formation of Guild Socialism. This was used to criticise the limits of democracy under capitalism and by extension the limits of collectivism. As a result, Hobson argued, "Guild Socialism is necessarily a work of democratic social reproduction. It is democracy applied to industry. Herein it differs from State Socialism, which leaves to the bureaucrat the task of organising the industrial army without regard to the democratic principle."[223]

Finally, Hobson expressed this idea directly towards the labour movement through his journalism. This has already been highlighted in relation to his articles published in *The New Age*, and his subsequent book, which mainly addressed the same middle-class socialist audiences. Hobson's career as a journalist also meant that his ideas incorporated a different form of practical knowledge. Unlike Penty whose ideas came from a combination of his practical knowledge derived from his training and work as an architect and his theoretical knowledge derived from nineteenth-century corporatism and libertarian socialism. Hobson was informed by a different combination of knowledge, which included theoretical knowledge supplied by Marx's critique of political economy and his practical knowledge derived from his career as a journalist who specialised in labour issues. This development can be understood in relation to the writing of what would become *National Guilds* and the relationship between Hobson and Orage.

The beginnings of this project took shape in the first months of 1912 when Orage and Hobson met frequently and shared ideas. At this point Hobson had written only the first three articles about the wage system before he left Britain to become the manager of a banana plantation in British Honduras. The next three articles he wrote were sent from Panama, while further articles were written in different locations, such as in various banana and mahogany camps and on the deck of a large schooner as he traveled to the estate where he would become a manager and complete the

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[221] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *ibid* p.276
[222] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *ibid* p.58
[223] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *ibid* p.122

remainder of the articles.[224] Post of any kind took roughly a month to travel between British Honduras and the metropole and although Hobson physically returned to Britain in September 1913, he left soon after in either November or February 1914 at which point the majority of articles had already been written or published. According to Jack Vowles it is difficult to gauge exactly how much Orage influenced this process because while Hobson certainly wrote the articles the ideas behind them were developed through discussions first in person and then by post with Orage. Furthermore, Orage wrote separate contributions about Guild Socialism in his editorial notes in *The New Age* and also wrote another series of articles under the title, 'Towards National Guilds'. Additionally, as an editor Orage curated the correspondence and debate within *The New Age* and signed his own contributions with notes, such as "National Guildsmen", or "the Guild writers", which, as Hobson later recounted, gave the impression that the articles were "the joint efforts of a number of distinguished Socialist writers".[225] This evidence and analysis is compelling. However, as Tom Villis points out Orage's involvement also caused controversy. In particular, Villis argues that Orage's editorial work combined with Hobson's writings helped to create two rival groups who identified with what was now called Guild Socialism. The first was a more left-leaning group of readers who positively identified with Guild Socialism as a label and called themselves "guild socialists" and another more conservative group who identified with the term National Guilds and referred to themselves as "national guildsmen".[226]

Controversy blossomed between Hobson and Orage over who could claim to be the originator of the ideas behind Guild Socialism. The first trouble began in relation to the authors name on *National Guilds,* which was published under the supervision of Orage because Hobson was out of the country. As a result Orage allowed the first edition of the book to be published solely under his own name with no reference to Hobson. Upon discovering what Orage had done after he came across a copy of the book in New York Hobson was furious and forced Orage to admit the book had been mainly the product of his work. In this way Hobson was successful and all further editions of the book carried his name. Further controversy flared between the two when Orage attributed the inspiration for the book in its preface to Penty's earlier work, despite separately claiming in *The New Age* that the links between the two were minor. This reference particularly annoyed Hobson who claimed to have used the term 'guild' because it was widely used by socialists in the late

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[224] S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim of the Left: Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist* (Longmans, 1938) p.178
[225] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* pp.215-216; S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim of the Left* p.178
[226] T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde* p.55,59-60; S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim of the Left* p.177; N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p,94

nineteenth century, such as Morris, often to describe guilds in association with the Arts and Craft Movement.[227]

Kevin Morgan complicates this debate further by suggesting other sources of inspiration for the book also came directly from Hobson's work as a journalist. In particular, his frequent trips across the Atlantic brought him into contact with the American journalist, William English Walling. Walling was also a frequent transatlantic traveller and infrequent contributor to *The New Age,* as well as a fierce critic of Fabian collectivism. In Walling's own book, *Socialism As It Is* (1912) he also criticised state socialism and put forward an industrial unionist program, which recommended a combination of trade union and political party organisation. According to Morgan both Hobson and Walling developed and shared similar theoretical positions, such as the open declaration by both that syndicalism made up half of their theories. Furthermore, he notes that after the First World War Walling's writings were also subsequently labelled an American equivalent of Guild Socialism.[228] A similar conclusion is also reached by Vowles who notes that during Hobson's frequent trips to the Americas he likely came into contact with members of the IWW who inspired his idea of Guild Socialism.[229] There is good reason to accept this claim given not only Hobson's frequent travels, but also due to the kind of theoretical knowledge he developed, which did not contain the same degree of anti-statist rhetoric associated with French syndicalism. Instead, more like the industrial unionists in the United States Hobson argued that a partnership with the state was essential to his vision of workers' control.[230]

Ultimately the meaning of Guild Socialism which Hobson helped to develop was tied both to forms of theoretical knowledge derived from Marx's critique of political economy, and his own practical knowledge of the labour movement, which he developed through his journalistic career and brought him into contact with various sources of inspiration tied to industrial unionism. As a result of this combination, the reception of *National Guilds* proved to be appealing amongst leftwing intellectuals and trade unionists in Britain, despite some criticism that it was marked by both "crudity" and "naivety".[231] Amongst those who responded more positively to the program was a much younger figure, George Douglas Howard Cole, who would go on to help clarify and contribute additional meaning to Guild Socialism.[232]

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[227] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.217-219
[228] K. Morgan, 'British Guild Socialists and the Exemplar of the Panama Canal' *History of Political Thought* Vol.28 No. 1. (2007) p.131
[229] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.214
[230] S.G. Hobson and A.R. Orage, *National Guilds* pp.vi,133,136
[231] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* pp.34-35
[232] Henceforth G.D.H. Cole

2.2.4. G.D.H. Cole

G.D.H. Cole was born in 1889 into comfortable middle-class surroundings in the small southern English city of Cambridge. Unlike the other figures already discussed in this chapter who shaped the early meanings attached to Guild Socialism Cole grew up and became politicised in a different political context after the socialist rival of the 1880s and 1890s.[233] Cole was part of a different generation who came to socialism through his formal education at the end of the Edwardian period. As Cole later recounted, "I became a Socialist as a schoolboy a year or so before the General Election in 1906, which first put the [Labour] Party firmly on the parliamentary map… My conversion to Socialism had very little to do with parliamentary politics… I was converted quite simply, by reading William Morris's *News From Nowhere,* which made me feel, suddenly and irrevocably, that there was nothing except a Socialist for me to be… I became a Socialist, as many others did in those days, on the grounds of morals and decency and aesthetic sensibility."[234] As a result of this temporal difference, Cole has been frequently cast by historians as a convert to Guild Socialism rather than one of its originators.[235] However, this perspective is only valid when considered independently of the National Guilds League that came later. In fact, Cole was instrumental in refashioning the meaning of Guild Socialism and towards the establishment of the League.

According to his biographer, Luther Carpenter, Cole's acceptance of socialism was surprising for a number of reasons. Firstly because of the comfortable conditions in which Cole grew up. In Cambridge socialism was not particularly a strong force at this point, especially amongst the middle-classes and intelligentsia where socialist ideas had made only weak and scattered inroads. Furthermore, Cole came of age during a period when collectivism was hegemonic over socialist thought in Britain and the Labour Party appeared to be the obvious vehicle towards socialism.[236] As Cole's later recollections attest he came to socialism along a similar path as Penty, and to a lesser extent Hobson, through reading William Morris. Similarly to Penty, Cole accepted from Morris the idea that art grew out of conditions set by society and that the distinction between art and craftsmanship was false. These premises led Cole towards the idea, "that the quality of work and quality of living could not be dissociated, and that men whose daily labours were to them no better

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[233] M. Stears, 'George Douglas Howard Cole (1889–1959)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32486

[234] G.D.H. Cole, 'The British Labour Movement - Retrospect and Prospect', *Ralph Fox Memorial Lecture, Fabian Special,* No.8 (London, 1952) pp.3-4

[235] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* pp.36-38; N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.88

[236] L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 1973) pp.5-6

than an irksome round of toil, and satisfied no part of their natural impulses could by no means live happily or fruitfully in the rest of their existence."[237] In this sense, Cole shared a similar aesthetic understanding of labour as Penty, which focused on the ideas of quality tied to human experience. However, unlike Penty, these socialist ideas developed a decade later during the Edwardian era and were consequently shaped by the unrest of the period.[238]

Cole became heavily involved in political and literary activities while studying history and philosophy at Balliol College at Oxford University between 1908 and 1912. Here he joined both the Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party and contributed to the Workers' Educational Association, as well as editing the *Oxford Reformer*. In this context, Cole came into contact with a cohort of young male socialists who would help him develop his ideas many of whom would subsequently become members of the League, such as the journalists Ivor Brown and William Mellor.[239]

In 1912 Cole was awarded a fellowship at the Magdalen College, Oxford, where he would shift his focus towards economics and political thought. This fellowship allowed Cole to complete his first major publication a comparative account of trade unionism entitled, *The World of Labour* (1913).[240] The book was an immediate success amongst British intellectuals, even managing to continue selling well during the First World War and made its way onto a fourth edition by 1917.[241] Besides crediting his fellowship Cole also acknowledged *The New Age* and specifically its discussion of National Guilds as inspirations for the book. As Cole later wrote, "[he] was a regular reader of *The New Age* from 1906 onwards, and followed with keen interest the successive developments of the Guild idea."[242] Despite this enthusiasm, Cole did not declare himself a guild socialist in *The World of Labour*. Instead, he critiqued the theoretical ambiguity of those who did. In particular, he interrogated the ambiguities of how to transition to a guild society, the lack of emphasis on democracy, and the tenuous connection of writers in *The New Age* to the actual existing trade union movement.[243]

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[237] G.D.H. Cole, 'William Morris and the Modern World', *Persons and Periods* (Macmillan, 1938) p.293
[238] L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole* pp.9-11
[239] L.P. Carpenter, *ibid* p.16; P. Howard, "Ivor John Carnegie Brown (1891–1974)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30863;
[240] M. Stears, "George Douglas Howard Cole (1889–1959)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32486
[241] L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole* p.23
[242] G.D.H. Cole, *Chaos and Order in Industry* (Methuen, 1920) p.51; G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* (Harvester Press, 1973) p.4
[243] G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* p.54, 363-365

Alongside these sources, Cole also credited the arch-Fabians, Sidney and Beatrice Webb as inspiration for his book.[244] This gratitude was a clear act of positioning against the Webbs which was tied to their assessment of the role of trade unions that Cole opposed. The source of this disagreement was located in the Webbs landmark studies, *Industrial Democracy* (1897) and *The History of the Trade Unionism* (1894), which analysed the rise of trade unionism in Britain and the use of collective bargaining by unions to negotiate wages and working conditions with employers. Although the Webbs acknowledged the growing strength of the trade unions in Britain since the 1890s they nevertheless maintained the view that collective bargaining was the pinnacle of what trade unionism could achieve.[245] For the Webbs parliamentary means via the Labour Party was the correct path for the British labour movement, which they defended ceaselessly even during the Great Unrest.[246] In response, Cole began to develop what would become a consistent argument put forward by the National Guilds League, which chimed with the earlier disagreements formed by Penty, Orage, and Hobson, that the Fabians were elitists who did not trust ordinary people and had little understanding of their lives and aspirations.[247] This mistrust was embodied in the commitment the Fabians placed on parliamentary democracy and the Labour Party as the vehicle capable of delivering socialism instead of trade unions, which Cole was beginning to see as the real leaders of labour movement.

In contrast to the Webbs, *The World of Labour* placed the potential of trade unionism at the forefront of the labour movement. Although the book was written in response to conditions generated in Britain, in particular the Great Unrest, the majority of its content was devoted to analysing trade unionism around the world in order to highlight what lessons could be learnt from elsewhere. These concerns were tied together by the book's overriding question, "what is the labour movement capable of making of itself?"[248] In answer to this question, Cole focussed the majority of his attention on the development of syndicalism and industrial unionism in France and the United States and to a much lesser extent trade unionism in Italy, Germany, and Sweden. As such, *The World of Labour* celebrated the emphasis syndicalists and industrial unionists placed upon producers and trade unions as opposed to the Webbs emphasis on the necessity of parliamentary democracy and the mechanisms of the state.[249]

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[244] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* p.xxxix
[245] B. Webb and S. Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (Longmans, 1920) p.173-220; B. Webb and S. Webb, *The History of the Trade Unionism* (Longmans, 1920) p.596, 638
[246] B. Webb and S. Webb, *What Syndicalism Means* pp.138-147
[247] A.W. Wright, 'Fabianism and Guild Socialism: Two Views of Democracy' *International Review of Social History,* Vol.23 No.2 (1978) p.229
[248] G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* p.2
[249] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* p.7

The international cases portrayed in *The World of Labour* were presented by Cole as distinct and shaped by local conditions, while also being interconnected. For example, Cole described the distinctive history of French syndicalism premised on the revolutionary history of France. While, also arguing that it influenced the growth of syndicalism in Italy and the United States via the movement of texts like Georges Sorel's *Réflexions sur la violence* (Reflections on Violence - 1906) and the transatlantic passage of individuals like William English Walling.[250] Furthermore, Cole even went so far as to claim that the ideas in his book were only an expression of the ideas introduced from abroad by Tom Mann.[251] However, Cole counterbalanced these claims with a pessimistic argument that "on the whole imported ideas do not pay" thereby suggesting his own skepticism about the possibility of transmitting ideas internationally. This warning has often been construed by scholars as evidence of Cole's implicit nationalism, or as Anthony Wright has called it "Little Englanderism".[252] Evidence for this claim is undeniably present in *The World of Labour*, especially given that Cole also asserted that "[n]ationality is still the strongest bond which can join men together".[253] However, it would be wrong to argue that Cole's perspective was wholly limited to a national perspective. Indeed *The World of Labour* contributed an international perspective to Guild Socialism, which was shaped by the privileged academic setting provided by Oxford where Cole found himself that informed the theoretical knowledge he developed.

The international perspective *The World of Labour* presented was rooted in the imperial context Cole found himself in at Oxford. However, before considering this context it is first necessary to take account of the actual arguments contained within Cole's book. Firstly, it is important to consider that each of the national cases of trade unionism examined were, with the exception of Sweden, all located within imperial metropoles. Therefore by discussing the connectivity and cooperation between them Cole presented an inter-imperial account of their development.[254] This is revealed through the connections between cases Cole described, such as the growing anti-collectivism in Britain with the growth of workers' control movements in France and the United States. For example, when describing Belloc's idea of the servile state Cole responded to this idea by identifying it as "very French" in terms of its anti-statism and connected it directly to the, "rising tide of force the newspapers call Syndicalism."[255] Furthermore, when describing industrial

[250] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* pp.41-42, 156
[251] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* pp.41-42, 167
[252] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* p.204; A.W. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1979) p.72; J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War* (Routledge, 1974) p.125
[253] G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* p.27
[254] D. Hedinger and N. Heé, "Transimperial History - Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition" *Journal of Modern European History*, Vol. 16 (2018) pp.429-430
[255] G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* p.4

unionism and syndicalism in France and the United States Cole couldn't help but acknowledge their influence in Britain. In particular, he noted the transfer of syndicalist ideas from France since the beginning of the twentieth century and highlighted the role of IWW towards inspiring industrial unionism in Britain.[256]

The international perspective of the labour movement contained within *The World of Labour* is further emphasised when considered in relation to how Cole was able to obtain this information and formulate it into a coherent form of theoretical knowledge embodied in his book. This process relates to the distinction between information and knowledge described by Peter Burke who argues that the development of new kinds of knowledge is often tied to the gathering and interrogation of information which is then classified and systematised as it is converted into knowledge.[257] In the case of *The World of Labour* it is clear that significant material factors were necessary in the form of communication systems, such as postal services and steamships, in order to transport written information across borders for Cole to consult. The availability of this information was contingent on Cole's position at Oxford, which funded his research and was itself a centre for the accumulation of information and production of knowledge located at the heart of the British empire and intimately connected with its operation.[258] Therefore this position at Oxford allowed Cole and many other young socialists to become familiar with subjects, such as French syndicalism and American Industrial Unionism, as they sought to broaden the language of British trade unionism and developed a similar international perspective of workers control.

The acceptability of this perspective at Oxford was also contingent on the existing academic knowledge hierarchy which existed there. This relates to the necessary process of combinability, described by Bruno Latour, which hinges upon the idea that information and knowledge must both be acceptable within certain existing knowledge systems in order to become integrated and develop.[259] In this case, the academic popularity of pluralism at Oxford during this period provided a means for Cole's perspective to develop largely in association with the philosopher John Neville Figgis. Figgis's pluralist ideas were inspired by the translation from German into English of Otto von Gierke's, *Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht* (1868) by the legal scholar Frederic William Maitland. Maitland contended that different groups within a society, such as trade unions and churches, possessed different personalities and should be recognised as existing independently of

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[256] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* p.32-33, 211-212
[257] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge* (Polity, 2016) pp.20-22
[258] T. Pietsch, *Empire of scholars: Universities, networks and the British academic world, 1850–1939* (Manchester University Press, 2015); R. Symonds, *Oxford and Empire: The Last Lost Cause?* (Clarendon, 2004)
[259] B. Latour, *Science in Action* (Harvard University Press, 2003) p.223

state recognition. Figgis adopted this idea which then became a challenge to the authority of the unity sovereign state. Instead, Figgis now conceived a pluralist state in which there was no single source of authority.[260] The prominence of this pluralist position at Oxford during this period is mirrored in the background of *The World of Labour* and informed the book's central question about the potential of trade unions as units within a broader society. Therefore in this sense, academic pluralism provided a means for Cole to develop his own international perspective of trade unionism and foster interest in workers' control as an alternative to the authority of the state supported by collectivism.

Another important factor that shaped the development of *The World of Labour* was an invitation Cole received in 1912 from Beatrice Webb to join the Committee of Inquiry into the Control of Industry. This newly established Fabian group was designed to develop a response to the threat against the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy posed by syndicalism and was tasked with finding a means of reconciling the idea of democracy with industry.[261] The Webbs closely controlled the initial stages of the inquiry and employed young researchers, like Cole and his friend from Oxford, William Mellor, alongside many other future members of the League, such as Robert Page Arnot and Margaret Postgate, in order to provide data to support the Webbs arguments. In 1913 the committee changed its name to the Fabian Research Department and increasingly the young researchers began to disagree with the Webbs. In particular, they questioned the Webbs opinion that trade unions should not be granted greater control over their respective industries. As a result, the young researchers increasingly came to believe that trade unions should be allowed to democratically administer themselves without the need for parliamentary oversight, which caused a divide within the department. These tensions disrupted the ability of the department to produce reports and publish conclusions as both the Webbs and the young researchers began to block each other's research.[262] This marked the beginnings of an open conflict within the department between the theoretical knowledge, which informed the Webbs support for Fabian collectivism, and the new knowledge being produced by Cole and others in defence of workers' control.

The struggle between these rival forms of socialist knowledge produced a dialectical transformation in Cole and the other young researchers, who were now beginning to identify as guild socialists. Furthermore what had begun as a battle within the Fabian Research Department quickly spread to the rest of the Fabian Society. This wider conflict erupted in 1914 at the annual Fabian Summer

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[260] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* pp.22-23
[261] J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War* pp, 37-40); M. Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism* (Stanford University Press, 1969) pp.150-151
[262] L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole* pp.25

School in Cumbria. Here the guild socialists centered around Cole disrupted daily research discussions and political debates by questioning Fabian orthodoxies. The guild socialists also withdrew socially from the school after they challenged the imposed nighttime curfew, and began to blatantly order out for beer. Outside of the school the guild socialists raised the red flag and sang revolutionary songs at the local Keswick Evangelical Convention, which led to the local Cumbrian police being summoned to the school to the annoyance of their opponents and particularly the Webbs. According to Margaret Postgate, these disruptions marked the beginnings of the guild socialists' attempt to capture the Fabian Society and contributed to the impetus which would form the National Guilds League.[263]

In 1915 the guild socialists launched their attempt to take control of the Fabian Society speared headed by Cole. Their plan involved a pact between the guild socialists and another group of rebels, who had challenged the dominance of the Webbs in 1912 and attempted to form a closer relationship with the Labour Party by abandoning the program of attempting to influence middle-class politics. Together the two groups agreed the Fabian Society should exclude supporters of the Liberal and Conservative parties and restrict its activities to research in support of the labour movement, while renouncing all attempts to take a role in parliamentary politics by sponsoring specific candidates. Despite coming close to success the rebellion failed by only a few votes to topple the Webbs overall control of the Fabian executive committee. In response, most of the rebels quickly resigned or were expelled from the society. Cole reacted viciously to this defeat accusing his opponents of being fools and immediately resigned after the Fabians annual general meeting in May 1915.[264] Although the guild socialists had failed to win control over the Fabian Society they did secure one minor victory. As a result of the schism, the guild socialists now took full took control of the Fabian Research Department. This would become a valuable resource in the years to come as this body continued to function to create statistical data used by the National Guilds League, and formally split from the Fabians in 1918 after changing its name to the Labour Research Department that remained a bastion of support for Guild Socialism until the 1920s.[265]

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[263] M. Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism* pp.150-155; *The Life of G.D.H. Cole* p.52
[264] L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole* pp.29-31
[265] D. Blaazer, "Guild Socialism and the Historians" *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* Vol 44, No. 1 (1998) p. 12; L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole: An Intellectual Biography* pp.28-31

2.2.5. From Storrington to the National Guilds League

The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 also played a decisive role in the making of the National Guilds League, alongside the guild socialists failed attempt to capture the Fabian Society. Several hundred thousand men joined the British army in the first few months of the war including many of the early supporters of nascent Guild Socialism.[266] In response, those who remained civilians now reevaluated their position and began efforts to organise a united position. This led to a conference in December 1914, later remembered as the Storrington Conference, which was according to the organisers own account designed "[to] reach an agreement on all points of difference" about Guild Socialism.[267] This meeting created the prospect for a singular guild socialist position in order to challenge the dominance of Fabian collectivism. It also represented the beginnings of the successful institutionalisation of Guild Socialism.

The Storrington Conference began on a wet evening just before Christmas in the small village of Storrington in West Sussex, some fifty miles south of London. Here a small group of men and women found lodgings in a local inn called The White Horse and made preparations for a series of discussions on the subject of Guild Socialism over the upcoming week. A complete list of names of those who attended does not exist. However, Cole at least was there along with other soon-to-be-former Fabians, such as Mellor, Arnot, and probably Postgate. Notably absent from the conference were Hobson, who was away on business in Honduras, and Orage, who refused to be part of any attempt to move the discussion of Guild Socialism away from *The New Age*.[268] The outcome of the conference was a twelve-page report, which became known amongst guild socialists as the Storrington Document. Despite its size, this document represented an important synthesis of different interpretations of Guild Socialism and would become a blueprint for the League.

The central thesis of the report was an unambiguous argument for democratic socialism discernible from its opening sentence, "Guild Socialists profess themselves democrats in both industry and politics." This claim rested on the argument Hobson had initially developed but was supported by Cole and other members of the Fabian Research Department, that representative democracy was a sham due to the corrosive effects of capitalism which reduced workers to "an inferior economic

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[266] M.B. Reckitt, *As it happened* (M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1941) pp.121-122, 141
[267] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[268] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* pp.314-315

status" thus rendering parliamentary democracy void. Following the dictum of EPPPP the report argued, "if economic conditions are servile, the political system will be servile" and "unless the workers have industrial freedom they cannot be politically free." This diagnosis led towards an unambiguous solution. The recognition of the obvious connection between politics and economics and the implementation of a new partnership between these fields through the introduction of democratic principles into industry summarised by the concept of "industrial democracy".[269]

In order to construct this partnership, the Storrington Document proposed the introduction of a system of National Guilds which would work with the state in order to unite political and economic concerns. This argument was again heavily informed by Hobson's work, but also bore the obvious influence of Penty's earlier vision. As a result, the report argued that National Guilds would emerge from the further development of existing trade unions. Specifically, through the expansion of membership by incorporating professional white-collar workers, such as clerks and foremen, alongside manual workers, thereby further expanding the industrial unions' size and capacity to represent workers across entire industries. Furthermore, the report also recommended the introduction of collective contracts to hasten this transformation. This involved unions negotiating shared contracts for multiple workers rather than individual contracts for each worker. The intention behind this policy was that through trade unions expanding their functions by collectively administering wages and gradually accumulating other responsibilities, such as electing management structures; collective contracts would gradually increase the autonomy and democratic organisation of unions, thus providing a means towards the growth of workers' control.[270] This idea followed Penty's initial recommendation for trade unions to increasingly take over responsibilities from employers, such as managing wage and working conditions but also showed signs of significant refinement. Indeed both expanding union membership and collective contracts were part of an overall strategy now emerging for the creation of National Guilds, which would later become known as "encroaching control".[271]

Encroaching control represented a similar strategy to the industrial unionist program of winning control through a combination of trade union advancement and winning political elections resulting

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[269] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[270] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[271] L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole: An Intellectual Biography* pp.77-82; J. Lovell introduction to *The World of Labour* p.xvii; M. Cole, 'Guild Socialism and the Labour Research Department' in A. Briggs and J. Saville's (eds.) *Essays in Labour History 1886–1923* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1971) p.274

in a gradual transfer of power to workers. This would occur as unions increased their strength in relation to their size and the number of functions they managed. Furthermore, they could also be aided by political initiatives, such as certain efforts towards nationalisation and higher taxes on wealthy capitalists. However, fundamentally the emerging guild socialist position was that political means alone were not enough. In fact, as the Storrington Document made explicit, a combination of industrial and political tactics were required, not excluding strikes, in order to secure the development of National Guilds and solidify workers' control.[272]

Although the Storrington Document attempted to present a unified model of Guild Socialism it also included clear internal tensions. This point has already been remarked upon by Vowles who noted that the report provided no resolution to real differences in meaning associated with Guild Socialism at this point.[273] However, although Vowles makes this claim he failed to specify what these differences were. In fact, the Storrington Document provides two clear examples, which signify tensions over the meaning of Guild Socialism in relation to the role of women and the idea of the state.

The role of women was a particularly divisive issue for the authors of the Storrington Document, so much so that a separate special report was written by a dissenting minority, which was later attached to the original document. The source of this disagreement was whether men and women should have equal access to all jobs within National Guilds. According to the Storrington Document, "in a democratic system, there must be complete equality of rights between men and women" which meant "economic independence of every adult person in the community, whether man or women. Such independence will be secured either by the producing of some commodity or by the rendering of some service. Women as wives or housekeepers are rendering a service, for which they should receive direct remuneration from the State, or through Associations."[274]

Although this argument anticipated the demands of socialist feminists in the 1970s for wages for housework.[275] It was rejected by a number of dissenters at the Storrington Conference who argued that beyond the sphere of the home and certain professions, including domestic service, medicine,

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[272] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[273] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.315
[274] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[275] S. Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (Falling Wall Press, 1975); L. Toupin, *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972-77* (Pluto Press, 2018)

education, shop assistants, clerical work, and some agricultural labour, "[t]he entrance of Women into industry is undesirable".[276] This they reasoned was because the role of women under National Guilds would still be dependent on "the twin institutions of marriage and of the family."[277] This was based on several paternalistic arguments. Including that modern industrial was liable to cause infertility in women, that it would take mothers away from their duties of childcare and maintaining a household, and that standards of quality in industry would have to be lowered "to meet the secular disabilities of women."[278]

This disagreement highlights the broader issue of the role of women in relation to Guild Socialism, which has so far received relatively little scholarly attention. For example, both Margaret Cole and Kevin Morgan have briefly described the paternalistic views of certain guild socialists towards women.[279] While conversely, Judith Smart has described how Guild Socialism provided a useful alternative to women in contrast to other male-dominated sections of the labour movement.[280] In fact, as shall be seen later in the course of this thesis, women played an important role in the development of Guild Socialism particularly in relation to the League. Additionally, division over the role of women would continue within the League in the years to come reflecting a broader tension amongst socialists and trade unionists in Britain. This was despite the large numbers of women's trade unions and mixed-sex unions during this period, which were nevertheless persistently criticised by opponents within the British Left who argued women should be excluded from certain jobs particularly in heavy industries in order to protect these jobs for men.[281]

While the role of women highlighted obvious tensions between the authors of the Storrington Document, the role of the state proved to be a more subtle disagreement. This tension was focused on the nature of the state and had implications for the proposed partnership between the state and the National Guilds. Specifically, while the Storrington Document described a relatively clear balance between the interests of producers and consumers represented by the guilds and the state respectively that would be maintained economically by the state owning and leasing the means of production to the guilds and in turn the guilds repaying the state through taxes. It was not entirely

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[276] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[277] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[278] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[279] M. Cole, *The Life of G.D.H. Cole* (Macmillan, 1971) pp. 56; K. Morgan, *British Guild Socialists and the Exemplar of the Panama Canal* p.150
[280] J. Smart, 'Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall Commune in Melbourne, 1917' *Labour History*, No. 94 (May, 2008) pp.114-115
[281] N.C. Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976* p.4.60-61, 81

clear how this relationship would be managed or sustained. This left open a number of questions, including whether this partnership would need to be organised under another even greater sovereign authority? Or whether it was possible to establish a dual power situation between the guilds and the state? Or even, whether ultimately power would reside at the bottom of the system with individuals?[282] These ambiguities hint towards the different potential meanings linked to Guild Socialism, which for time being remained unproblematic for authors of the Storrington Document, but nevertheless highlighted the potential for theoretical problems to surface in the future.

Following the Storrington Conference several of its participants armed with what they considered a clearly systemised vision of Guild Socialism travelled to London at the beginning of 1915. Among them were Cole, Brown, Mellor, and the school teacher Maurice Reckitt. Their intention was to confront Orage at the offices of *The New Age* and gain his approval for a new guild socialist institution after he had rejected the offer to attend the Storrington Conference. Although Orage disliked the idea of giving control of the discussion around Guild Socialism away from his paper, he eventually agreed to the proposal; or as Reckitt put it he agreed to show, "benevolent neutrality" towards the new institution.[283] In addition, Cole also wrote to Hobson who was still in Honduras, and also endorsed the plan with only minor reservations that such an institution could potentially become a new home for Fabianism.[284] As a result of these twin blessings, an invitation to attend a conference at the offices of the British Steel Smelters Association on the 20th and 21st of April was sent out to prospective members, which made clear that the "Guild Socialists' next step should be the foundation of a Guild Socialist League".[285]

2.3. Institutionalising Guild Socialism

The creation of the National Guilds League in 1915 marked the beginning of the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism and the creation of a knowledge system. This served to expand the meanings associated with Guild Socialism through the addition of new forms of knowledge. Before this point, as has already been discussed, the development of Guild Socialism was tied to a small cadre of disgruntled former Fabians and discussions within the pages of *The New Age*. In contrast, what now

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[282] *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[283] M. Cole, *Guild Socialism and the Labour Research Department* p.274; M.B. Reckitt, *As it happened* p.132
[284] S.G.Hobson to G.D.H. Cole, 3.3.15, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK; S.G. Hobson, *Pilgrim of the Left* pp.186-187
[285] *A Guild Socialist League*, G.D.H. Cole Collection, D3/12/5/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

began was a rigorous attempt to systematically develop the meaning of Guild Socialism and to introduce it to a wider set of audiences through a coordinated propaganda campaign involving lectures, newspapers, and pamphlets. This required the reformulation of knowledge linked to the meaning of Guild Socialism in order to suit particular audiences and the addition of new forms of knowledge to strengthen the appeal. In order to sustain this campaign, the League also provided an institutional framework which assisted by organising members, communications, finances, and establishing regional offices. As a result of this institutional transformation, the materiality, scale, and spaces where Guild Socialism was produced were altered. Furthermore, by focussing on the League new historical actors come to light who contributed to its organisation through different forms of practical knowledge. Thereby adding to the cast of characters who contributed towards the development of Guild Socialism in addition to Penty, Orage, Hobson, and Cole.

After the formation of the National Guilds League, steps were immediately taken to regulate the meaning of Guild Socialism. In order to coordinate the League a twelve-person executive committee was elected to oversee the institution and reelected on an annual basis. The purpose of this committee was to ensure the League pursued two principal activities which were spelt out in the institution's freshly written constitution. "(a) Propaganda of Guild Socialism by means of Lectures, Meetings and Publications. (b) Enquiry into subjects connected with National Guilds."[286] These objectives built upon the intentions of those responsible for circulating the initial invitation letter, which called for the creation of a new institution in order to develop Guild Socialism. According to this letter signed by a total of nine authors, who were all former Fabians.

"No systematic attempt has yet been made to reach any but a small minority of middle-class intellectuals, and, as a result, the more advanced and active Trade Unionists are inclined to regard the whole theory as the work of cranks and faddists. For several years, the "NEW AGE" has advocated the principle of National Guilds; but, inevitably its appeal has been limited, its effect wholly unascertained."[287]

In order to advance the meaning of Guild Socialism further and introduce the subject more widely to the British labour movement, a new institution was required. As the invitation continued, "propaganda can only succeed and produce a lasting effect if there is behind it some organisations,

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[286] National Guilds League Rules and Constitution, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK
[287] *A Guild Socialist League*, G.D.H. Cole Collection, D3/12/5/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

some central rallying point, from which local effort can be helped and encouraged."[288] The creation of the National Guilds League exemplified this logic. Thereby constituting an institution to support the development of propaganda and institutional support which in so doing became a centre point for a knowledge system that advanced the meaning of Guild Socialism.

2.3.1. Propaganda

The production of pamphlets was one of the first attempts undertaken by the National Guilds League to move Guild Socialism beyond the confines of *The New Age.* These changed the material expression of Guild Socialism and built upon the early journalistic knowledge of members of the League, such as Hobson, by targeting specific audiences. Initially, the League created three pamphlets in 1915. The first two, *National Guilds: An Appeal to Trade Unionists* (1915) and *The Guild Idea: An Appeal to the Public* (1915) were directed towards trade unionists and the general public respectively. These laid out the argument for the transformation of trade unions into National Guilds, which was underscored by the slogan, "Out of the Trade Unions must come the Guilds."[289] In order to support this argument, these pamphlets refashioned knowledge associated with Guild Socialism in order to convince the different audiences they addressed.

In order to convince the British general public to support Guild Socialism, the League believed that it was vital to unpick the negative view of trade unionism, which had developed as a result of the militancy of the Great Unrest. The problem that needed to be addressed was that no direct connection existed between the general public, which was largely conceived by the League as an educated middle-class audience, and the trade union movement. In particular, *The Guild Idea* drew attention to how the general public had been misled about trade unionism whose only contact came through newspaper reports when unions went on strike. According to the League, this led to a situation in which the general public had been taught to hate trade unionism and anything resembling workers' control by supporters of collectivism in service of capitalism.[290]

"The public thereupon distrusts Trade Unionism as a whole, very certainly it is angered by its rules and regulations and restrictions, for it can see in this so-called "limitations of output" only a

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[288] *A Guild Socialist League*, G.D.H. Cole Collection, D3/12/5/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[289] *National Guilds: An Appeal to Trade Unionists* (Victoria House Printing, 1915) p.7
[290] *The Guild Idea: An Appeal to the Public* (Victoria House Printing, 1915) p.4

sectional selfishness, a great menace to the nation, and a sinister hint of that black Syndicalism which it has been taught to regard as more terrible even than Socialism itself."[291]
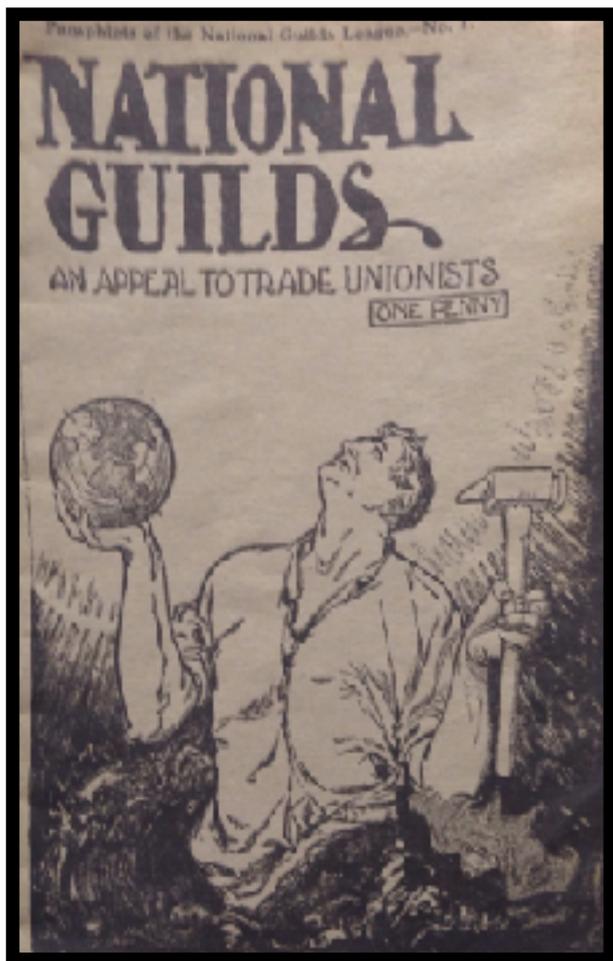
Figure 1
Source: *National Guilds: An Appeal to Trade Unionists*
(Victoria House Printing, 1915)
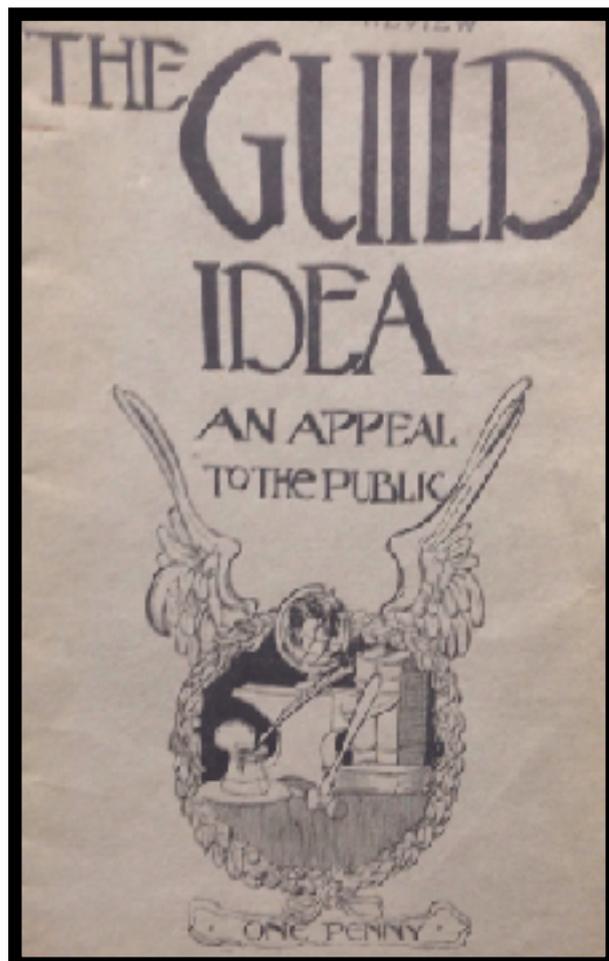
Figure 2
Source: *The Guild Idea: An Appeal to the Public*,
(Victoria House Printing, 1915)

To address this problem and forge a trusting relationship between the general public and trade unions *The Guild Idea* reformulated theoretical knowledge about the political economy of Guild Socialism. In particular, the pamphlet argued,

"The Guild Idea is confidence, the Collectivist idea is suspicion. The Collectivist is always afraid - afraid of trusting the producer, afraid of the Trade Union. It is not strange, for Collectivism works with the grain of capitalist society, and naturally the monopolists of wealth, able and accustomed to play with the politicians, are afraid of the monopoly of labour. But National Guilds must emerge from Industrial Unions and National Guildsmen are not afraid of the Trade Unionist. Rather they see in Trade Union ideals a hope for the fire and a promise of stronger, finer work."[292]

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[291] *The Guild Idea: An Appeal to the Public* p.4
[292] *The Guild Idea: An Appeal to the Public* p.13

This argument, therefore, presented a reformulated version of the importance of finding a balance between consumer and producer interests through the creation of National Guilds, which was central to the political economy of Guild Socialism. Furthermore, it also highlighted the theoretical tensions between Guild Socialism and collectivism, thereby revealing the tension at the heart of the British Left, while attempting to demonstrate the positive potential of trusting trade unionism.

In contrast to this appeal to the general public the League restructured theoretical knowledge about Guild Socialism into different arguments when addressing trade unionists. In *An Appeal to Trade Unionists,* the League turned towards support for industrial unionism and a critique of parliamentary democracy means, the wage system and criticism of nationalisation without workers' control to convince trade unionists to support Guild Socialism.[293] This represented the use of different elements of theoretical knowledge linked to Guild Socialism not present in *The Guild Idea.* However, they amounted to the same conclusion, the necessity to form National Guilds. "Out of the fighting Industrial Unions will come the managing and producing Guilds, and Industrial Unionism is the first step towards National Guilds."[294] Instead of relying on the same argument used to convince the general public of the worth of National Guilds to balance consumer and producer relations. This pamphlet emphasised how guilds would guarantee job security and ensure workers' control over the management of all aspects of production for trade unionists.[295] As a result, *An Appeal to Trade Unionists,* reflected a different formulation of the same theoretical knowledge about the political economy of Guild Socialism placed in relation to a different audience.

Besides these two examples of how the League reformulated knowledge about Guild Socialism to cater to new and different audiences. The League also produced a third pamphlet, *A Catechism of National Guilds* (1915) which was quite different and directed towards middle-class socialists. Unlike the other two examples, this pamphlet was different in terms of its presentation of Guild Socialism. While the other pamphlets delivered their messages through direct exposition and clearly reformulated theoretical knowledge about Guild Socialism to address their specific audiences. *A Catechism of National Guilds* adopted a question and answer style following the format of a Christian catechism used to teach the sacraments. This made the message, which was essentially the

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[293] *National Guilds: An Appeal to Trade Unionists* pp.1-4,19
[294] *National Guilds: An Appeal to Trade Unionists* p.7
[295] *National Guilds: An Appeal to Trade Unionists* pp.8,19

same exposition of the political economy of Guild Socialism as the other two pamphlets, appear more convoluted and therefore less accessible to uneducated audiences. Furthermore, its dense format directed it towards an audience already informed about theoretical precepts of Guild Socialism. Unlike the other pamphlets, which spelt out their arguments methodically over around twenty pages. In contrast, *Catechism* was just four pages long and therefore did not spend nearly as much time explaining its premises to its readership. This makes particular sense since, unlike the other pamphlets, *Catechism* was also reprinted with minor revisions in *The New Age* and therefore can be understood as an attempt by the League to maintain the support of the paper's middle-class socialist readership and its editor Orage, despite his reservations about the League.[296]

The production and circulation of these pamphlets significantly changed the scale of engagement in Britain with Guild Socialism. For example in its first year, the League sold 8000 pamphlets and a further 7000 leaflets targeted explicitly towards these new and established audiences. These sales improved significantly in the following year due to successful the establishment of regional groups across the country who bought and sold pamphlets locally at demonstrations and public meetings in coordination with the executive committee. As a result the next year a total of 17,000 pamphlets and 10,000 leaflets were distributed.[297] Notably, these figures were much smaller than the estimated circulation of *The New Age* during the same period. Although only incomplete records of the paper exist, Orage personally estimated the circulation of the paper to have reached 22,000 by November 1908 and to have sold in the region of by 4,500 copies per week in August 1913, not including the likely possibility that many copies were read by multiple readers.[298] Despite possessing a lower circulation in comparison to *The New Age* the price of the Leagues' roughly twenty-page pamphlets was highly competitive only costing around one penny at this point; in comparison with *The New Age,* which was typically around the thirty pages and cost six pennies per issue in 1915.[299] Furthermore, although the readership of *The New Age* may have been larger it was also certainly less diverse, as the paper continued to target itself towards educated middle-class audiences who could afford its cost. In contrast, the pamphlets produced by the League targeted a broader array of audiences and came with a more affordable price to match.

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[296] *A Catechism of National Guilds,* (Victoria House Printing, 1915) p.1
[297] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1915-1916* pp.4-6, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1916-1917* pp.4-5, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[298] M. Easson, *New Boots from the Old: Matthew Walker Robieson's Ideas and the Struggle for Guild Socialism*, PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales (2012) pp.123-125
[299] *The New Age,* 20th May 1915, p.1

In addition to competitive pricing which distinguished the pamphlets produced by the League from *The New Age* they also featured graphic artwork. These images visualised Guild Socialism for the first time constituting another material change introduced by the League. Furthermore, they represented another effort by the League to reformulate the theoretical knowledge behind Guild Socialism in order to make it more appealing to wider audiences. These images were produced by the Australian political cartoonist, Will Dyson, who was also a member of the executive committee of the League. Dyson's artworks highlight the addition of new forms of practical knowledge in the form of illustration to the meaning of Guild Socialism, which served to advance its theoretical messages. Indeed Dyson captured the appeal of the League to a mixture of audiences, both working-class trade unionists and middle-class professionals, who were reflected in his depictions of archetypes of both types of workers. Hammers and anvils were used to signify manual workers, while books and pens represented white-collar professionals (See Figure 2). These images formed a unity with the text featured in the pamphlets as both made clear reference to William Morris's idea of "the labour-power of the hand and brain" working in unison.[300] As a result, Dyson's artistic representations can be seen as another attempt by the League reorganise the complex knowledge system behind the meaning of Guild Socialism in order to appeal to wider audiences.

Besides pamphlets the National Guilds League also developed other forms of propaganda, in particular its own newspaper, *The Guildsman,* which was launched in December 1916. This initiative was conceived in Glasgow by a local branch of the League and led by a trio of trade unionists, John Paton, George Thomson, and Edwin Muir.[301] Although London was a clear centre for the League in terms of institutional organisation and membership. Glasgow constituted an important, yet smaller centre, which drew heavily on local syndicalist and industrial unionist support which had been cultivated there during the previous decade. *The Guildsman* benefited from its location in the "second city of the Empire" due to its vast shipbuilding and engineering capacities, which employed large numbers of militant trade unionists.[302] Furthermore, the city's position as Britain's foremost centre for shipbuilding was premised on innovations in communication technology and the strategic need for rapid communication between different points

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[300] *National Guilds: An Appeal to Trade Unionists* pp.3-4
[301] M. Easson, *New Boots from the Old* pp.139-140
[302] D.C. Unger, *The Roots of Red Clydeside: Economic and Social Relations and Working Class Politics in the West of Scotland, 1900-1919* Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas (1979) p.iv; J.M. MacKenzie, "'The Second City of the Empire": Glasgow – Imperial Municipality', in F. Driver and D. Gilbert (eds.), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester University Press, 1999) pp. 215–37

both within and beyond the British Empire. This meant that the city, and in particular its port, was an important centre of imperial communication infrastructure in the form of shipping, railways, and electric telegraphs.[303] This allowed physical copies of *The Guildsman* to be rapidly distributed across Britain to local groups and increasingly in years to come to members living abroad. As a result copies of the paper were sold locally at group meetings across the country but were also more readily available in London at various bookshops, as well as in smaller locations, such as Watford and Gunnersbury, where League members were able to convince local newsagents to also sell copies.[304]

Glasgow's traditions of powerful trade unions, syndicalism, and industrial unionism, were also clearly depicted in *The Guildsman.* This was especially apparent in regular sections of the paper, such as "Industrial Notes", "By the Clyde", "Clyde Jottings" and "Trade Union Notes", which mainly covered local trade union activities often written by Paton and Thomson.[305] Alongside advertisements for local lectures on syndicalism and industrial unionism as well as book reviews of syndicalist texts, such as Sorel's *Réflexions sur la Violence*.[306] These ideas were particularly strongly fused together in a pamphlet reprinted in *The Guildsman* entitled, *Towards Industrial Democracy* (1917), which was co-written by Paton and another trade unionist William Gallacher.[307] Although Gallacher was not a member of the League, he was nevertheless closely linked to Guild Socialism. After working in the United States in 1913 where he had become inspired by industrial unionism Gallacher became instrumental in inviting key international figures to visit Glasgow, such as the South African syndicalist trade union leader Bill Andrews, who also became closely linked to Guild Socialism.[308] Together Gallacher and Paton put forward a syndicalist program of workers' control in *Towards Industrial Democracy* characterised by the formation of workshop committees to administer all production from the local to the national level. This was blended with the gradualist guild socialist idea of collective contracts in order to develop a singular "great Industrial Union".[309] This fusion of syndicalist and guild socialist ideas was seen as effective propaganda by members of the League, so much so that Weymouth branch of the League reprinted the pamphlet at its own

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[303] S. Hazareesingh, 'Interconnected Synchronicities: The Production of Bombay and Glasgow as Modern Global Ports c.1850–1880' *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2009) pp. 7–31; W. Behringer, 'Communications Revolutions: A Historiographical Concept' *German History*, Volume 24, Issue 3, July 2006, pp. 333–374
[304] *The Guildsman,* February 1917, p.10
[305] *The Guildsman,* December 1916 p.8; February 1917, p.7; April 1918 p.9; December 1918 p.10
[306] *The Guildsman*, January 1917, p.8
[307] *The Guildsman*, July 1917, pp.6-8; J. Paton and W. Gallacher, *Towards Industrial Democracy: A Memorandum on Workshop Control* (Paisley Trades and Labour Council, 1917)
[308] R.K. Cope, *Comrade Bill: The Life and Times of W.H. Andrews* (Stewart Printing Company, 1945) p.191
[309] J. Paton and W. Gallacher, *Towards Industrial Democracy* pp.1-4

Figure 3
Advertisements
Source: *The Guildsman*, July 1917, p.11

expense to distribute it to local trade unionists, while G.D.H. Cole noted that "for some years it has taken a regular place in the propaganda of the Guild Socialists."[310]

The location of *The Guildsman* in Glasgow was also reflected in the material production of the paper. In a letter sent from the mangers of *The Guildsman* in Glasgow to the headquarters of the League in London it was noted that during its first two months the paper had sold only 1500 copies, but this figure had increased to an average of between 1800-2000 copies by February 1917. This

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[310] G.D.H. Cole, *Workers' Control in Engineering and Shipbuilding: A Plan for Collective Contrac*t (Labour Publishing Company, 1921) p.11-12

increase was due to special efforts to sell copies at the large local engineering works in Glasgow. It was reported that if the paper was to become self-sufficient it would need to sell an average of 3000 copies and receive £3 from advertisement per month.[311] For this reason, *The Guildsman* began to give over increasing amounts of page space to local businesses advertisements, particularly artisans, cooperatives and book sellers (See Figure 3). This is evidence of the new spatial and material dimensions coming to define Guilds Socialism after the creation of the League, as well as evidence that new kinds of practical knowledge relating to financial organisation were now becoming important in order to materially support the continued development of Guild Socialism.

Above all else *The Guildsman* function as a forum for the discussion and development of Guild Socialism. In this sense, it served as a clear example of how the creation of the League was restructuring the meaning of Guild Socialism through the inclusion and exclusion of particular types of knowledge. This is particularly clear in comparison to the earlier discussion of the subject in *The New Age,* which featured an array of theoretical understandings of Guild Socialism, which were disowned in *The Guildsman.* For example, under Paton's editorship of the paper an authoritarian version of the guild system expressed by the Spanish journalist, Ramiro de Maeztu, was not endorsed and largely excluded.[312] Similarly, *The Guildsman* struggled to accept the pluralist idealism of John Figgis into the meaning of Guild Socialism.[313] Furthermore, although both Figgis and de Maeztu remained features of the broader discourse surrounding Guild Socialism in *The New Age,* their general exclusion from *The Guildsman* highlights clear evidence of the existence of an epistemic hierarchy forming within the League due to the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism.[314] This allowed theoretical knowledge which was accepted by *The Guildsman,* especially those associated with Penty, Hobson and Cole, to be included within the knowledge system in the League, which then became more refined and allowed the League to weave a more coherent set of narratives around itself.[315]

In particular, one narrative *The Guildsman* helped to promote was a strong sense of national identity tied to Guild Socialism. Nationalism, as has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, was already a

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[311] J. Mortimer to the National Guilds League, 9.2.1917, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 8, M/25 Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK
[312] *The Guildsman,* February, 1917 p.6
[313] *The Guildsman,* November 1919 p.7; December 1919 p.5; January 1920, p.7; February 1920, pp.7-8; March 1920, p.11
[314] L. Daston, "Comment on Martin Muslow's History of Knowledge" in M. Tamm and P. Burke's (eds.) *Debating New Approaches to History* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) p.176
[315] M. Stears, "Guild Socialism" in M. Bevir's (eds.), *Modern Pluralism: Anglo-American Debates since 1880* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) p.55

feature of the development of Guild Socialism. However, this was intensified by the National Guilds League which placed the idea of the nation in congruence with the state and conspicuously placed the nation in its title, a decision which very nearly failed in favour of the alternative name "the Guild Socialist League."[316] In so doing the League began to construct a national historic narrative for itself. *The Guildsman* provided an important forum for the construction of this narrative and featured frequent articles which made reference to the historical struggle of the British working-class. These included references to political movements, such as the seventeenth-century radical democratic tradition tied to the English Civil War epitomised by groups like the Levellers, alongside accounts of the development of trade unionism in relation to figures like Robert Owen during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[317] These references were used in combination with descriptions of the earlier medieval guild system, which became the starting point of this tradition, and led up to the early twentieth century with the emergence of Guild Socialism.[318] The context of the First World War was also folded into this development and in response, Paton wrote in *The Guildsman*, "our mission is to capture the flowing tide of patriotism and direct its force against the culminating development of capitalist influence in this country."[319]

The construction of a national narrative around Guild Socialism and the instrumentalisation of the wider context of British nationalism were central to the League's campaign to win support in Britain. This operated on two levels, as a means to increase support for Guild Socialism and as a strategy to defend it against criticism. In the first sense nationalism was a useful means towards securing support from the British trade union movement, which had overwhelmingly thrown its support behind the war effort, despite the expectations of many socialists that international solidarity would prevent the war.[320] Therefore although an idea of the nation functioned as a feature of the intellectual writings of Penty, Hobson, and Coles who framed their visions of political economy in national terms. In contrast through the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism nationalism was now instrumental towards winning support from the labour moment and became a key part of knowledge system within the League.

Secondly, nationalism also served as a defensive strategy towards protecting Guild Socialism from criticism. Specifically, it served as a shield against potential arguments by opponents, such as the

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[316] E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell, 1983) p.2; N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism* p.95; *Revised Storrington Document*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[317] *The Guildsman*, December 1916, p.3; April 1918, pp.6-7; June 1918, pp.7-9
[318] *The Guildsman*, April 1920 p.10
[319] *The Guildsman,* December 1916, p.2
[320] C. Wrigley, 'Labour, Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes (Great Britain and Ireland)' (2017) *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 14.03.21] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/labour_labour_movements_trade_unions_and_strikes_great_britain_and_ireland

Fabian Society, who could delegitimise Guild Socialism through accusations that it simply represented a form of foreign anarchism or syndicalism.[321] In Britain syndicalism, in particular, was often associated with France meaning that the League had to be careful to avoid being framed within a diffusionist paradigm, in order to not highlight a kind of 'hyper-difference' by confirming the foreign character of the League as an argument to dismiss it, or at least doubt its legitimacy.[322] Additionally in the context of the war where the British state took on additional powers through the Defence of the Realm Act to repress antiwar opposition, such as censorship, guild socialists had to be especially careful to position themselves non-antagonistically towards the war. This point is emphasised by Haia Shpayer study of the limited understanding by most of the British public of the diversity of left-wing ideas due to their limited exposure. According to Shpayer, this situation made relatively small movements, such as Guild Socialism, prime targets for attack from a range of political platforms.[323] The formulation of a coherent national identity can therefore be interpreted as an integral part of the National Guilds League's propaganda campaign to both expand the appeal of Guild Socialism and protect it.

Alongside printed propaganda, the League also organised public lectures in order to increase the profile of Guild Socialism in Britain (See Figures 4 and 5). These lectures changed the spaces in which Guild Socialism was discussed in comparison to previously when the subject was largely restricted to the pages of *The New Age.* Furthermore, they also helped to advance the meaning of Guild Socialism. After just two years the League had organised 120 lectures across Britain in a variety of locations including public halls, trade union centres, and socialist societies, through the cooperation of local branches and the executive committee.[324] These lectures were often tied to other forms of propaganda, such as the development of specific pamphlets, or discussions in *The Guildsman.* For example, in 1917 a lecture was organised in Paisley for a group of local teachers entitled, 'Self-government in the Teaching Profession' which was connected to recent proposals by the Glasgow branch to form a National Guild for Education.[325] This was tied to the development of a specific pamphlet on the subject, *Education and the Guild Ideal* (1921), and followed extensive commentary in *The Guildsman,* which recommended that a Teachers Guild could be formed out of

[321] D. Goodway, 'G.D.H. Cole: A Socialist and Pluralist', in P. Ackers, A.J. Reid's (eds.), *Alternatives to State- Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Palgrave, 2016) p.255
[322] H. te Velde, 'Political Transfer: An Introduction,' *European Review of History* (2005) p.209
[323] H. Shpayer, *British Anarchism 1881-1914 Reality and Appearance* (University of London, 1981) pp.213-214
[324] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1916-1917* p.2, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[325] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1916-1917* p.11, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

the already existing, National Union of Teachers.[326] Therefore as this case indicates public lectures could be used as a means to develop Guild Socialism through the use of new spaces in combination with other new forms of propaganda created by the League.
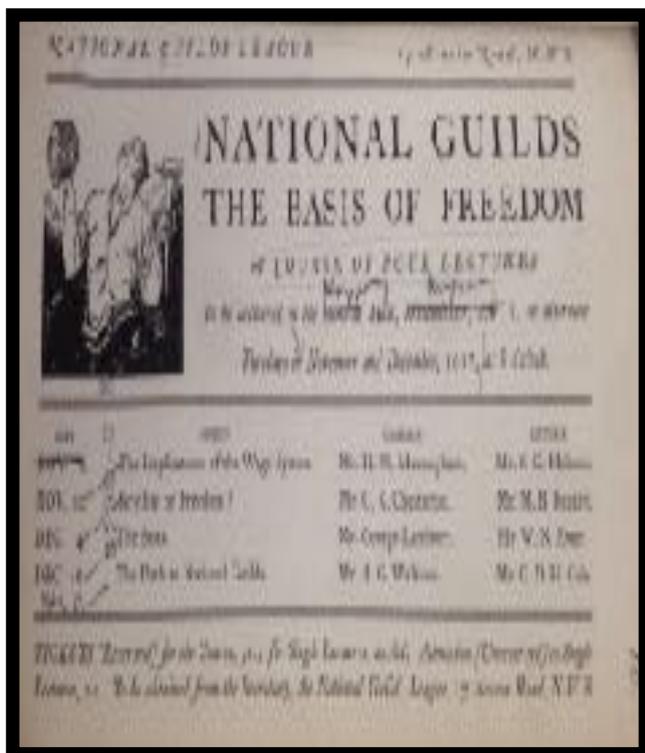
Figure 4
Advertisement for the National Guilds League Winter Lecture Series (1917)
Source: Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, M/36, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
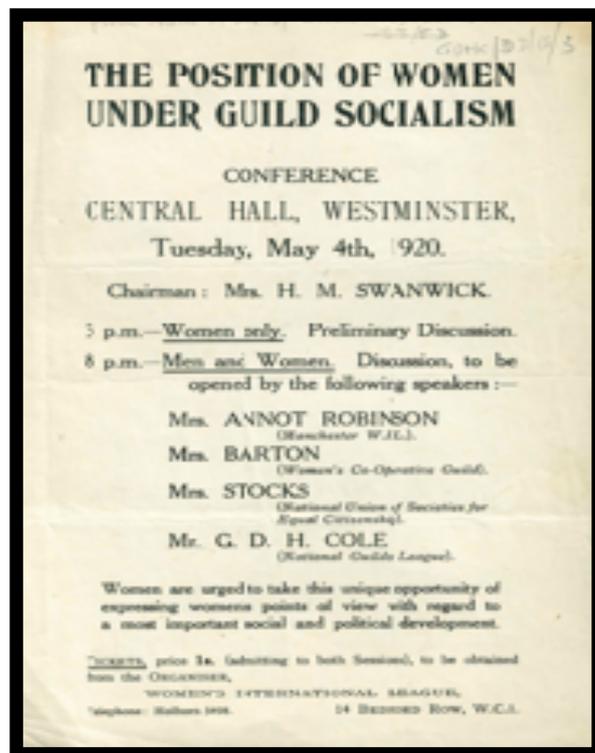
Figure 5
Poster for Conference about the Position of Women Under Guild Socialism, (1920)
Source: G.D.H. Cole Collection, D3/16/3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

On the other hand, public lectures also proved to be costly investments for the National Guilds League which were not always so successful. For example, towards the end of 1917, a series of four lectures about the theory of Guild Socialism were organised in London that targeted local trade unionists and socialists (See Figure 4). The organisation of these lectures proved to be extremely problematic and began with the postponement of the first lecture due to the last-minute refusal by the venue owner to allow the event to take place because of threats that the lecture would be shutdown by the government for "being pacifist and pro-German in purpose." According to the League, this was "a preposterous suggestion, as the subjects of the lectures were not even remotely connected with the war."[327] A subsequent lecture in the series was also disrupted by a German air

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[326] *The Guildsman*, July 1917, pp.3-4; September 1917, pp.8-9; November 1917, p.10; May 1918 p.10; *Education and the Guild Ideal* (Labour Publishing Company, 1921) pp.11-16
[327] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1916-1917* p.5, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

raid, which combined with the postponement of the first lecture made the entire series a financial loss for the League, despite high sales printed propaganda.[328] As result, these examples indicate that public lectures were not necessarily beneficial to the League's aim of promoting Guild Socialism and could prove to be damaging in financial terms.

While the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism demonstrated through League's propaganda campaign transformations in the materiality, scale, and spaces in which the subject was expressed. That led to the creation of new meanings associated with Guild Socialism as knowledge was included, excluded and reformulated from the knowledge system within the League. This was ultimately contingent on the development of a high degree of institutional organisation provided by the League in order to sustain it. This was achieved through the instrumentalisation of forms of practical knowledge which were introduced by members of the League, and so far have not been recognised by scholars as contributing to the development of Guild Socialism.

2.3.2. Institutional Organisation

The institutional organisation of the National Guilds League consisted of three important factors which helped to sustain its propaganda campaign and contribute to the knowledge system it contained. These included an official membership, office management, and financial management, all of which further characterised the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism. In so doing each of these factors represented an example of what Peter Burke has referred to as "skill migration", whereby actors repurposed forms of knowledge they had developed elsewhere and channelled them into the League.[329]

The composition of the membership of the National Guilds League provides valuable insight into the kinds of practical knowledge which became closely associated with Guild Socialism. As has already been emphasised, a large part of the membership of the League consisted of middle-class socialist intellectuals who were former members of the Fabian Society, such as Penty, Hobson, and Cole. As a result the League directly adopted a set of research practices, including conferences, lectures, research committees, summer schools, and the creation of special reports, which mimicked

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[328] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1916-1917* p.5, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[329] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Polity, 2016) p.102

the middle-class socialist predilections of the Fabian Society. In this way Guild Socialism development not only in direct response to Fabianism but in another sense as a continuation of the same practices of knowledge production. These were especially beneficial for more academically inclined members, such as Cole, who benefitted heavily from this research environment and was able to advance his theoretical work by incorporating criticisms he received within the League into his theories of Guild Socialism.[330]

Trade unionists were another important group within the League who also provided valuable forms of practical knowledge.[331] In particular, working-class trade unionists were often essential towards the creation of regional branches of the League, such as in the case of the Glasgow branch already discussed. These were established along the lines of trade union branches and were administered by branch secretaries alongside dedicated correspondent sectaries who connected local groups with other sections of the League by sharing and receiving information. This exchange was further solidified after the creation of *The Guildsman,* which became an important vector for the circulation of information about Guild Socialism between different branches. In this way, trade unionists contributed valuable skills to the institutional organisation of the League, which were derived from the earlier experiences of trade union organisations. As a result, this example of practical knowledge indicates another way in which Guild Socialism was transformed through institutionalisation. Allowing for the greater circulation of Guild Socialism across Britain, and as will be examined in the following chapter internationally.

Office management was particularly important to the successful running of the various branches of the League and constituted another important aspect of its institutional organisation. Following the formation of the London headquarters of the League, the need for effective office administration was quickly realised as vital if the institution was to survive. In this regard, women played a prominent role within the League as its scale and complexity increased through the creation of regional branches and various forms of propaganda. This was clearly identified in May 1917 where during the League's annual conference it was made clear that the role of secretary and treasurer could no longer be handled by one person at the institutions' headquarters. It was, therefore, necessary to create additional positions in order to handle the workload running the League now

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[330] L. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole: An Intellectual Biography* p.33
[331] M.B. Reckitt, *As it happened* p.132

entailed.[332] Up until this point the office administration of the League had been organised on a voluntary basis with the bulk of the official clerical work being handled by William Mellor until he became incapacitated by illness in the middle of 1916. After this point, the writer, Monica Ewer, took over the majority of office work. However, quickly found that it was too much to manage on a solely voluntary basis. As a result, a full-time position with a regular salary of £150 was created for her.[333] In this role, Ewer proved to be an effective secretary while also being a talented lecturer for the League.[334]

Ewer was not alone in this role as a group of women emerged who were vital to the management of the League's offices. These included the London agent for *The Guildsman,* Miss Herz, the clerical secretary F.E. Thomas, and Rose Cohen who worked as a typist and prepared amongst other things the lengthy annual reports that the League generated.[335] Cohen, in particular, was especially important to maintaining internal communications within the League between its various branches and previously worked as an assistant secretary for the Fabian Research Department. Furthermore, Cohen's skills as a typist and knowledge of, Russian, French, and a little German, were also of value in order to maintain and develop international correspondences between the League and its members and affiliates abroad.[336] In these ways, office management became vital to the successful growth of the League highlighting another way in which the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism aided the development of the subject through the addition of examples of practical knowledge.

As a consequence of this effective office management the National Guilds League was able to sustain a communication network between its regional offices. Materially this took the form of letters, memos, reports, and the creation of individual letterheads for regional offices (See Figures 6,7 and 8). This again highlighted a change brought by the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism. Furthermore, it facilitated the emergence of major centres of the League, such as Glasgow and London, which also became central points for the accumulation of knowledge about Guild Socialism. These existed alongside smaller centres in the knowledge system, such as regional offices, which communicated with local members and the larger centres of the League (See Figure

[332] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1916-1917* p.6
[333] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1917-1918* p.9, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[334] M.B. Reckitt, *As it happened*, p.146
[335] National Guilds League Annual Report 1917-1918, p.8; National Guilds League Annual Report, 1920-21, p.6, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 2, Nuffield College Library, Oxford University.
[336] K. Morgan, 'Rose Cohen (1894–1937)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* (2018) https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780198614128.013.109727

9). A particularly clear example of the importance of office management to sustaining this communication network was the organisation of the League's annual conference. This event required individual groups to send reports about their activities, as well as proposals and questions for the conference to discuss. Office management was particularly important to manage this flow of physical information, which was then compiled and recorded in typed summaries of the event.[337] These were then distributed to participants, while even more condensed accounts were also published in *The Guildsman*.[338] This knowledge production was all made possible by figures like Cohen, Ewer, Herz and Thomas, whose skills allowed this scale of communication and coordination
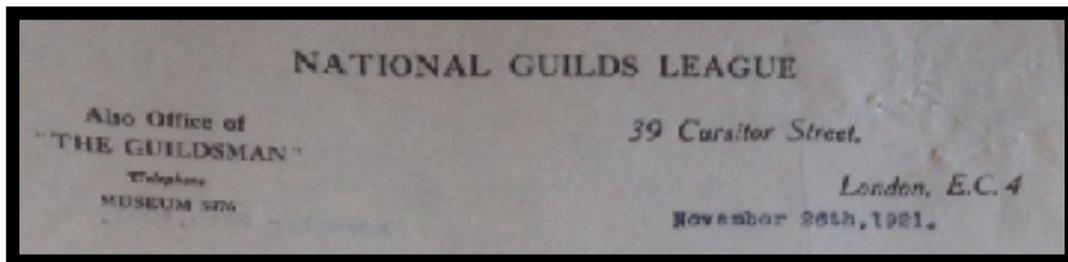
Figure 6
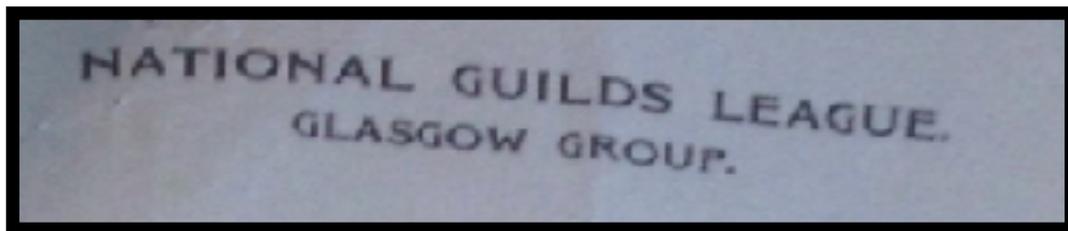
Figure 7
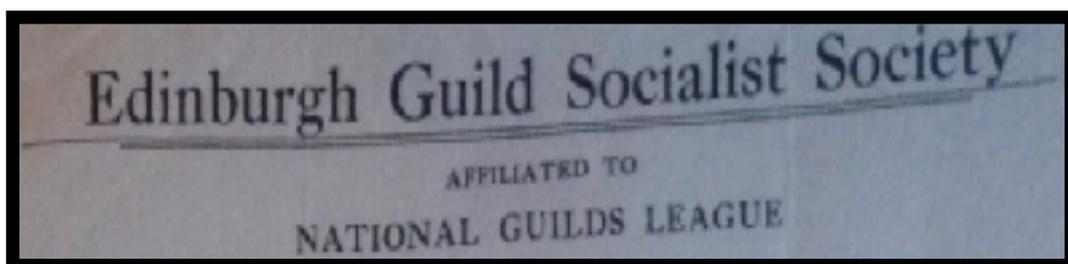
Figure 8
Figures 6,7 and 8 depict examples of letterheads produced by Edinburgh, London and Glasgow branches of the National Guilds League. Source: Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, M/36, Nuffield College Library.

to be sustained. This meant that a significant amount of credit must be attributed to these actors whose organisational skills were vital to the institutionalisation and promotion of Guild Socialism.

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[337] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1915-1916* pp.7-9; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1916-1917* pp.9-24; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1917-1918* p.11-22; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1918-1919* pp.10-16; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1919-1920* pp.13-24; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1920-1921* pp.13-23
[338] *The Guild Socialist, March 1922* pp.7-11

The financial organisation of the National Guilds League was another aspect that highlighted the significance of the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism. In particular, the ability to mobilise sufficient capital was vital to sustaining the League's propaganda campaign, as well as its regional offices and communications. Furthermore, it represented an important example of skill migration that
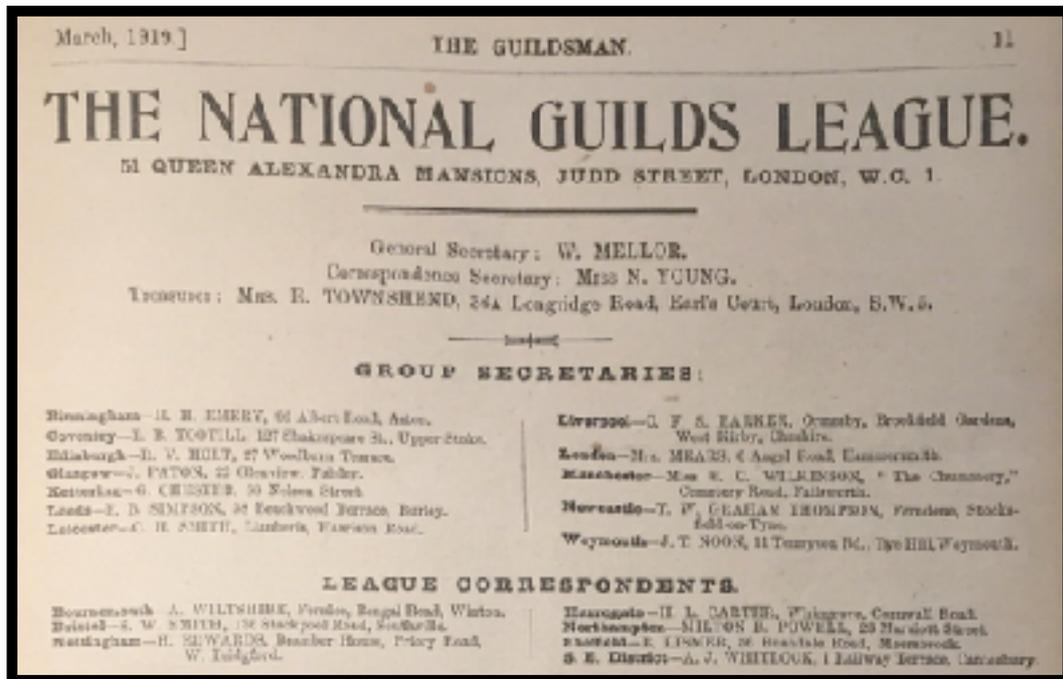
Figure 9
List of Group Secretaries and Correspondence Secretaries.
Source: *The Guildsman*, March 1919, p.11

supported the entire institution. Although the use of advertisements to fund *The Guildsman* has already been mentioned, more broadly the League's financial expertise were contributed by Emily Townshend who served as the League's treasurer for the overwhelming majority of its existence and was also a founding member who sat on the executive committee.

Townshend was born in 1849 and planned to study mathematics at Cambridge University however never completed her degree. Like many other members of the National Guilds League, she had previously been a member of the Fabian Society and was also heavily involved with the suffragette movement for which she spent several weeks in Holloway prison.[339] As treasurer of the League, Townshend's responsibilities were to administer the institutions never plentiful finances. Indeed in its first two years, the League was heavily reliant on donations to pay for costs, such as

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[339] M. Easson, *New Boots from the Old* pp.459-460

printing, publishing, postage, and travel costs. In fact, during its first year donations amounted to almost one-third of the League's meagre budget of £138.8.2, while in its second year they made up over half of the slightly higher figure of £159.18.9.[340] These donations were in a different order of magnitude in comparison to *The New Age* and the £1000 Orage had received to acquire the paper. Indicating not only that the League had substantially less capital behind it, but also that it was more estranged from large sources of wealth. As a result, the League was particularly reliant on its membership to provide additional donations and Townshend was instrumental in this way by issuing multiple appeals for funds to the readers of *The Guildsman* and preventing over expenditure of the League's limited resources.[341]

The financial situation of the League changed dramatically in 1917 when the annual budget more than doubled to £396.17.7. At this point membership subscriptions began to surpass donations along with increasing revenues from the sale of pamphlets.[342] These figures continued to increase until 1921 and while the war continued came from almost entirely domestic sources.[343] The growing financial success of the League proved particularly important in 1917 given the rising cost of running *The Guildsman,* largely due to the mounting cost of paper, which threatened to bankrupt the League and was averted largely by Townshend's ability to secure additional funds.[344] Townshend assisted in steadily increasing the revenues of the League and carefully managing the organisations growing costs that now included new expenses, such as salaries for office workers and grants paid to local branches.[345] In this way, she was directly responsible for overseeing the material expansion of Guild Socialism during this period and likely drew upon her knowledge of mathematics in order to successfully manage the League's finances. As a result, she contributed considerably towards sustaining the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism, therefore, allowing the League to continue functioning towards the further development of the subject.

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[340] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1915-1916* p.6; *National Guilds League Annual Report* 1916-1917 p.8; Report from the Finance Committee, 11.1.1918, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, M/36, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[341] *The Guildsman*, November 1918, p.11; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1917-1918* p.4
[342] Report from the Finance Committee, 11.1.1918, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, M/36, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1916-1917* p.8; *National Guilds League Annual Report 1917-1918* p.10
[343] 'Guild Socialist' Statement for 1921, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, M/36, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK
[344] *The Guildsman,* December 1916, p.10
[345] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1918-1919* p.12; National Guilds League Statement of Cash Receipts and Expenditure January 1st to 31st of December 1921, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, M/36, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK

Institutional organisation therefore contributed significantly to the making of the National Guilds League. This took various forms in relation to the men and women from a mixture of middle-class and working-class backgrounds who contributed different forms of knowledge as members of the League towards the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism. This resulted in the adoption of research and working practices, the creation of regional branches and communications between them, office management, and financial organisation, all of which allowed the League to sustain its propaganda campaign. Furthermore, they contributed to development of a knowledge system within the League which defined it from rival socialist institutions like the Fabians and earlier efforts to develop Guild Socialism. The consequences of active process of making the League and forming a knowledge system would important consequences for the meaning of Guild Socialism which the final section of this chapter will now examine.

2.4. Three Guild Socialisms

While the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism through the creation of the National Guilds League helped to form a knowledge system that strengthen the position of the subject in Britain. A direct consequence of this knowledge system was the creation of multiple meanings which became associated with Guild Socialism. Surprisingly, this was openly acknowledged by the League and even celebrated as evidence of the progressive advancement of the subject. For example in one study syllabus designed for working-class students in the early 1920s, the League advised students of Guild Socialism to check the dates of books they used and to form their own conclusions in each case because the subject was under constant discussion and modification.[346] A similar position was also adopted in books written by individual members, such as G.D.H. Cole, who claimed in *Guild Socialism Re-stated* (1920) that "there is I am glad to say, no such thing as a strict Guild orthodoxy."[347] Other authors, such as Maurice Reckitt and C. E. Bechhofer reached a similar conclusion in their book *The Meaning of National Guilds* (1920) and celebrated the diversity of meanings as a sign of the dynamism of the subject which they argued stimulated the "curiosity of the public."[348] Despite this positive framing many observers were confused about the meaning of Guild Socialism and sought a more concise singular definition. This tendency was exemplified by the American sociologist, Savel Zimand, who attempted to define Guild Socialism in his account of

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[346] *Guild Socialism: A Syllabus for Class and Study Circles* (National Guilds League, 1921) p.6
[347] G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Re-stated* (Lenard Parsons Ltd, 1920) p.5
[348] M. Reckitt and C.E, Bechhofer, *The Meaning of National Guilds* (Cecil Palmer, 1920) p.vi

contemporary social movements, but instead was only able to produce a bewildering assessment of many Guild Socialisms.

"The guild socialists are divided in factions… There is not one Guild Socialism, but many Guild Socialisms. Collectivism we know and Capitalism we know. But Guild Socialism is very Protean. Its phases are legion, its Guilds of infinite variety. There are the all hand-woven Guilds of the Middle Ages Union, the Glory-be-to-God Guilds of Mr. Reckitt, the Glory-be-to-Trotsky Guilds of the new N.G.L. Executive, the esoteric bank-on-me Guilds of Major Douglas, the Guilds-and-water of Mr. Sterling Taylor. Not to mention the functional jigsaws of Mr. Cole."[349]

Zimand's description captured the multiplicity of meanings attached to Guild Socialisms but was met with muted applause by the League. As one review published in *The Guildsman* noted Zimand had, "not got his account of the Guild Socialist movement, or the lines of divisions within it quite right."[350] Despite this rebuttal Zimand's assessment was not unique as other even more sympathetic observers reached similar conclusions about the indeterminacy of Guild Socialism, such as the German architect Martin Wagner, who wrote;

"Guild Socialism appears to be a new Socialism in form and content, which means to develop new forces, not of destruction, but of construction for social ends. I am thinking, in speaking of Guild Socialism, not of a complete doctrine, nor of professional priests and representatives of this teaching. I am thinking rather of certain trends of thought which are appearing in all Socialist sects and have been taken up by political parties and by industrial representatives of the workers by hand and brain alike."[351]

Despite Wagner's generous assessment of the subject, his identification of the incompleteness of Guild Socialism alludes to the same lack of coherence that Zimand highlighted. Furthermore, Wagner's attempt to place Guild Socialism in relation to other forms of socialism indicates his attempt to give clearer meaning to the subject. In this sense, both observers perceived a similar indeterminacy about Guild Socialism which led them both towards ideas of multiplicity, whether internally inside of the League itself, or externally within the broader framework of socialist ideas.

The multiplicity of Guild Socialisms has also been recognised by recent scholarship. In particular, Marc Stears and Ian Britain have both argued that various Guild Socialisms existed. Although Britain has only gestured to this point, Stears has argued explicitly that at least two, or sometimes

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[349] S. Zimand, *Modern Social Movements* (New York, 1921) p.187
[350] *The Guild Socialist,* November 1921, p.11
[351] M. Wagner, 'International Guild Work', *New Standards*, March 1924, p.147

three, different Guild Socialisms existed.[352] In particular, Stear's analysis focusses primarily on a small number of intellectuals, such as Penty, Hobson and Cole, and uses an innovative approach that combines elements of Intellectual History and Conceptual History to illustrate the divergences in their individual thought. This analysis is similar to Vowles's Intellectual History of Guild Socialism, which also highlights the divisions between different intellectuals over the meaning of Guild Socialism. In this sense, Vowles interprets these divisions as already baked into the substance of Guild Socialism before the formation of the League.[353] Although both Stears and Vowles are aware of the multiplicities of meanings associated with Guild Socialism both ultimately remain focussed on the level of individual intellectuals and therefore ignore the role of the League as an institution which contributed towards the production of meanings linked to Guild Socialism. Specifically, as will now be discussed the knowledge system within the League contributed towards the creation of three distinct meanings linked to Guild Socialism: medieval, corporatist, and syndicalist. These were analytically distinct and tied to different forms of knowledge that the League produced and organised.

2.4.1. Medieval Guild Socialism

The seeds of a medieval understanding of Guild Socialism were already present before the National Guilds League was founded. This was abundantly clear from Penty's initial publication, *The Restoration of the Gild System* and its influence upon Orage and writers in *The New Age*. However, it would be wrong to assume that this strand of Guild Socialism was simply reducible to Penty as has been suggested by some scholars.[354] In fact, distain for the problems caused by modern industrial society and support for solutions drawn from the medieval past were widespread within the League.[355] This extended even to members who were not devout medievalists, such as Cole, who nevertheless noted, "[the] increasing extent in recent years men's thoughts have turned back to the Mediaeval Guilds in their search for solutions of present-day industrial problems."[356] As a knowledge producing institution, the League worked to cultivate this medievalist understanding of Guild Socialism by linking together an idea of craftsmanship and a particular understanding of history.

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[352] I. Britain, *Fabianism and Culture: A study in British socialism and the arts 1884-1918* (Cambridge University Press, 1982) p.22; M. Stears, *Guild Socialism and ideological diversity on the British left* pp.289-305; "Guild Socialism" in M. Bevir's (eds.) *Modern Pluralism: Anglo-American Debates Since 1880* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp.40-59
[353] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.320-322
[354] A. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* p.78
[355] A. Hewes, 'Guild Socialism: A Two Year Test', *The American Economic Review*, Vol.12, No. 2 (1922) pp.209-237 p.216-217
[356] G.D.H. Cole, introduction to G. Renard's *Guilds in the Middle Ages* (George Bell and Sons, 1919) p.ix

Craftsmanship was a central aspect of the medievalist interpretation of Guild Socialism and serves as an example of how practical knowledge was vital to the construction of this meaning. Specifically, craftsmanship understood as a form of highly skilled labour constituted a form of practical knowledge, not dissimilar from other examples of artisanal work, which was promoted by the League as a means to appeal to trade unionists and represented a version of workers control tied to a particular premodern context.[357] This, therefore, corresponds to the argument made independently by both Simone Lässig and James Scott that knowledge is often embedded in localised contexts.[358] As a result, because craftsmanship was clearly situated in relation to skilled labourers the League was able to instrumentalise it as part of its own propaganda efforts and incorporate it into a medievalist historical understanding of Guild Socialism.

A clear example of this is found in a report produced by the League on the spread of Guild Socialism amongst trade unionists in the building industry. In this case, several building workers were explicitly identified as "craftsmen" and quoted as saying, "[we] would do work worthy of the Middle Ages", and, "we want people to point at those houses, and say. Those fine places were built by the Guild."[359] The importance of high-quality craftsmanship and its link to the premodern past was reflected in other propaganda produced by the League, such as within the pages of a teaching syllabus produced to educate working-class students about Guild Socialism. Here it was argued that "the medieval gilds, with all their shortcomings, stood for the ideals of freedom and craftsmanship in work and of a just price without profiteering, which have completely disappeared from modern industry, and these are part of the fundamental faith of Guild Socialism."[360] These examples serve to highlight how by forming a direct connection between contemporary trade unionists and a historically situated idea craftsmanship the League was able to produce a strong medievalist continuity with Guild Socialism.

According to Niles Carpenter craftsmanship was directly tied to a particular understanding of workers' control cultivated by the League. This understanding set the practices of modern industrial production against a premodern understanding and revealed a "psychology of Guild Socialism."[361] This idea was derived via John Ruskin and William Morris's rejection of the dehumanising effects of modern industry, which Penty had first adopted, and celebrated craftsmanship as, "an inherent

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[357] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge* p.19
[358] S. Lässig, *The History of Knowledge* p.45; J. C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (Yale University Press, 2020) pp.309–41
[359] E. Selley, 'Inquiry Into The Working of the Building Guilds' in *The Building Guild in London* (The Guild of Builders London, 1921) p.9
[360] *Guild Socialism: A Syllabus for Class and Study Circles* pp.3-4
[361] N. Capenter, *Guild Socialism* pp.282-288

capacity and desire on part of individuals to assert [their] personality by making useful and beautiful articles, with [their] own tools, and in [their] own way."[362] This understanding produced a model of political economy, which was inherently tied to the idea that through a greater degree of control over their production workers would be able to increase the quality of their labour and lead more fulfilling lives. This sentiment was outlined in one pamphlet produced by the League, which argued that in return for self-government National Guilds would undertake the production of "good quality [commodities], in necessary quantity, and at a fair price."[363]

An even more explicit example of this tendency to link together ideas of workers' control and a historical narrative around craftsmanship is found in the case of one pamphlet written by George Thomson entitled, *Apprenticeship in Modern Industry* (1923). Thomson built upon Penty's earlier argument about the decline of craftsmanship in response to industrialisation and the detrimental effects of industry on both the quality of work produced and workers themselves. For Thomson, "a consequence of the decay and destruction of the ancient Gild economy was the decline of the spirit of craftsmanship" which ultimately meant that "a good deal of valuable traditional lore and skill was lost."[364] Although Thomson forged a link between craftsmanship and the past he nevertheless maintained that this connection also stretched to the present and the future. Rejecting the argument that "the days of craftsmanship are completely over" or that craftsmanship should be associated purely with "old-fashioned trinkets of doubtful beauty or the production of copies of old and uncomfortable furniture."[365] Thomson instead argued, with reference to the local shipbuilding industry in Glasgow;

"craftsmanship of the delicate order may be shown in such characteristic machine operations as turning the tail shaft of a large liner, the bending of ship's plates and a thousand similar operations… The hull of a ship may be, and frequently is, a thing of beauty; indeed we get beautiful ships more frequently that we get beautiful buildings, and such beauty can only be generated when an artistic sense is called into play in design, and good craftsmanship executed."[366]

Using this understanding of craftsmanship operating both in the past and the present Thomson was able to project it towards a guild socialist future. As he made clear, "in the revival of the spirit of craftsmanship lies undoubtedly the hope of creating a new industrial democracy" it is for reason, "that sections of the National Guilds Movement have paid considerable attention to questions of

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[362] N. Capenter, *ibid* pp.282-283
[363] *A Catechism of National Guilds* p.3
[364] G.W. Thomson, *Apprenticeship in Modern Industry* (The National Guilds League, 1923) p.3
[365] G.W. Thomson, *ibid* p.4
[366] G.W. Thomson, *ibid* pp.4-5

craftsmanship, not being concerned with such because they desired a return to an older form of society, whose lineaments are softened and mellowed by being seen through the golden haze of five or six centuries, but because they feel that the industrial element of that civilisation was vital."[367] This constitutes what Paul Jackson has described as the "futural-thrust" of Guild Socialism which linked together the past, present and future with the aim of overcoming the perceived deficits of modern society. For Jackson, although Guild Socialism was backwards looking towards a medieval ideal, as in the case of craftsmanship, it nevertheless possessed a clear focus on realising a new future while drawing on the past, instead of a complete return to the past.[368]

Jackson's point raises the issue of the particular view of history, which the League worked to promote in conjunction with ideas like craftsmanship, and emphasised the particular national historical narrative that began with the medieval guilds.[369] This medievalism contributed a strong national narrative that tied Guild Socialism to a distinctly national version of the past. Anthony Wright has interrogated this point and argued that the medieval guilds provided a "spiritual inheritance" which existed despite no actual connection existing between medieval guilds and trade unions. Nevertheless, Wright argues that a large part of the published materials associated with Guild Socialism was explicitly designed to emphasise its unique connection to a British national context.[370] This point reiterates the clear national framing of Guild Socialism which was closely tied to the construction of medieval national narrative, and as has already been discussed designed to both appeal to trade unionists while also isolating Guild Socialism from accusations that it was an imported idea. In this sense, the medieval meaning of Guild Socialism which the League worked to produce was particularly important because it provided cover for other forms of Guild Socialism which were also under construction.

2.4.2. Corporatist Guild Socialism

Alongside the medievalist understanding of Guild Socialism the knowledge system within the League also helped to produce a corporatist meaning. Similarly to the medievalist meaning the beginnings of this association existed before the formation of the League, particularly in relation to Hobson's early writings. However, through the creation of League, this meaning was strengthened particularly in relation to the development of a more robust vision of the political economy of Guild Socialism and therefore the development of a specific kind of theoretical knowledge. Although this

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[367] G.W. Thomson, *ibid* p.5
[368] P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms* p.43
[369] P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms* pp.40-41
[370] A.W. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* p.72,79

understanding was more developed than Hobson's work. It also revealed certain ambiguities which indicated the hierarchical nature of the knowledge system within the League.

Central to the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism was the idea of a partnership between the state and National Guilds which was central to the vision of political economy promoted by the League. Although this idea was discussed before the founding of the League, such as in the case of Hobson's *National Guilds* and the Storrington Document, this idea took on new dimensions after the founding of the League. In particular, via the League's propaganda campaign a more coherent vision of what this partnership would entail began to take shape. For example, as one joint statement by the executive committee of the League published by *The Guildsman* in 1917 claimed, "Let the State and the Municipalities control the general affairs of their respective localities; but let industry be managed by self-governing Guilds working in partnership with the State. Only thus can we hope to obtain liberty in industrial life."[371] Crucially this more detailed theoretical vision of a partnership was supportive of an important meaning being attached to Guild Socialism, namely that it represented a synthesis of collectivism and workers control. This assessment led to many positive endorsements of Guild Socialism by prominent figure, such as the philosopher Bertrand Russell and the economist Karl Polanyi, who both saw Guild Socialism as an effective synthesis of different elements of the two bodies of socialist knowledge.[372] The League directly helped to promote this idea through its propaganda against the Fabian Society in an effort to draw away more of its middle-class socialist supporters. This was clearly demonstrated in one pamphlet produced by the League targeted towards middle-class educated socialists which clearly stated, "If the State became more powerful than the Guilds, Collectivism would result. If the Guilds over-ruled the State, Syndicalism would be established."[373] This framing of Guild Socialism clearly positioned it as a third-way option designed to entice those socialists frustrated with both collectivism and syndicalism.

Additionally, the corporatist meaning of this proposal became increasingly visible to contemporary observers of the League, such as the American socialist Harry Laidler, who noted in 1920 that the partnership proposed by the League now, "correspond[ed] roughly to the corporations of today."[374] However, as other critics noted this corporatist partnership was also still highly ambiguous. This was precisely the point made by the philosopher, Guy Field, who argued that the supposed

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[371] *The Guildsman*, February 1917 p.4
[372] B. Russel, *Proposed Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism and Syndicalism* (New York: H. Holt, 1919) p.xi; K. Polanyi, "Guild Socialism" in A. Fabry and G. Dale's (eds.) *Karl Polanyi The Hungarian Writings* (Manchester University Press, 2016) pp.118-120
[373] *A Catechism of National Guilds* p.4
[374] H.W. Laidler, *Socialism in Thought and Action* (Macmillan, 1920) p.173

partnership was open to a wide degree of interpretation and imagined differently by different sections of the League.[375] Furthermore, it raised the additional complication of whether the partnership was an equal relation similar to that imagined by the industrial unionists, or whether it was asymmetrical.

A particularly clear example of the ambiguity of this partnership was around the question of sovereignty. The corporatist solution to this problem was for the state to be both in partnership with guilds and also to adopt the role of singular indivisible sovereign above. This theoretical position created tension within the League, which was expressed with *The Guildsman*, between guild socialists who supported this idea and those who opposed it. For the defenders, they argued that by freeing the state from the influence of capitalism through the strategy of encroaching control would ultimately curb the potential for the state to abuse its position and doubled to down on need to form a stable equal partnership between producers and consumers.[376] Opponents of this idea of sovereignty reinvoked the idea of servile state and called instead for a pluralistic basis for sovereignty based on equality and coordination between the guilds.[377] Furthermore this issue raised additional questions over the form of democracy that the guilds would represent either administered from the top down by representatives or from the bottom up by individual guild members. Tensions over these issues within the League would gradually increase over time, but remained marginal during the first years after the League was founded therefore indicating the dominance of the corporatist Guild Socialism meaning within the League.

These tensions serve to indicate the existence of an internal hierarchy that characterised the knowledge system within the League. This produced a situation where the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism became dominant over other meanings. This situation highlights the way in which certain forms of knowledge can become subordinated beneath more dominant forms.[378] In the case of the League, it is clear that theoretical knowledge produced about the political economy of Guild Socialism was valued more highly because of its prominence across virtually all publications produced by the League. While in contrast criticism of this model and proposals of alternative theories were marginalised and featured mainly in the comments section of *The Guildsman*. Furthermore, this kind of theoretical knowledge was far more prominent in the League's propaganda than other forms of knowledge, such as craftsmanship, which featured mostly in relation to publications orientated towards trade unionists. In this sense, it is clear that certain forms

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[375] G.C.Field, *Guild Socialism: A Critical Examination* (Darton & Co, 1920) p.98-120
[376] *The Guildsman*, July 1917, p.1-2; *A Catechism of National Guilds* p.4
[377] *The Guildsman*, March 1917, p.9
[378] S. Lässig, *The History of Knowledge* p.37

of knowledge were more highly valued resulting in more and less dominant meanings of Guild Socialism, the consequences of which will be further explored in the following chapters.

Finally, the corporatist dimensions of Guild Socialism have also in recent years received considerable interest from scholars.[379] In particular, this has led several towards the opinion that the legacy Guild Socialism is also intertwined with fascist corporatist projects which emerged elsewhere in the world during the early twentieth century.[380] This characterisation is not completely unjustified however it does reiterate the point that a diversity of meanings were tied to Guild Socialism. Furthermore, although the corporatist understanding of Guild Socialism was particularly dominant within the League during its first few years. It was accompanied by another meaning which will now be examined that was almost completely antithetical.

2.4.3. Syndicalist Guild Socialism

The final understanding tied to Guild Socialism which the knowledge system within the League helped to produce was a syndicalist meaning. This meaning was produced largely by theoretical knowledge produced by members of the League which was circulated through propaganda and remained relatively inconspicuous during the initial years after the formation of the League. The existence of this meaning has been debated by scholars who fall into two camps and either support or dismiss this association. Those who support it, such as Geoff Ostergaard and David Goodway note the similarities in terms of theory and intellectual connections between Guild Socialism and anarcho-syndicalism.[381] While others who reject this meaning, such as David Runciman, have argued that because certain members of the League made explicit claims against syndicalism that this disqualifies this association.[382]

The construction of a syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism was developed through the combination of different kinds of theoretical knowledge expressed in propaganda produced by the League. A particularly important element of this theory was the development of a critique of the ambiguity and necessity of a partnership between the National Guilds and the state which

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[379] P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms* pp.40-41,70; J.W. Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth Century Europe* (Yale University Press, 2014) p.103; M. Pasetti, "Corporatist Connections: The Transnational Rise of the Fascist Model in Interwar Europe" in A. Bauerkämper; and G. Rossolinski's, *Fascism without borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945* (Berghahn Books, 2019) p.69; T. Rogan, *The Moral Economists* p.30; V. Torreggiani, *Rediscovering the Guild System* p.26; T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde* p.63

[380] L. Sudeley, 'The Ancestry of Guild Socialism' *The Contemporary Review*, Vol.227 (September, 1975) p.134

[381] G. Ostergaard, *The Tradition of Workers Control* p.78-79; D. Goodway, *G.D.H. Cole: A Socialist and Pluralist* p.246

[382] D. Runciman, *Pluralism and the Personality of the State* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) pp.166-167

underpinned the dominant political economy of Guild Socialism.[383] This critique was carefully expressed within *The Guildsman* over the meaning of syndicalism and industrial unionism in relation to Guild Socialism. Those voices who spoke in favour of these connections were cautious when expressing their positive endorsements of these connections indicating the subordinate position of this meaning of Guild Socialism within the League and an awareness of the hostile environment against syndicalism more generally.[384] As one commentator in *The Guildsman* carefully argued, "Guildsmen recognise the State, but they do not worship it."[385] Outside of this setting resistance amongst members of the League towards the idea of the state was even more tangible. In particular, in certain regional branches of the League where syndicalism and industrial unionism were particularly strong, such as Glasgow and Liverpool, local groups began to express increased hostility in local and annual meetings towards the idea of trusting any partnership with the state.[386] This resistance would grow over time and solidify around a theoretical position that championed an idea of democracy tied to workers' control. This focussed on a different model of guild organisation which focussed on the bottom-up democratic organisation of guilds, akin to the CGT, in which power was ultimately vested in guild members rather than from above.

This new position was clearly expressed in one of the most widely read pamphlets distributed by the League, written by Cole and Mellor entitled, *The Meaning of Industrial Freedom* (1918). Here the authors stressed the desire of guild socialists, "to bring democracy into action in every sphere and to build up from below rather than arrange from above" which directly challenged the top down model of democratic organisation promoted by the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism.[387] Furthermore, Cole and Mellor strongly defended this idea of workers' control against supporters of collectivism in the Fabian Society and the Labour Party who criticised this idea as "impudent, absurd, Syndicalistic, Anarchistic" and instead maintained that workers' control was "not merely the supplement, but the precursor of political liberty."[388]

Although this syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism was largely submerged beneath the practical and theoretical knowledge tied to medievalist and corporatist meanings for some observers of the League these implications were clear. For example, the American journalist Arthur Gleason warmly

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[383] *The Guildsman*, July 1917, p.2
[384] *The Guildsman*, February 1917, pp.1-3; August 1917 pp.8-9; November 1917, p.10
[385] *The Guildsman*, October 1917, p.7
[386] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1917-1918* p.14
[387] G.D.H. Cole and W. Mellor, *The Meaning of Industrial Freedom* (Allen & Unwin, 1918) p.25
[388] G.D.H. Cole and W. Mellor, *ibid* pp.3-4, 21

celebrated the League's work towards "popularising the idea of a British brand of syndicalism."[389] Indeed Gleason noted the wide array of forces at work within the League when he noted;

"They have domesticated that immense dynamic. But for them, the Central Labour College, the Socialist Labour Party, the IWW, French ideas, the phrases of Tom Mann, and the tracts of Daniel De Leon would have perhaps been the only deposit of syndicalism and industrial unionism. The result would have been a small minority of workers over-stimulated with a doctrine that omitted one-half the truth. But Orage, Cole, Mellor, Hobson, Bechhofer, Reckitt, and a few others rendered the alien vocabulary into a British blend which pleased the palate like Lipton's tea."[390]

Explicit appraisals like Gleason's were not common and therefore point towards the subordinate position of the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism. However, as will be explored in the following chapters this situation would begin to change in the upcoming years.

Conclusion

On the 3rd of May 1915, *The Manchester Guardian,* announced the formation of the National Guilds League and gave the following short description of its purpose. "[T]he work of the League is to be purely educational and there is no intension of competing with existing Labour or Socialist organisations."[391] This summary profoundly misunderstood the objectives of the League, the reasons behind its makings, and the broader context which had helped to forge Guild Socialism.

The emergence of the League must be seen in the context of the dialectical tension between opposing bodies of socialist knowledge in the form of collectivism and workers' control, which characterised the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This tension was manifest within the British Left between the 1880s and 1900s when as collectivism under the direction of the Fabian Society and Labour Party gained control over the labour movement and most importantly the new industrial unions forming that had begun to form. In response Guild Socialism began to emerge as a local manifestation of the demand for workers' control, especially through the early efforts of socialist intellectuals, such as Penty, Orage, Hobson and Cole who worked to develop this idea by drawing meaning from various different sources of practical and theoretical knowledge. These efforts were heavily inspired by the final years before the First World War, known as the Great Unrest, which saw a remarkable rise in labour militancy amongst trade unionists in Britain and

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[389] A. Gleason, *What the workers want: A study of British Labor* (G. Allen and Unwin, 1920) p.262
[390] A. Gleason, *ibid* p.262
[391] *The Manchester Guardian,* 3rd May 1915, p.12

provided an opportunity for a form of workers control to challenge the dominance of collectivism. Guild socialists rose to this occasion and following additional impetus provided by the start of the First World War and the failure to take over the Fabian Society launched their own attempt to win control over the labour movement through the creation of the League in 1915.

The emergence of the League marked the beginnings of the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism which was characterised by the creation of a knowledge system. This was tied heavily to the start of a propaganda campaign targeted towards new audiences including trade unionists, socialist intellectuals, and an imagined middle-class public. This required the introduction of new forms of knowledge while others were excluded in order to restructure Guild Socialism to appeal to these different audiences. As a result Guild Socialism was transformed in terms of its meaning, scale, materiality, and spatiality. This campaign was accompanied by new forms of institutional organisation developed in order to support this effort. This was characterised by the creation of a formal membership alongside new forms of office management and financial organisation which supported the growth of the League and also served to help change the meaning, scale, materiality, and spatiality of Guild Socialism. Institutionalisation also brought to light the contributions of a variety of actors, including the different roles played by women and the inclusion of trade unionists, which disrupts the understanding of Guild Socialism solely as the product of middle-class male socialist intellectuals.

Furthermore, the creation of the League spearheaded the rapid development of meanings associated with Guild Socialism which crystallised as a result of the different types of knowledge the League helped to organise. This resulted in the creation of three distinct forms of Guild Socialism: corporatist, medieval, and syndicalist, all of which were tied to the initial conditions which helped form the League. The differing prominence of these meanings indicates the existence of an epistemic hierarchy within the League which valued certain forms of knowledge above others. Although these meanings largely grew up in the context of Britain they were further developed outside of Britain, which is the principal focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Guilds at Home and Abroad

In mid-December 1914 G.D.H. Cole received a letter written by a woman named Gertie Brown from the small town of High Barnet just a few miles north of London. The letter arrived just a few days before the start of the Storrington Conference, which would lay the groundwork for the formation of the National Guilds League, and was sent on behalf of Brown's brother. As the letter revealed, W. Brown[392] was interned in Vienna after being detained as a British national due to the start of the First World War while on holiday in Austria. Despite this predicament, W. Brown was still able to write to his sister, which was how she was able to learn of his intention to translate Cole's book, *The World of Labour*, from English into German. He informed his sister that he would only do this with Cole's permission and asked her to obtain it. In response, Cole gave his full consent for the translation and asked for no payment of royalties in return. The following April - the same month as the League was officially founded - Cole received another letter this time from W. Brown, which informed him that the translation was complete and had received a warm initial review in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung,* the official newspaper of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria.[393]

Although it is unclear if Cole ever saw a copy of this translation he did nevertheless make an effort to obtain one. During the war this proved impossible due to censorship and postal restrictions between Austria and Britain, which restricted communications and especially prevented the spread of potentially subversive socialist material.[394] However, immediately after the war, Cole made inquiries with a friend, the Austrian historian, Max Beer, to ask whether a version of the book could be found and sent to him. In a letter sent to Beer, Cole wrote that he was fully aware of the disruption to global communications caused by the war as he mused, "I expect the war stopped it. I should like to get a copy if it exists."[395]

This short series of correspondences are significant because they help to reveal the growing appeal of Guild Socialism outside of Britain. This was not restricted to Anglo-Austrian interactions. In fact,

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[392] The first name of W. Brown's brother is illegible from his letters.
[393] G.E. Brown and W. Brown to G.D.H. Cole, December 1914 - April 1915, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[394] E. Demm, 'Censorship' (2017) *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 14.04.20] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/censorship
[395] G.D.H. Cole to M. Beer, 29.8.1919, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

it involved hundreds of individuals located worldwide who were in contact with the National Guilds League, thereby constituting a communication network. This development was surprising, especially in relation to the previous chapter, which examined the early efforts of the League to promote Guild Socialism amongst British audiences and inscribed the subject with a British national focus. In spite of this, interest in Guild Socialism flourished internationally during the early twentieth century and involved a large number of different historical actors who began to appropriate Guild Socialism to suit their own needs. The motivations behind these actions varied greatly in relation to different local circumstances. However, all were similarly shaped by the turmoil unleashed through the First World War and the accompanying instability of the interwar period. As a result of these interactions, the meaning of Guild Socialism was transformed through contact with new types of knowledge and infrastructures, which expanded the circulation of the subject internationally.

The correspondence between Cole, Beer, and the Browns already highlights many of these details. In this case, translation served as a form of knowledge, which allowed Guild Socialism to travel beyond British audiences and form new connections in Vienna. This connection was formed due to events set in motion by the start of the war, which trapped W. Brown in Austria and created the conditions for him to begin contemplating translating Cole's book that he probably took to read while on holiday. Unable to return to Britain he was still able to exchange letters with his sister via physical infrastructure provided by postal services, which also allowed Cole and Beer to become involved in the conversation. Thereby demonstrating how a combination of knowledge and infrastructure aided the unforeseen international circulation of Guild Socialism.

The international development of Guild Socialism has so far received relatively little scholarly attention aside from a handful of studies.[396] These accounts have tended to focus on individual actors or specific regions, while also overlooking the multiplicity of meanings associated with Guild Socialism. In response, this chapter builds upon this earlier scholarship and goes beyond it in a number of ways. Firstly it adopts an approach that includes multiple regions in order to highlight

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[396] For the United States see M. Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* (Oxford University Press, 2006); M. Stears, *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2010); For Australia see J. Smart, 'Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall Commune in Melbourne, 1917', *Labour History*, No. 94 (May, 2008) pp. 113-132; For New Zealand see J. Vowles, 'From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism: Some Neglected Aspects of the Ideology of the labour movement, 1914-1923' in J.E. Martin and K. Taylor (eds), *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History* (Dunmore Press, 1991) pp.283-303; J. Vowles, 'Ideology and the Formation of the New Zealand Labour Party' *New Zealand Journal of History,* Vol. 16, No.1 (1982) pp.39-55

the diversity of factors that affected the transfer and reception of Guild Socialism. Secondly, it draws attention to a range of different actors often not associated with this subject who contributed to the growing appeal of Guild Socialism through their collective interactions with the League. Thirdly, it highlights the role of knowledge and knowledge systems in relation to the international circulation of Guild Socialism in order to highlight the various and protean meanings tied to this subject.

This approach serves to produce a novel account that builds upon the previous chapter by drawing attention to the existence of a communication network centred around the National Guilds League. This network helped to circulate Guild Socialism internationally and was composed of hundreds of individuals who exchanged letters, books, newspapers, pamphlets with the League, and sometimes even traveled between different regions in order to share information about Guild Socialism. Important consequences followed the development of this network. In particular, it increased the scale of circulation of Guild Socialism beyond Britain and brings to light the involvement of various different historical actors who interacted with the League. These changes produced different patterns of reception and forged stronger and weaker connections between different locations and the League. A measure of the scale and intensity of these connections is clearly represented in the map below, which depicts the number of correspondence letters sent to the headquarters of the League in London (See Figure 10). The unevenness of these experiences reveals the importance of material communication systems often tied to imperial structures that shaped these connections, as well as the significance of conditions created as a result of the First World War. Furthermore, they also reveal different motives and obstacles that defined actors who were part of the correspondence network, therefore, demonstrating the different value they attached to Guild Socialism.

Knowledge was also vital to the communication network. Forms of knowledge enhanced the circulation of Guild Socialism in combination with material infrastructures to expand the network to include new individuals and regions. As a result, new connections were forged with the League by local actors who helped to produce examples of intellectual synchronicity that signified the integration of Guild Socialism into new contexts by linking the subject to local ideas.[397] These connections varied highlighting the range of meanings and knowledge associated with Guild Socialism which local actors used to suit their own needs. In response to these connections and the

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[397] S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* p.66; C.L. Hill, *Conceptual Universalization* pp.134-158

recirculation of information about Guild Socialism the knowledge system within the National Guilds League also began to change. New national and international concerns were quickly integrated and used to justify the growth and success of Guild Socialism. These changes reorientated the League away from its earlier national focus and increasingly towards internationalism.
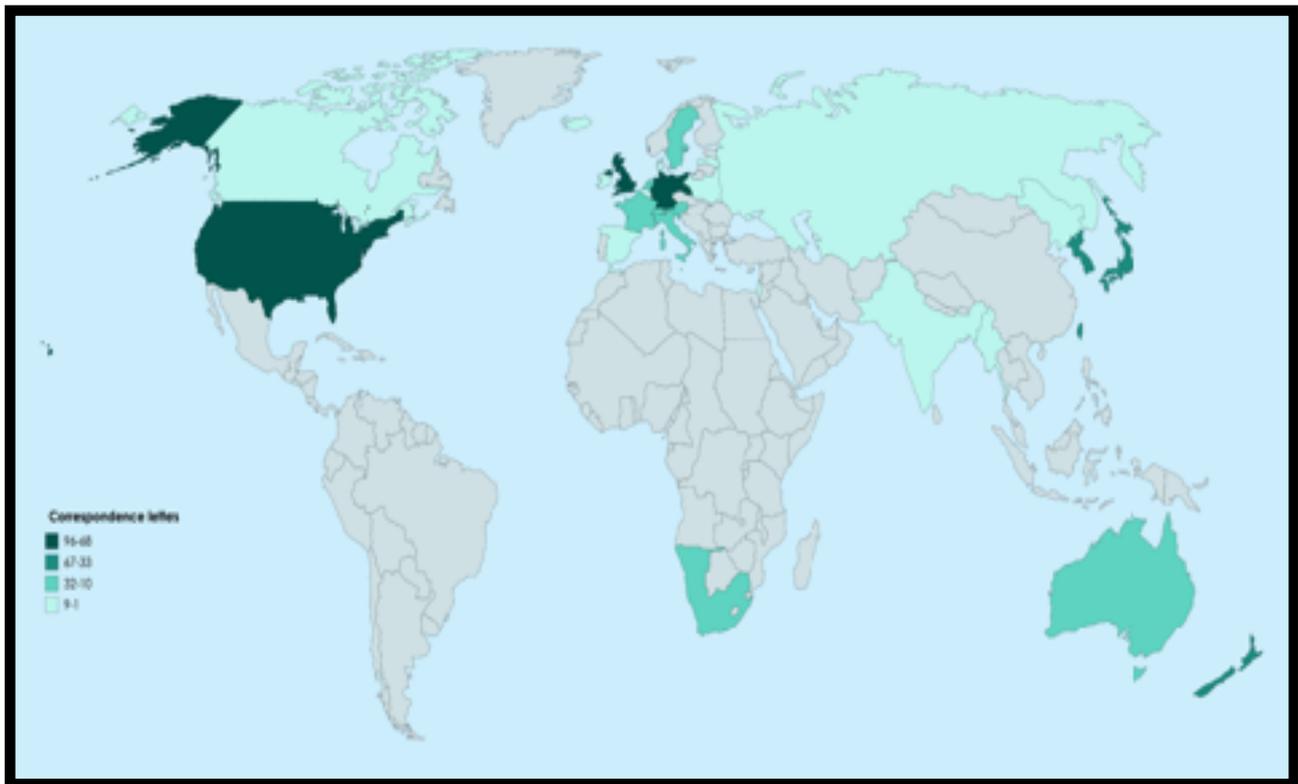
Figure 10
This map illustrates correspondence letters sent to and from the National Guilds League (1915-23) based on archival materials gathered at Nuffield College and the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

In order to examine these concerns this chapter is guided by the following questions. What effects did the communication network produce? What role did knowledge play in relation to the network? And, how was Guild Socialism changed as a result? In response to these questions, this chapter is divided into three parts. These consider six individual case studies that highlight the involvement of three groups of mediators who contributed towards the international circulation of Guild Socialism and were part of the communication network that formed around the National Guilds League. Part One examines the role of translators who worked to expand the communication network to include non-English speakers, thereby helping to allow Guild Socialism to move beyond the confines of Britain and its empire. Part Two considers journalists who communicated with the League and expanded the circulation of Guild Socialism through the use of existing press networks. Part Three focuses on trade unionists, who were the largest group of constituents to interact with the National

Guilds League internationally and like the other groups repurposed Guild Socialism to suit their own local needs. Collectively these three groups amount to a cross-section of the communication network around the League, which highlights different motives, obstacles, receptions, and types of individuals that defined the international circulation of Guild Socialism.

3.1. Translators

Translators played an important role in the circulation of Guild Socialism most obviously because the overwhelming majority of materials produced by the League were in English and targeted initially towards British audiences. As a result, translators were vital mediators who allowed the expansion of the communication network around the League to also include non-English speaking actors.

The issue of language and the significance of translation have generally been overlooked by historians when considering the international reception of Guild Socialism. This is partly explained by the scholarly attention often given to English-speaking regions, such as the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, where translation was not an issue.[398] However, it has been also been sidelined by celebratory claims about the appeal of Guild Socialism to English-speaking audiences. For example, Richard Vernon has argued that the subject was, "among the very few revolutionary causes to have grasped the imagination of English-speaking intellectuals."[399] Although this claim is not untrue. What it fails to consider is the centrality of English as the primary language of Guild Socialism and the salience of the imperial context that it developed within.

The close relationship between the English language and the British empire has been widely discussed by scholars.[400] In the case of Guild Socialism, its initial development in Britain tied it linguistically to the empire which aided its circulation around the world. This partly explains why Guild Socialism became popular in English-speaking locations under the direct control, or former control of the British empire, but also helps to explain why other regions such as South America

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[398] For the United States see M.Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* (Oxford University Press, 2006) and *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2010); For Australia see J. Smart, "Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall Commune in Melbourne, 1917" *Labour History*, No. 94 (May, 2008) pp. 113-132; For New Zealand see J. Vowles, 'From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism: Some Neglected Aspects of the Ideology of the labour movement, 1914-1923' in J.E. Martin and K. Taylor (eds) *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History* (Dunmore Press, 1991) pp.283-303, and 'Ideology and the Formation of the New Zealand Labour Party' *New Zealand Journal of History,* Vol. 16, No.1 (1982) pp.39-55
[399] R. Vernon, Introduction, in G.D.H. Cole's, *Guild Socialism Restated* (Transaction Books, 1980) p.v
[400] N. Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (Basic Books, 2004) p.xxiii; R. Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

had little contact with Guild Socialism (See Figure 1). As a consequence translators played an important role by facilitating what Christopher Hill has described as the wider circulation and re-contextualisation of ideas.[401] In this sense translation was an important form of knowledge, which allowed the integration of Guild Socialism across imperial boundaries into non-English speaking environments. This was achieved by the inclusion of translators within the communication network which developed around the League. The extent of these efforts were wide-reaching and translations of texts about Guild Socialism became available in Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Swedish, all before the sudden collapse of the League in 1923.[402]

The following case studies present the experiences of two translators, Eva Schumann (1889–1967) and Ödön Pór (1883-1971). These examples highlight the importance of translation towards widening the appeal of Guild Socialism and the different circumstances translators had to navigate. Although both figures worked independently to translate Guild Socialism from English into German and Italian respectively, their efforts nevertheless help to illustrate a common set of experiences that many other mediators encountered when engaging with the League.

3.1.1. Eva Schumann

Born in the small German town of Hainichen in Saxony, Eva Schumann grew up to study Botanics, Zoology, and Geology at university in Dresden, Berlin, Munich, and Vienna. In 1912 she married the translator Wolfgang Schumann and two years later completed her doctorate. Alongside her formal education, she also learnt English before the war through a study-abroad program in Britain. In 1918 Schumann became politicised by the German Revolution and began working for a left-leaning newspaper in Dresden the *Dresdener Volkzeitung.*

Schumann first came into contact with Guild Socialism in 1920 when she accidentally received several pamphlets produced by the League through a subscription she had to the British socialist

[401] C.L. Hill, "Conceptual Universalization in the Transnational Nineteenth Century", in S. Moyn and A. Sartori's (eds.), *Global Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2013) p.135

[402] G.D.H. Cole and W. Mellor, *Het Gilde Socialisme* (Libertas, 1920); G.D.H. Cole, *Industriell självstyrelse* (Stockholm, 1921); G.D.H. Cole, *Selbstverwaltung in der Industrie* (Berlin: Engelmann, 1921); A.J. Penty, *Gilden, Gewerbe und Landwirtschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922); A.J. Penty, *Die Überwindung des Industrialismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923); A.J. Penty, *Auf dem Wege zu einer christlichen Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1924); G.R.S. Taylor, *Der Gildenstaat: Seine Leitgedanken und Möglichkeiten* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921); G.R.S. Taylor, *Gildenpolitik: Ein praktisches Programm für die Arbeiterpartei und die Genossenschaften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923); A. Philip, *Guild-Socialisme et Trade-Unionisme* (Paris, Les Presses Universitares de France, 1923); G.D.H. Cole, *Girudo Shakaishugi* (Hihyōsha, 1920)
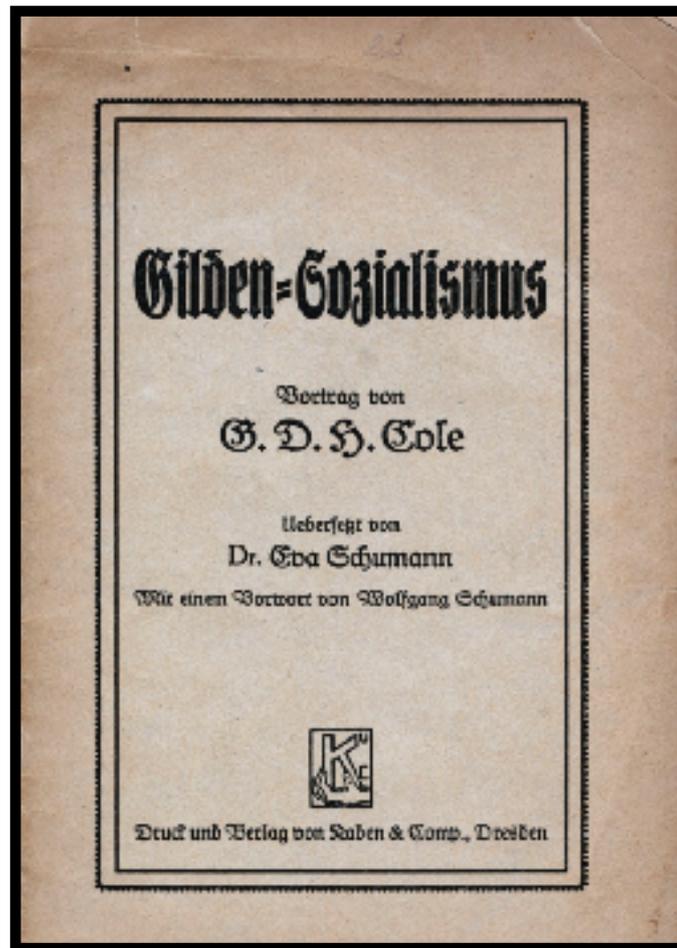
Figure 11
G.D.H. Cole, *Gilden-Sozialismus* (Dresden: Kaden, 1921)

paper, *The Labour Leader*.[403] As a result of this serendipitous contact, she wrote to the League offering her services as a translator and asked permission to translate from English into German an introductory lecture on Guild Socialism originally delivered by G.D.H. Cole to the Fabian Society in 1919. This she claimed would serve as a suitable primer on the subject for German audiences. Schumann reasoned this would be particularly useful for the League after having read in its newspaper that interest in Guild Socialism was not as strong as the topic warranted. This led her to write in one letter to the League, "perhaps you will be glad of a spread[ing] of your thoughts beyond your country."[404] In the same letter, she also assured the League that both printing and distribution of the text could be handled in Dresden by local socialist publishers. In response, Schumann was granted permission for her translation, which she quickly completed and posted a finished copy of to the League's offices in London (Figure 11). Alongside her translation, Schumann

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[403] E. Schumann to the National Guilds League, 25.6.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.
[404] E. Schumann to the National Guilds League, 25.6.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.

sent another letter describing how she had also begun to popularise Guild Socialism in Dresden by writing several articles in newspapers and even delivering a public lecture about the subject.[405]

Schumann's case is revealing of the important role played by translation towards the circulation of Guild Socialism amongst German speakers. This is particularly necessary to foreground since no account of how translation played a role in this story has so far been given. This is surprising given the argument made by Gareth Dale that, "[in] all probability Guild Socialism exerted less influence in its homeland than in Germany and Austro-Hungary."[406] Dale's claims are based on intellectual ties between members of the League and prominent German-speaking Marxist intellectuals, such as Otto Bauer and Rudolf Hilferding, who often paid tribute, "to the services of the English writers on National Guilds."[407] Bauer especially believed that Guild Socialism represented the, "strongest intellectual power within the British labour movement" and wrote several articles on the subject, particularly favouring the strategy of encroaching control as a form of non-violent revolutionary socialisation, which he drew attention to in his influential work, *Bolschewismus oder Sozialdemokratie* (Bolshevism or Social Democracy - 1920).[408] In particular, Dale gives attention to the role of the Austro-Hungarian economist, Karl Polanyi, who was a member of the League and corresponded with Bauer, while also working to promote Guild Socialism amongst Hungarian communities in Vienna during the interwar period.[409] However, arguably these intellectual connections between the League and German-speaking intellectuals on the left only highlight one dimension of the circulation of Guild Socialism internationally. What is also important to consider is how these connections were in part contingent on the role played by lesser well-known mediators, such as translators like Schumann. Who often formed the initial connections which subsequent communications between the League and more renowned figures were reliant upon.

Schumann's efforts to translate Guild Socialism were motivated by her own socialist politics, which she revealed through her correspondences with the League. In particular, her commitment to socialism was clearly expressed through the language she used in her letters, which were often

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[405] E. Schumann to G.D.H. Cole, June 1920 - March 1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[406] G. Dale, 'Karl Polanyi in Vienna: Guild Socialism, Austro-Marxism and Duczynska's Alternative', *Historical Materialism,* Vol.22, No.1 (2014) p.51

[407] *The Guildsman*, November 1920 p.4

[408] O. Bauer, *Der Weg zum Sozialismus* (Berlin, 1919) pp.1-5; *Bolschewismus oder Sozialdemokratie* (Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandelung, 1920) pp.88-99; *Die Österreichische Revolution* (Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandelung, 1923) pp.171-172

[409] G. Dale, *Karl Polanyi in Vienna* pp.47-52; G. Dale and A. Fabry, *Karl Polanyi: The Hungarian Writings* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) pp.24-26

littered with phrases, such as "Dear Comrade" and "with socialist greetings."[410] These phrases were indicative of more than just acts of political solidarity. In fact, they were also expressions of her effort to re-contextualise Guild Socialism into her own German-speaking environment and in so doing connect it to another locally popular idea, Council Communism. Council Communism emerged directly out of the German Revolution and was prominent in Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands during the interwar period. Similarly to Guild Socialism, Council Communism opposed revolutionary vanguardism and parliamentary democracy, whilst also emphasising workers' control and direct democracy through the establishment of workers councils in factories. As a result, it has often been linked by scholars to the wider global trend of syndicalism during this period.[411]

For Schumann clear theoretical parallels existed between Guild Socialism and Council Communism through the Austrian philosopher, Otto Neurath's concept of socialisation. For Schumann, Neurath's understanding of this idea whereby private industries would be brought under public control was remarkably similar to Guild Socialism.[412] This led her to write in a letter to the League in 1921, "interest for the guild movement is crucial in Germany and Austria the current of ideas being strong in that direction; and many parallels to your ideas in the (...) programs of Neurath, Heines, Rathenau and others won't have escaped your notice."[413] This analysis seems clearly to have also influenced Neurath himself since Schumann was also connected to him via her husband, Wolfgang, with whom he had co-authored a pamphlet on the subject of socialisation in 1919.[414] This pamphlet was written in the context of Neurath's involvement with the short-lived Bavarian Council Republic during the German Revolution. This experiment in workers' control lasted for only a few months but nevertheless proved to be a highly evocative example of democratic governance organised through a system of workers councils. As such Schumann also sent a copy of this pamphlet to the League in order to illustrate her point about parallels between Guild Socialism and Council Communism.[415] Soon afterward Neurath incorporated Guild Socialism directly into his own work in a new pamphlet

[410] E. Schumann to G.D.H. Cole, 10.8.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[411] M. van der Linden, 'On Council Communism' *Historical Materialism,* Vol.12, No.4 (2004) p.36; M.S. Adams, "Anarchism and the First World War", in C. Levy and M.S. Adams (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) p.402
[412] E. Schumann to G.D.H. Cole, 10.8.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[413] E. Schumann to G.D.H. Cole, 21.3.1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[414] O. Neurath and W. Schumann, *Können wir heute sozialisieren?* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt, 1919)
[415] E. Schumann to G.D.H. Cole, 10.8.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

entitled, *Gildensozialismus, Klassenkampf, Vollsozialisierung* (Guild Socialism, Class Struggle, Full Socialisation - 1922).[416] Thereby highlighting the important role played by Schumann as a mediator between Guild Socialism and Council Communism.

Understood more broadly Schumann's efforts to translate Guild Socialism into a German-speaking context can also be seen in relation to the wider process of intellectual synchronicity. In order to understand how translators were often vital to forging new connections within the communication network around the League. According to Sebastian Conrad and Christopher Hill, intellectual synchronicities describe a process whereby certain ideas embedded in a local context form a means for similar ideas from elsewhere to be introduced into the same location.[417] In this case, a form of synchronicity can be discerned from Schumann's efforts to link Guild Socialism to a similar idea local idea, Council Communism. As such this connection provided a pathway for a more widespread reception of Guild Socialism amongst German speakers which was facilitated by Schumann's translation knowledge. In this case, the process of intellectual synchronicity is particularly important to consider in order to not misconstrue the spread of Guild Socialism as a diffusionist narrative caused by the subjects' universal applicability.

The conversation about the use of diffusionist models in the Global History of Ideas has recently been expanded by several interventions. According to Andrew Sartori, it is difficult to understand how ideas which spread from a particular location can ever be seen as universal when they represent the characteristics of the society which first generated them.[418] In this way, Sartori has reengaged a debate between historians over the conditions that form ideas and their content. These characteristics shape the transference of ideas and how they appear to both historical actors and historians as either localised or universal phenomena. In the case of Guild Socialism, it is difficult to imagine how an idea that was so clearly rooted in a particular national context through the use of language, history, and its appeal to specific British audiences, as discussed in the previous chapter, could ever be seen as a universal idea. Samuel Moyn has also responded to the debate with his own thesis on "truncation and fulfilment", which highlights how local actors adapt ideas to their own circumstances by filling in the gaps in concepts to make them locally acceptable.[419] Although this explanation is compelling, in this case, it does not fully address why local actors like Schumann

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[416] O. Neurath, *Gildensozialismus, Klassenkampf, Vollsozialisierung* (Dresden: Kaden, 1922)
[417] S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* p.66; C.L. Hill, *Conceptual Universalization* pp.134-158
[418] A. Sartori, 'Intellectual History and Global History' in R. Whatmore and B. Young (eds) *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Wiley Blackwell, 2016) pp.208-210
[419] S. Moyn, "On the Non-globalization of Ideas" in S. Moyn and A. Sartori (eds), *Global Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2013) pp.187–204

would be interested in identifying with and adapting Guild Socialism. Especially in comparison to other more prominent socialist ideas available at the same time, such as Marxist-Leninism.

Synchronicity provides a means of overcoming these difficulties by shifting focus away from the origins of Guild Socialism and towards its interactions in relation to wider factors.[420] In this case, geopolitical considerations like the First World War and German Revolution are important to recognise as well as the local development of Council Communism. These factors provided Schumann with a pathway towards the development of an example of intellectual synchronicity. This provided a means for Guild Socialism to become more widely circulated through Schumann's translation knowledge which added new meaning to the subject as a consequence.

The League quickly became aware of the growing appetite for literature about Guild Socialism among German speakers via letters it began to receive. In response, the League granted new requests for translations and began to sell and donate large amounts of pamphlets and newspapers to correspondents.[421] Additionally reports in *The Guildsman* began to increasingly draw parallels between Guild Socialism and Council Communism, which were reinforced by first-hand accounts from the Bavarian Council Republic that reached similar conclusions.[422] These associations were further reinforced by other reports sent to the League by Dutch correspondents, which claimed that the respective newspapers of the communist parties in Germany and the Netherlands, *Kommunistische Räte Korrespondenz* and *De Tribune*, were also discussing Guild Socialism in similar terms.[423]

Another interesting consequence of the growing international interest in Guild Socialism through its synchronicity with Council Communism was that it revealed the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism produced by the League. Schumann identified with this meaning specifically through her association with Council Communism, but was also not alone as a large number of other German-speaking correspondents made similar associations. These included the academic Theodor Plaut who argued that most Germans who knew of Guild Socialism understood it as a British form of syndicalism; and the translator Alfons Paquet who hoped that his translations of guild socialist texts

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[420] S. Conrad, 'Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 117, No. 4 (2012) p.1027

[421] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1920-1921,* p.4, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 1, M/1, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

[422] *The Guildsman*, July-August 1919, p.11; July 1921, p.6; February 1922, p.4

[423] D.J. Schuik to the National Guilds League, 6.3.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, M/27, Nuffield College Library.

could help to unite the syndicalist movement and wider trade union movement in Germany.[424] This pattern of reception differed notably from the corporatist and medievalist meanings that the League generated and were prevalent elsewhere as will be discussed later in the course of this chapter. However, serves to indicate the importance of synchronicity as a process that strengthened certain meanings attached to Guild Socialism due to particular local circumstances.

Schumann's role as a translator is also revealing of the gendered dimensions of translation in relation to Guild Socialism. This is because she clearly experienced specific problems that were not present for male translators. A clear example of this is found in her later correspondences with the League when she requested to translate additional texts by Cole from English into German. These offers were rejected by the League in favour of the more famous and influential figures, such as Rudolf Hilferding.[425] Other evidence of this bias towards famous male German translators also exists, such as the choice of Alfons Paquet and Otto Eccius, who between them produced the bulk of German language translations for the League. In particular, Paquet was responsible for translating the highly important and popular pamphlet, *The Meaning of Industrial Freedom* in 1920, while Eccius translated a total of five books about Guild Socialism over the next several years.[426] Although Eccius did pay some credit to Schumann by claiming that she had coined the term 'gildensozialismus' as the preferred German translation of Guild Socialism.[427] More generally attempts by tens of other translators and publishing houses who sought to acquire the rights to produce translations into German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Yiddish were similarly undertaken by men.[428] When considered in relation to this weight of evidence Schumann stands out both as the only example of a female translator of Guild Socialism working outside of Britain, and the only example of a translator whose offers to work for the League were rejected. Furthermore, this marginalisation also corresponds with similar efforts by historians who

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[424] T. Plaut, *Wesen und Bedeutung des Gildensozialismus* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1923) pp.6-8; A. Paquet to G.D.H. Cole, 15.10.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[425] G.D.H. Cole to E. Schumann, 30.3.1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[426] A. Paquet to G.D.H. Cole, 15.10.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis; A.J. Penty, *Gilden, Gewerbe und Landwirtschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922); *Die Überwindung des Industrialismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923); *Auf dem Wege zu einer christlichen Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1924); G.R.S. Taylor, *Der Gildenstaat: Seine Leitgedanken und Möglichkeiten* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921); *Gildenpolitik: Ein praktisches Programm für die Arbeiterpartei und die Genossenschaften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923)
[427] O. Eccius, *Der Gildenstaat* p.vii
[428] Jüdischer Verlag to G.D.H. Cole, October 1920 - July 1921, Letters, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis; G. Lacerdote to S.Webb, 15.3.1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis; Calpe to G.Bell & Sons, 8.4.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis; T. Tanake to G.D.H. Cole, 12.5.1919, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis; G. Bell and Sons Publishers to G.D.H. Cole, 26.6.1919, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

have frequently tended to cite her more famous husband, Wolfgang, in connection to her own work and as a result suggested that he was responsible for inspiring Neurath's interest in Guild Socialism.[429]

This point raises the broader issue of gender in relation to the wider communication network around the League. In fact, while the majority of individuals who communicated with the League were men a significant minority were highly educated middle-class women, like Schumann. In particular, Germany and the United States were two locations where large numbers of women began to actively study Guild Socialism. In the United States, Amy Hewes, a professor of economics and sociology at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts was representative of a large number of female academics in the United States who discussed Guild Socialism and circulated the subject amongst similar educated middle-class audiences that the League had targeted in Britain.[430] Hewes was particularly central to this discussion and undertook a serious analysis of the subject between 1920 to 1922, which led to the publication of one of the most detailed contemporary reviews about the League in the *American Economic Review*.[431] In Germany, Guild Socialism became a popular topic amongst female economists and historians during the interwar period. This resulted in a stream of publications during the interwar years, such as Charlotte Leubuscher's, *Sozialismus und Sozialisierung in England* (Socialism and Socialisation in England - 1921), Irma Peratoner's, *Entwicklung, Idee und Verwirklichung des Gildensozialismus in England* (The Development, Idea and the Realisation of Guild Socialism in England - 1923), and Hertha Lehmann-Jottkowitz's *Die Christlich-Soziale Bewegung in England* (The Christian Social Moment in England - 1933).[432] In particular, Leubuscher went even further than others by not only showing considerable interest in Guild Socialism in Britain and tracing its development before the First World War, but also analysing the interest it was receiving in Germany and the possibilities of a German version of Guild Socialism.[433] Leubusher was not alone in her speculations and a number of other economists

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[429] W. Euchner, H. Grebing F.J. Stegmann, P. Langhorst, T. Jahnichen, N. Friedrich, *Geschichte der sozialen Ideen in Deutschland* (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005) pp.283-286

[430] Guild Socialism Collection, Boxes 8-9, Nuffield College Library.

[431] A. Hewes, 'Guild Socialism: A Two Year Test', *The American Economic Review*, Vol.12, No. 2 (1922) pp.209-237

[432] C. Leubuscher, *Sozialismus und Sozialisierung in England* (Gustav Fischer, 1921); I. Peratoner, *Entwicklung, Idee und Verwirklichung des Gildensozialismus in England, (*Univ., Diss.--Frankfurt a. M., 1923); H. Lehmann-Jottkowitz, *Die Christlich-Soziale Bewegung in England* (Dessau : Dünnhaupt, 1933)

[433] C. Leubuscher, 'Deutsche Literatur über den englischen Gildensozialismus' *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (1923), pp.266-273

shared her interest in the possibility of a German version of Guild Socialism emerging and pondered whether it could ever be the same as in Britain.[434]

In addition to highly educated middle-class women, working-class female trade unionists also communicated with the League. In particular, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union and the International Congress of Working Women both developed connections with the League.[435] Judith Smart has offered an explanation for this reception among female trade unionists in relation to women in Australia, where she argues Guild Socialism offered an alternative model of labour organisation that was attractive to women because it was not inscribed with the same exclusionary masculinity that characterised conventional trade unionism.[436] Although this is a compelling explanation it is difficult to completely accept this argument because it appears to rest upon weak empirical data and the conflation of Guild Socialism with the Women's Guild Association. However, despite these shortcomings, Smart nevertheless points towards the importance of gender in relation to the reception of Guild Socialism and indicates that women along with men were involved in this process.

Finally, Schumann's case as a translator is also indicative of two material problems which characterised the correspondence network around the League that affected the circulation of Guild Socialism. The first of these was the question of which books or pamphlets to read and acquire in order to understand Guild Socialism. This problem again points towards the multiple meanings associated with the subject, which was compounded by the sheer volume of publications produced by the League. In total over 40 pamphlets were written, alongside monthly editions of *The Guildsman,* and a large selection of books. The scale of this array of sources made it particularly difficult for many mediators to understand a consistent definition of Guild Socialism, which didn't exist anyway and has also likely played a role in dissuading historians from researching the topic. Although some correspondents with the League like Schumann and the famous Austrian anarchist Rudolf Grossman (popularly known by his alias Pierre Ramus) did develop relatively consistent understandings of Guild Socialism in relation to syndicalism, which was achieved through reading primarily Cole's work.[437] Many other correspondents with the League produced hybridised and

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[434] T. Plaut, *Wesen und Bedeutung des Gildensozialismus* pp.2-3

[435] National Guilds League Annual Report 1920-1921, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 2, Nuffield College Library; A. Henry to the National Guilds League, 1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[436] J. Smart, *Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall Commune in Melbourne* p.114

[437] P. Ramus to the National Guilds League, 14.2.1922, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

often contradictory understandings informed by the different meanings of Guild Socialism the League produced. Most notably Alfred Mander's book, *New New Zealand* (1922) oscillated between multiple contradictory strands of theoretical knowledge in order to advocate simultaneously a corporatist argument about the value of the state above all rights belonging to individuals, while also endorsing the syndicalist impulse to remove all political and economic functions from the state.[438]

This problem was further intensified for correspondents outside of Britain owing to the disruption of communications caused by the First World War. This meant that while the war continued literature about Guild Socialism accumulated in Britain and was suddenly released internationally when it ended in 1918. This flood of diverse publications made it even harder for correspondents like Schumann to understand Guild Socialism and in response led them to request even more literature from the League in order to gain a clearer understanding.[439]

This difficulty of acquiring and understanding publications was connected to another material problem, the cost of correspondence. In particular, Schumann is representative of a large number of correspondents who were unable to afford high postage costs as well as the cost of publications produced by the League. In response, Schumann like many others often offered to exchange or loan books to mitigate costs.[440] This problem is indicative of the wave of high postwar inflation, which swept across Europe and especially Germany, that made foreign books prohibitively expensive.[441] Schumann for instance claimed that books cost around 300 marks each in 1920, even before the worst excesses of hyperinflation hit Germany in 1923.[442] Although high inflation was a problem experienced generally by correspondents in Europe additional issues in Germany, such as special taxation on imports and high exchange rates, added to the cost of communication with the League. In response to these problems Schumann, and others like her, attempted to negotiate other means to gain League publications. Often they would offer to exchange books or pay for them through services, such as translation or further circulating propaganda locally, as well as simply asking for free copies to be sent to them. In these ways, they attempted to navigate the unfavourable conditions which weakened the transmission of Guild Socialism.[443]

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[438] A.E. Mander, *New New Zealand* (Clarte, 1922) pp.11-18
[439] E. Schumann to G.D.H. Cole, 10.8.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[440] E. Schumann to G.D.H. Cole, 10.8.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[441] A. Tooze, *Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order 1916-1931* (Penguin, 2015) p.212
[442] E. Schumann to G.D.H. Cole, 10.8.1920, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[443] *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 6,8,9, Nuffield College Library.

3.1.2. Ödön Pór

The case of Ödön Pór presents another example of the importance of translators to the circulation of Guild Socialism and the varied political and economic circumstances they navigated. Born and raised in Budapest in the late nineteenth century Pór took up the cause of Guild Socialism, alongside his more famous cousin of Karl Polanyi, by working as a translator for the League. Following the completion of a law degree in Budapest, Pór began a career as a journalist working for the socialist newspaper, *Népszava*. He continued this career for the next few years working as a correspondent for various leftwing papers and moved to Italy in 1904 and then to the United States in 1909.[444] In 1913 Pór returned to Europe and took up residence in London where he worked for the famous Italian socialist paper, *Avanti!*. At this point *Avanti!* leant heavily towards syndicalism and opposed the collectivist, Confederazione Genernal del lavoro (General Confederation of Labour), which had held sway over most Italian trade unionists. Under the editorship of a young Benito Mussolini, *Avanti!* called for a united front, or "blocco rosso" (Red Block), comprised of all socialists interested in workers' control and appealed particularly to young socialists eager to attach themselves to the growing strength of syndicalism in Italy.[445]

In London, Pór came into contact with Guild Socialism via many of the figures who would go on to help found the National Guilds League in 1915. This led him to publish several articles on the subject as part of the growing discussion within *The New Age*.[446] Shortly before the start of the First World War Pór returned to Italy where he became cut off from the development of Guild Socialism in Britain and was unaware of the founding of the League until the reopening of borders in 1918.

Por's involvement with the circulation of Guild Socialism highlights similarities and differences with the case of Eva Schumann. Similarly to Schumann, Pór identified parallels between the formation of Guild Socialism in Britain and local ideas in Italy, therefore, providing another example of translation as a reflection of the process of synchronicity. However, unlike Schumann his attachment to these ideas changed over time. As such Pór first identified Guild Socialism with syndicalism, but gradually revised this opinion shifting towards medievalism and then ultimately to corporatist fascism. This highlights the point made by Frederick Cooper that connections are not always constant and therefore defined by varying degrees of intensity.[447] In this case, the First

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[444] G. Franzinetti, "Ödön Pór: From Socialism to Fascism, From Hungry to Italy" in I.Fried (eds) *Prospettive cuturali fra intersezioni, sviluppi e svolte disciplinari in Italia e in Ungheria* (Ponte Alapítvány, 2018) p.107
[445] C. Levy, *Gramsci and the Anarchists* (Berg, 1999) p.32
[446] P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms and the New Age Magazine* p.60-61
[447] F. Cooper, 'What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian's Perspective' *African Affairs,* Vol. 100, No.399 (2001) pp.189-213

World War disrupted Pór's engagement with Guild Socialism, which reiterates the significance of wider geopolitical conditions for structuring synchronicities.

Pór's initial identification with Guild Socialism began in the period before the war when he himself was a supporter of Italian syndicalism. In June 1912 he published an article in the *English Review* on the advancement of syndicalism in the Italian bottle-blowing industry. Here he outlined the growth of a small workers co-operative towards the formation of the Federation of Italian Bottle Blowers in 1906 and the progress of its 2000 members towards industrial unionism. According to Pór, the wider Italian syndicalist movement was important to this development because "[t]he syndicalist movement imbued the glass-blowers with that higher sense of solidarity."[448] This article brought Pór to the attention of G.D.H. Cole who referenced this article in *The World of Labour*. Cole disagreed with Pór's conclusions that the glass-blowers were syndicalists just because they had some measure of control of their workplace, and also argued that Italy showed little sign of moving towards syndicalism.[449] Despite this rebuke in response, Pór now began to forge a connection with Cole and another future member of League, Emily Townshend, both of whom were identifiable with the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism.

In 1913 Pór wrote an essay on the connection between Guild Socialism and Italian syndicalism. This text remained unpublished for almost a decade until it was updated and published by Townshend under the title, *Creative Socialism* (1924). Townshend made this clear in the preface of the book and wrote in the dedication, "to my friend Odon Por [sic] from whom comes anything of value in the following pages".[450] What followed was an outline of the development of various strands of socialism, which noted, "Guild Socialism, as Mr. Cole and his followers prefer to call it, is an attempt, carefully thought out and elaborated, to graft the new spirit which had found expression abroad in Syndicalism on the vigorous plant of English Trade Unionism."[451] Pór clearly still held this opinion after the war as a similar idea was also expressed in the English translation from Italian of his book, *Guilds and Co-operatives in Italy* (1923). Here he expressed a similar opinion and wrote that, "it is significant that Guild Socialism has developed in Great Britain and Italy independently, without mutual inspiration."[452] Thereby highlighting Pór's belief in the synchronicity between Guild Socialism and Italian syndicalism.

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[448] Ö. Pór, *The Italian Glass Blowers Takeover of 1910* (Kate Sharpley Library, 1992) pp.8-10
[449] G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* p.167-169
[450] E. Townshend, *Creative Socialism* (J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1924) p.i, vii
[451] E. Townshend, *ibid* p.48
[452] Ö.Pór, *Guilds and Co-operatives in Italy* (Unwin Brothers, 1923) pp.59

Pór's commitment to forming a connection between Guild Socialism in Britain and Italian syndicalism was also revealed through the correspondence letters he exchanged with the League after the war. Here he detailed his continued commitment to syndicalism noting how he was working on a book about syndicalist attitudes and also claimed to have the greatest library of syndicalist literature in all of Italy.[453] These letters reveal Pór's belief in the useful function Guild Socialism provided to syndicalism in terms of offering a theoretical basis, which could be applied in Italy. This he made clear in one letter written in 1921 where he argued, "I am trying to spread the idea of Guild Socialism in Italy, for strangely enough though we have here, in nucleus, a great movement what you make [sic] call "towards guilds," we have no theory to explain and stimulate its growth. Especially now that imported bolscevism [sic] has completely broken down we need some new ideas that are more harmonious with our reality."[454] Soon after in another letter he commented, "as far as Italy is concerned I regard G.S. the method wanted" and suggested that he should write a pamphlet for the League specifically about the situation in Italy.[455] In this sense, Pór believed that theoretical knowledge about Guild Socialism could be transferred to Italy and used to expand the meaning of Italian syndicalism.

Pór's transition away from support for syndicalism began to make itself clear in his letters to the League from 1921 onwards. Increasingly, he now began to make references to beginning the study of medieval agricultural guilds in northern Italy around the city of Ravenna, and announced plans to write a book about the subject that would be published in English and Italian.[456] As he outlined in one letter, "I want to make the volume a practical book for there is a great demand in almost every country from India to Ireland for it as people want to start similar movements everywhere especially in the field of agriculture."[457] This move away from identifying Guild Socialism explicitly with syndicalism and instead shifting his attention towards medieval guild tradition is indicative of Pór's transition away from support for one meaning of Guild Socialism produced by the League towards another. Thereby, highlighting Cooper's point about the changeability of connections.

[453] Ö. Pór to G.D.H. Cole, April - May 1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[454] Ö. Pór to G.D.H. Cole, 27.03.1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[455] Ö. Pór to G.D.H. Cole, 12.04.1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[456] Ö. Pór to G.D.H. Cole, 19.04.1922, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[457] Ö. Pór to G.D.H. Cole, 12.04.1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

By 1923, Pór had given up support for syndicalism and was now moving through his medievalism towards a new equivalence between Guild Socialism and corporatist fascism. This was made clear in the English translation of his next book titled, *Fascism* (1923) where he identified himself as neither, "Fascist nor Bolshevist, but [as a] Guildsman."[458] In this work, Pór argued clearly the relationship between Guild Socialism and fascism, but also highlighted his own position between them.

"The Fascist Trade Union Movement is a Guild Movement. It draws inspiration from the Italian Mediaeval Guilds and the Guild Republics and from *Carta di Carnaro,* and its aim is to adapt their forms and principles to the facts of to-day. This Guild Movement has various aspects that differentia it from any other Trade Union or Guild Movement. Its programme does not include "the abolition of private property" by means of "the class war," nor the "Socialization of the means of Production," i.e., the creation of a new Society in which all property is vested in the State. It recognises, on the contrary, the real flexibility of economic "laws" (so-called). It does not object to private property provided that it is accompanied by a consciousness of social responsibility and is neither "parasitic" nor "profiteering" and its aim is, by means of the free competition of ability ("lotta di capacity") to select and foster those forms of production and organisation which will best serve the public. But alongside private property of individuals and of capitalist firms, it explicitly recognises those Guild forms of proprietorship which are being formed in the Co-operatives of production, run by Labour, and the Consumer Co-operatives, and it does not fail to recognise that these latter out to be substituted for other forms of capitalist action wherever they can show better results."[459]

This clear shift in meaning Pór now attached to Guild Socialism can be explained in relation to several factors. Firstly his prior commitment to the subject through his involvement with the League meant he was unlikely simply to abandon it. Secondly, the multiple potential meanings of Guild Socialism made it easy for him to move between different associations. Therefore his theoretical move towards corporatist Guild Socialism in terms of his commitment to the state as both a legitimator for guilds and private property can be explained. In this way, Pór's transition is also reflective of the changing landscape of political ideas in Italy during this period. This point builds upon earlier historical research into Italian syndicalism, which has tended to interpret the subject as a key ingredient for the later emergence of corporatist fascism by casting it as a patriotic worker-orientated ideology. This has led to similar historical narratives being adopted in relation to other

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[458] Ö. Pór, *Fascism* (Labour Publishing Company Limited, 1923) p.18
[459] Ö. Pór, *ibid* pp.221-222

regions in order to explain the same phenomenon.[460] In contrast, more recent research has begun to move away from this teleology and towards a more varied transnational account, which suggests that Italian syndicalism adopted a number of contradictory positions in the early twentieth century.[461] This led many syndicalists and industrial unionists in Italy to embrace simultaneously militant direct action and electoral politics, alongside celebrating diverse intellectual influences which ranged from orthodox Marxists, such as Karl Kautsky, to the French syndicalist intellectual, George Sorel, while celebrating industrial workers in northern Italian cities and organising landless agricultural labourers in the south.[462] In this sense, Pór's later transition to corporatist fascism appears to reflect the diversity of ideas and shifting climate of Italian politics, which he attempted to connect to Guild Socialism. Therefore suggesting that his transition was less predestined and instead more opportunistic.

Alongside revealing the ability for correspondents with the League to shift between meanings of Guild Socialism. Pór's case also reveals a different motivation behind his relationship with the subject in comparison to other actors like Schumann. While, Schumann was motivated by her politics, in contrast, Por's motives appear to be more economic. According to Guido Franzinetti, Pór's interest in Guild Socialism was connected to the strategic role it played for him, which "provided an intellectual passport to Italian Socialist circles", and explains why the majority of Pór's Italian writings up until 1923 were, to a greater or a lesser extent, connected to Guild Socialism.[463] This argument is also consistent with Pór's correspondence with Cole where he discussed his work for *Avanti!* and his negotiations for the translation and publication of various pamphlets produced by the League, as well as books by Cole and Hobson from English into Italian.[464] However, it is unclear whether these translations were ever completed because despite Pór's claims and those of several historians, no other evidence of them exists.[465] Furthermore, Pór himself frequently mentioned problems with his translations in his correspondence with the League,

[460] J.S. Barnes, *The Universal Aspects of Fascism* (William and Northgate, 1928) pp.37-39; D.D. Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism* (Manchester University Press, 1979); W. Thorpe, *"The Workers Themselves" Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913–1923* (Kluwer, 1989); M. van der Linden, *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective* (Scholar Press, Aldershot 1990); Z. Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology. From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (P.U.P, 1994) pp.78-92; J.R. Jennings, *Georges Sorel: The Character and Development of his Thought* (Macmillan, 1985) p.vii
[461] M. Bencivenni, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture: The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890-1940* (NYU Press, 2014); R. Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism: An International Comparative Analysis* (Ashgate, 2008); D. Turcato, *Italian Anarchism as a Transnational Movement, 1885-1915* http://www.zapruder- world.org/content/davide-turcato-italian-anarchism-transnational-movement-1885-1915 (2007)
[462] C. Levy, 'Currents of Italian Syndicalism before 1926', *International Review of Social History,* Vol. 45, No. 2 (2000) p.212
[463] G. Franzinetti, *Ödön Pór* p.108
[464] Ö. Pór to G.D.H. Cole, March - July 1921, Letters, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[465] R. Houlton, 'Two Aspects of Guild Socialism', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, No.7 (1963) p.25

such as the Italian market not yet being ready for complex theoretical statements on Guild Socialism and first requiring a clear primer; or the destruction of a completed Italian manuscript of Hobson's *National Guilds*, which Pór claimed was destroyed after the *Avanti!* publishing house was burnt down.[466]

The validity of these claims is doubtful and points towards an alternative explanation for Pór's engagement with the League. Firstly, while it is certainly true that the *Avanti!* publishing houses were burnt down in 1919 by Italian fascists, this happened a full two years prior to the letter Pór sent when he complained about the issue. Furthermore separate correspondence between the League and *Avanti!* highlight the publishers' strong desire for Italian translations of particularly Cole's books and willingness to pay for the publishing rights to do so.[467] Regardless of whether Pór did ever produce any of his translations, he was certainly paid to do so.[468] This highlights an important economic motivation for Pór's role as a mediator for Guild Socialism, which contrasts with others, such as Schumann's political motivations. Similarly to Schumann, Pór's correspondences with the League paint a picture of adverse financial conditions, which would have otherwise restricted the circulation of Guild Socialism, such as high exchange rates and costs of postage and like others Pór employed similar strategies in order to overcome these boundaries, including requesting materials be sent for free, or on loan. However, Pór's probable swindling of advanced payments for translations from *Avanti!* suggests that deception also played a role to some extent in his attempts to integrate Guild Socialism into Italy. Further evidence of this is found in the charming language, which Pór frequently used in his letters as well as the hints of the lucrative market Italy could provide for book sales. This strategy of flattery was especially directed towards Cole who Pór clearly identified as the most influential voice within the League. This resulted in numerous attempts to enlist Cole's personal support, such as in July 1921 when Pór requested Cole's help to get an article published and playfully suggested that, "it won't be difficult for you."[469] On another occasion this time writing to Cole's publisher, while still working for *Avanti!* Pór wrote that the quick translation of Cole's *Guild Socialism Restated* (1920) for which he had already been paid, but

[466] Ö. Pór to S.B. Pinker, 21.07.21, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis; Ö.Pór to G.D.H. Cole, 12.04.1921, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.
[467] G. Lacerdote to S.Webb, 15.3.1921, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[468] Ö. Pór to S.B. Pinker, 21.07.21, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
[469] Ö. Pór to G.D.H. Cole, 23.07.21, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.

which never materialised, "may open for Mr. Cole's books a good Italian market and it is possible they may pay better for other books."[470]

Despite their differences, both Pór and Schumann present a varied account of how translators functioned within the correspondence network around the League. By helping to form connections through translation knowledge, which expanded the circulation of Guild Socialism internationally and revealed examples of intellectual synchronicity. Furthermore, they reveal the complex set of motivations and hindrances, which shaped their interactions with the League and served to add additional meaning to Guild Socialism.

3.2. Journalists

Journalists were another important group involved in the communication network around the National Guilds League. They expanded the circulation of Guild Socialism by connecting it to an existing set of press networks. These served to expand the reach of the communication network around the League and constituted another important dimension of the global integration of Guild Socialism in the form of existing material infrastructure. This is an important counterpoint to the process of synchronicity because although synchronicity is useful in terms of explaining how intellectual connections are formed these connections are necessarily supported by material systems, which physically transmit knowledge, people and objects in order to allow the process of forming synchronic relationships.

In recent years historians working on topics related to the Global History of Socialism have undertaken work focussed on press networks. These scholars include Anthony Gorman, Ilhram Khuri-Madisis, and Kenyon Zimmer, who have all drawn attention to the important role played by print media networks for the production, distribution, and translation of information, which helped to form a shared sense of socialist identity between different actors in various locations during the nineteenth and twentieth century.[471] This work has largely focussed on describing the transnational connections between various kinds of socialists during this period. However, can also be extended

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470 Ö. Pór to S.B. Pinker, 21.07.21, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.
471 A. Gorman, "'Diverse in Race, Religion and Nationality... but United in Aspirations of Civil Progress': The Anarchist Movement in Egypt 1860-1940" in S.J. Hirsch and L. van der Walt's (eds) *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940* (Brill, 2010) p.7; I. Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (University of California Press, 2010) p.150; Kenyon Zimmer's most recent work has has used GIS to map out anarchist newspapers and periodicals between 1872-1940 in the US http://depts.washington.edu/moves/anarchist_map-newspapers.shtlm

by taking into deeper consideration how these press networks were themselves also the product of structural preconditions tied to imperialism and colonialism.[472] This provides an opportunity to reframe these connections as imperial or inter-imperial and highlight the argument made by Nicholas Thomas that "exchange… meditates conditions and relations that are not, or not wholly, constituted with the immediate frame of exchange".[473] In the case of Guild Socialism, journalists operating in relation to the League were connected to various material communication systems, which were situated within a broader context defined by empires.

The communication network around the League provides a useful means to highlight this context which aided the circulation of Guild Socialism. For example, the physical location of the League at the heart of the British empire provided an extremely privileged position from which to access a vast imperial communication network. This provided easy access to postal services, which could transport physical objects including, books, letters, newspapers, and pamphlets across great distances often via trains and steamships. These allowed for the rapid circulation of information between the League headquarters in London and mediators around the world. In particular, those located in British colonies, such as New Zealand and Australia had particularly strong and reliable contact with London, due to the strategic importance of these locations to the empire. Furthermore, those correspondents based outside of the British empire also benefitted from inter-imperial communication infrastructure which linked imperial metropoles, such as those located in Japan or the United States. These material connections also provided significant revenue streams for the League. Allowing it to sell propaganda and memberships to a much larger set of audiences around the world. This financial support helped to sustain the League and connected it to the global economy. Collectively these conditions allowed the League to punch significantly above its weight as a small propaganda organisation giving it a sizeable advantage provided to it by its location and making it far more accessible for actors outside of Britain to communicate with.[474]

Journalists were crucial mediators who operated within these structures. Two clear examples which will now be examined are Murobuse (Koshin) Takanobu (1889—1970) and Jessie Wallace Hughan (1875-1955) who both worked independently to circulate Guild Socialism through press networks centred in Japan and the United States.

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[472] S. Conrad, *What is Global History* p.103
[473] N. Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Harvard University Press, 1991) pp.8-9
[474] D. Headrick, 'A Double-Edged Sword: Communications and Imperial Control in British India' *Historical Social Research* Vol 35, No.1 (2010) pp.51-65; C.L. Hill, *Conceptual Universalization in the Transnational Nineteenth Century* p.145

3.2.1. Murobuse (Koshin) Takanobu

In May 1920 the journalist Murobuse Takanobu, sometimes known as Koshin, sent a letter from his home in Tokyo to the offices of the National Guilds League in London. In his letter Murobuse introduced himself as a writer and editor for a monthly journal, *Hihyo,* and that he had come into contact with Guild Socialism through reading, *The New Age* and *The Guildsman.* As a result, he wished to join the League as a full-time member and enclosed payment of his annual dues.[475] Over the next several years Murobuse exchanged letters intensely with the League and also travelled to Europe where he met other members of the League while staying in London.[476]

From his position in Tokyo Murobuse was able to circulate information about Guild Socialism amongst his readership at *Hihyo.* By his own account, this included several thousand readers every month, which led him to call the journal an organ of "Japanese Guild Socialism".[477] These efforts met with notable success as over the next few years Guild Socialism became increasingly popular in Japan and parts of Japanese Manchuria. This took the form of a growing number of newspaper exchanges with the League and Japanese counterparts, including *Shakai-shugi-Kenkyū* (Studies of Socialism) and *Kaizō* (Reconstruction). The League also began to generate increasing revenues from the sizeable number of subscriptions to *The Guildsman,* which were sent mainly to students in large Japanese cities, alongside postal orders for books and pamphlets as well as a small number of membership subscriptions.[478] Additionally, Guild Socialism also became a topic of discussion within the broader socialist movement in Japan which led famous figures, such as the anarchist Ôsugi Sakae and the feminist-socialist Yamakawa Kikue, to also engage with the subject.[479]

Although Murobuse's role as a journalist was certainly crucial to the rising popularity of Guild Socialism in Japan this development was also contingent on wider factors. In particular, Murobuse's efforts to popularise Guild Socialism via his connection to an existing press infrastructure are indicative of a common trend of circulating radical opinions through newspapers, especially during

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[475] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, May 1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[476] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, May 1920 until August 1922, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; *The Guildsman*, April 1921, p.11

[477] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, 7.5.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, May 1920, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[478] *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 4,9, Nuffield College Library.

[479] Ô. Sakae, "*Social Idealism* (1920)" in R. Graham's (eds.), *Anarchism A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE To 1939)* (Black Rose Books, 2005) p.370; Y. Kikue to the National Guilds League, 28.6.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[480] In the context of Japan, this was aided by the rapid growth of journalism and the spread of newspaper presses during the Meiji period (1868–1912). This coincided with the growth of a modern sense of citizenship aided by political and economic transformations, that characterised the development of the Japanese empire that fed the expansion of education programs and literacy.[481] Also central to the project of empire-building was the development of communication infrastructure in the form of postal services, trains, telegraphs, and steamships, which supported diplomacy, trade, and security, but fundamentally provided the rapid exchange of information both within the empire and externally.[482] As a result, the relative locations of Murobuse in Tokyo and the headquarters of the League in London were vital because both were situated at the heart of two interconnected imperial communication networks. This allowed easy communication between both metropoles and meant that a letter sent from London could arrive in Tokyo within a matter of a few months, meaning both locations could stay relatively up-to-date with local developments.[483]

Alongside Murobuse's position in Tokyo the growth of interest in Guild Socialism also coincided with the rise of syndicalism in Japan, which was centred around the newspaper industry. This began with the formation of a small number of groups during the 1910s, including the Sincere Friends' Society Printers' Union (Shinyukai), the Labour Movement Circle (Rodo Undo), and the Righteous Progress Society Newspaper Workers' Union (Seishinkai), which united in 1926 to form a unified syndicalist federation.[484] The prevalence of syndicalism in Japan can therefore be understood to have aided the reception of Guild Socialism by once again providing an example of intellectual synchronicity, which provided a pathway for the wider circulation of the subject.

Although part of the reception of Guild Socialism can be connected to the prevalence of syndicalism in Japan this was not the case for Murobuse himself. Instead, Murobuse's interest was tied to political and aesthetic ideas linked to the medievalist meaning of Guild Socialism. This argument has been developed by Masashi Izumo, whose work on the reception of Guild Socialism in Japan draws attention to the centrality of interest in William Morris by Murobuse and others like

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[480] M. Conboy, *Journalism: A Critical History* (London: Sage, 2004) chap. 5.

[481] J.L. Huffman, *Creating a Public: People and Press in Meiji Japan* (University of Hawaii Press, 1997) p.2

[482] D. Yang, 'Telecommunication and the Japanese Empire: A Preliminary Analysis of Telegraphic Traffic' *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2010) pp.66-67

[483] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, May 1920 until August 1922, Letters, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[484] J. Crump, "Green before their time? The pre-war Japanese anarchist movement", in I. Neary (eds) *War, Revolution and Japan* (Taylor & Francis, 2005) pp.78,87-88; J. Crump, *Hatta Shūzō and Pure Anarchism in Interwar Japan* (Macmillan Press, 1993) pp.22-44

him. Indeed according to Izumo, Morris's ideas of craftsmanship and romantic socialism received considerable attention in early twentieth-century Japan, particularly among middle-class socialist intellectuals. This resulted in a stream of publications during the 1920s, including Kada Tetsuji's *Wiriam Morisu* (William Morris - 1924), Honma Hisao's *Seikatsu no Geijutsuka* (Life into Art - 1925), and Okuma Nobuyuki's, *Shakai shizoka toshite no Rasukin to Morisu* (Ruskin and Morris as Social Thinkers - 1927). According to Izumo, Murobuse was himself part of this group and in his own translation of one of Cole's books wrote, "Owen and Morris are the Adam and Eve of Guild Socialism".[485] This analysis is convincing, especially in relation to the large number of books and pamphlets Murobuse ordered and claimed to have read in his correspondences with the League. These are also suggestive of his middle-class intellectual background in terms of the considerable expense these certainly required in terms of price and postage from London to Tokyo, as well as the large quantities he ordered and apparently read.[486]
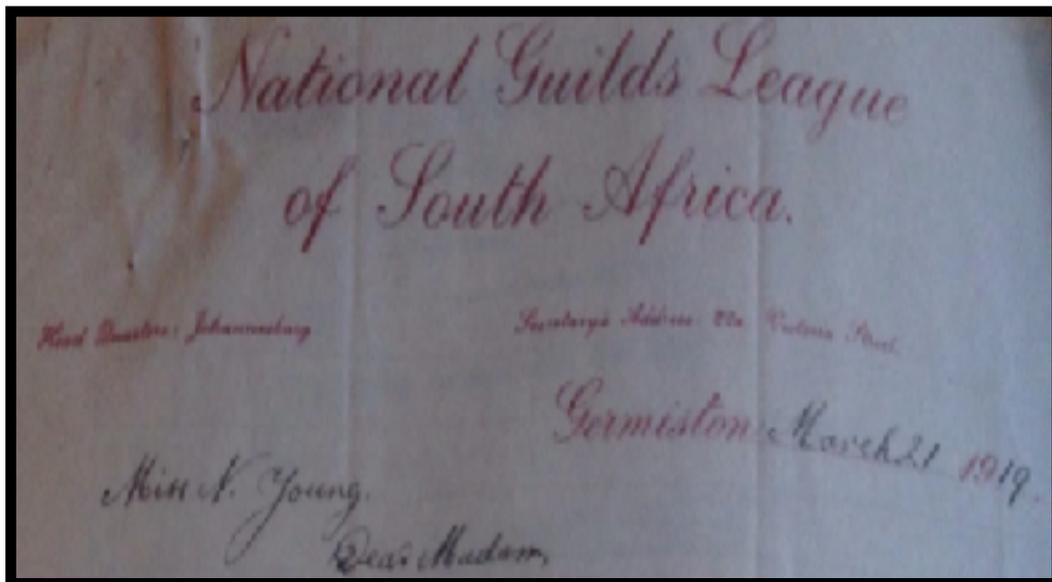
Figure 12
Source: A.E. Jordan to the National Guilds League, 21.3.1919, Letter, Guild Socialism
Collection, Box 9, Nuffield College Library

Figure 13
Guilds at Home and Abroad
Source: *The Guild Socialist*, April 1922 p.7

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[485] M. Izumo, "The reception of William Morris in early 20th century Japan", Kanazawa University, Departmental Bulletin Paper, Vol. 42, No.1 (2006) p.27
[486] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, May 1920 until August 1922, Letters, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

Other institutions also aided Murobuse's efforts to circulate Guild Socialism in Japan such as the establishment of the National Guilds League of Japan founded in 1920.[487] Although little evidence about the impact of this organisation exists beyond Murobuse's letters. His claims are indicative of a broader trend amongst correspondents with the League from around the world who made similar claims about the formation of local or national organisations designed to promote Guild Socialism (See Figure 12). Including the Commonwealth Guilds League in Melbourne, the National Guilds League of South Africa in Germiston, and numerous mentions of a National Guilds League of the United States.[488] Despite limited evidence of the impact, longevity, or size of these groups. The fact that so many examples of similar groups forming and that this information was communicated to the League makes them collectively significant. Especially because the League was willing to trust and celebrate these reports along with other information received from mediators, like Murobuse. This led to a further recirculation of information and production of knowledge about Guild Socialism as the League in response began to reproduce the reports it received about the development of Guild Socialism in Japan and elsewhere in its own paper, *The Guildsman.* This led to the creation of a special regular column in the paper titled 'Guilds at Home and Abroad' in September 1919 which was dedicated to reporting on guild socialist activities globally (See Figure 13).
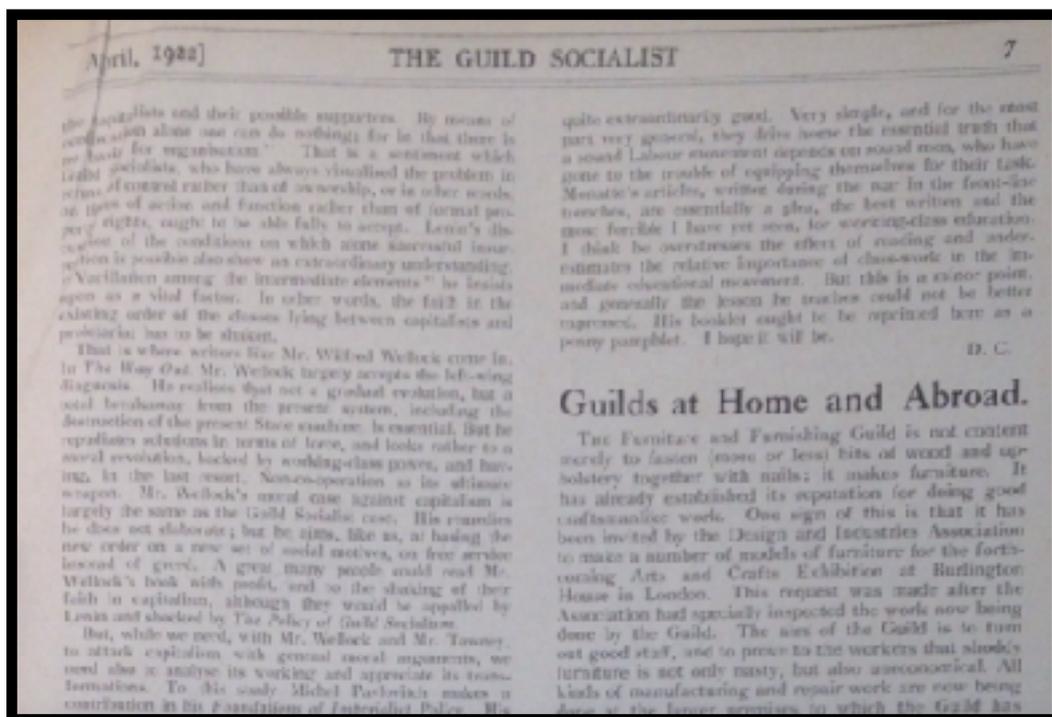
[487] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, 7.5.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[488] J. Smart, *Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall in Melbourne* p.119; A.E. Jordan to the National Guilds League, 21.3.1919, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; W.H.Kaufman to G.E. Plumb, L. Haines and C.D. Thompson, 24.1.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

Guilds at Home and Abroad represented a clear example of the recirculation of Guild Socialism. Furthermore, it demonstrated how journalists like Murobuse and the local press networks they were embedded within became connected to the League's own communication network. A clear example of this process was demonstrated in November 1920 when *The Guildsman* gleefully reported on the development of Guild Socialism in Japan.

"The Guild idea is going ahead in Japan. It began to be noticed there largely in intellectual circles, and I am told that the first article dealing with it appeared in a University journal. Recently, however, a considerable [amount of] Guild literature has been published, including Japanese translations of quite a number of our own Guild books and pamphlets. We have received recently a book of considerable size written in Japan, and a number of magazine articles dealing with the Guild moment, and I understand that these have greatly simplified the task of the League office in dealing with the steady stream of Japanese inquiries. Now, usually much to their astonishment, we hand them Guild publications in their own language. Mr Murobuse, who is organising the Guild movement in Japan, tells me that the idea is now spreading rapidly from the narrow circles in which it began to the organised workers. The Osaka Ironworkers' Union, one of the most important Unions in the metal industries, has recently embraced the Guild Socialist faith. It will be an odd situation if we allow our movement to die, as an organised body of opinion, in the country of its origin, just when it is not only taking practical shape here, but spreading very rapidly to other countries."[489]

This description is a clear example of how the wider world was being written into the narrative of Guild Socialism presented in *The Guildsman* and marked a sharp contrast from the largely British-centric idea of the subject discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, Guilds at Home and Abroad is an especially obvious example of this shift, which drew together reportage on the development of Guild Socialism across large parts of the world both inside and outside of the British empire.[490] In each example of the column similar reports of the spread of Guild Socialism via local actors and institutions were supplied by journalists like Murobuse who as a result were actively transforming Guild Socialism by broadening its appeal beyond British audiences and tailoring it to their own local conditions. This created a panoptic vision of growth, which supports the idea of the important role played by existing infrastructures such as print media networks for the production, distribution, and translation of information, which aided the integration of Guild Socialism locally and helped to form a shared sense of identity around Guild Socialism. In this way, this development mirrored the

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[489] *The Guildsman,* November 1920, p.9
[490] *The Guildsman,* November 1919 p.9; February 1921, pp.6-7; May 1921 pp.6-7; March 1922 p.10

effect other examples of socialist press networks described by Gorman, Khuri-Madisis, and Zimmer, underscoring the vital role played by journalists towards the circulation of Guild Socialism.

The League celebrated these developments in London in 1921 at its annual conference. Here the growth of support for Guild Socialism internationally was a prominent feature of the conference report. In particular, Germany and Japan were considered, "the most fruitful fields for the germination of our ideas", and the creation of the National Guilds League of Japan was given special praise. Furthermore, the report added that "Japanese students, in particular, those who visit this country, provide by far the best market for literature and translations of it are beginning to appear in Japanese."[491] Ultimately this report demonstrated the important role played by mediators like Murobuse who connected the League to a broader set of international audiences via their own local press networks. Thereby allowing the recirculation of information and revenues back to the League which in turn reorientated it towards a more international position.

3.2.2. Jessie Wallace Hughan

Jessie Hughan provides another example of a journalist whose connection to local press networks served to increase the circulation of Guild Socialism. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Hughan was highly educated. She earned a bachelor's degree from Barnard College in 1898, a master's degree from Columbia University in 1899, and completed her doctorate in 1910, which was subsequently published under the title, *The Present Status of Socialism in America* (1911). She was also a committed socialist and in 1907 joined the Socialist Party of America and the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS). Established in 1905 the ISS provided a forum for students to discuss topics related to socialism across the United States. In 1907 Hughan was elected to the executive committee of the ISS and began to write for its bimonthly magazine, *The Intercollegiate Socialist.*[492]

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[491] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1920-1921,* p.4, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 1, M/1, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[492] S. Deleon, I.C. Hayseed and G. Poole, *The American Labour Who's Who* (Hanford Press, 1925) p.113; C.F. Howell, "Jessie Wallace Hughan" in B.A. Cook's (eds) *Women and War: A Historical Encyclopaedia from Annuity to the Present: Volume One* (Santa Barbara, 2006) pp.293-294; M. Horn, *The Intercollegiate Socialist Society 1905-1921* (Westview Press, 1979) pp.2-3

For Hughan *The Intercollegiate Socialist* became an important vector for the circulation of Guild Socialism across the United States. Similarly to *Hihyo* in Japan, the magazine became an important forum for dissecting the meaning of Guild Socialism and highlighting its synchronicity to local ideas. For example, in one article Hughan wrote entitled, "Guildsmen and American Socialism" she argued, "[i]n America… we of the Socialist Party are ready, with very little persuasion, to welcome the movement of Guild Socialism as the natural expansion of two ideas which have long been acknowledged, but somewhat underdeveloped, among us namely industrial unionism and the future control of industry by workers."[493] This explicit attempt to form a connection with Guild Socialism and local ideas of industrial unionism and workers' control highlights, a similar example as the previous case studies in this chapter have suggested of a local mediator attempting to form a direct intellectual connection with Guild Socialism through the use of already locally embedded ideas.

Hughan was not exceptional when writing about the potential to integrate Guild Socialism into the United States. In fact, *The Intercollegiate Socialist* possessed many other voices which echoed the same opinion. The sociologist Ordway Tead is one such example. For Tead, the appeal of Guild Socialism was not purely intellectual, but also strategic. He believed that a similar propaganda campaign to the League's efforts in Britain to win over trade unionists could also be made in the United States as a means towards introducing industrial democracy.[494] Hughan and Tead often debated the efficacy of this strategy and so regularly agreed with each other that Hughan at one point wrote, "Mr Tead and myself are so far agreed regarding the compatibility of the guild idea and American Socialism that our differences must, needs be, chiefly academic."[495] In this sense, both Hughan and Tead clearly believed in the efficacy of print media networks to widen support for Guild Socialism.

Despite agreeing on the level of strategy Hughan and Tead's theoretical understandings of Guild Socialism were different. In relation to the question of sovereignty Hughan criticised Tead and his acceptance of Cole's argument that a plurality of guilds would be capable of effectively managing production in a society without a sovereign state to unify them. In contrast, Hughan agreed with Hobson's argument that an indivisible sovereign authority would be necessary in order to organise a democratic system of National Guilds from the top down in order to maintain their cohesion.[496] This

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[493] *The Intercollegiate Socialist*, December-January 1918-1919, p.21
[494] *The Intercollegiate Socialist*, February-March 1919, pp.32-33
[495] *The Intercollegiate Socialist*, February-March 1919, p.33
[496] *The Intercollegiate Socialist*, February-March, 1919 p.33

point again highlights the different meanings of Guild Socialism that the League was actively involved in producing. In particular, this theoretical difference is indicative of the stark division between corporatist and syndicalist meanings of Guild Socialism. While also indicating differences in reception between different mediators who were interested in the subject.

Although Hughan and Tead disagreed over the meaning of Guild Socialism their efforts to popularise Guild Socialism in the United States through *The Intercollegiate Socialist* were successful. This point has been developed by Marc Stears who has drawn attention to how their efforts succeeded in raising interest, particularly in New York. This resulted in the creation of a specialist bookshop dedicated to Guild Socialism in Greenwich Village called The Sunwise Turn.[497] More generally across the United States interest in Guild Socialism mushroomed which can be measured in relation to the large number of letters and requests for publications sent to the League (See Figure 1). In particular libraries and universities alongside regional and trade union newspapers were especially keen to receive materials sent from the League, thereby reflecting the broad appeal of Guild Socialism amongst working-class trade unionists and middle-class intellectuals.[498] This was unsurprising given how explicitly the League tailored its propaganda towards these audiences, albeit in a British context, which confirmed Hughan and Tead's suspicion that guild socialist propaganda could be effective in the context of the United States.

The growing interest in Guild Socialism in the United States and debates over the meaning of the subject also reflected a broader situation in the country. Specifically, the changing meaning of socialism in the United States during this period. In particular, there was now the growing prospect of introducing socialism through parliamentary democracy after the American Socialist Party twice gained over 900,000 votes in presidential elections in 1912 and 1920. Despite these electoral gains the American Socialist Party was deeply divided over racism and participation in the First World War, which drew many members away from collectivism and towards the syndicalist ranks of the IWW.[499] This division between collectivism and workers' control in the American labour movement also coincided with the beginnings of the first Red Scare in America around 1917, which saw public

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[497] M. Stears, *Demanding Democracy: American radicals in search of a new politics* (Princeton University Press, 2010) pp.64-65
[498] *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library
[499] E. McKillen, 'The Socialist Party of America, 1900-1929' *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of American History* (2017) [Accessed 05.02.2021] https://oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-413

opinion in the United States swing massively against socialism.[500] In response to this turbulent situation, the ISS changed its name to the League for Industrial Democracy in 1921 and began to more systematically engage with Guild Socialism.

At around the same time as the situation was changing in the United States in Britain Guild Socialism was also shifting towards an increasingly international position. *The Guildsman* was central to this process and instrumentalised Hughan explicitly to do so. Reporting on the debate between Hughan and Tead the paper wrote, "the Intercollegiate Socialist Society of American not only shows itself in its publications to be fully conversant with the literature of National Guilds, but is at present conducting in its journal a discussion on "Guilds for America" between two of its contributors which is of great interest to Guildsmen here, being concurred, as it is with the familiar 'problem of sovereignty.'"[501] This reportage is revealing of a dual process of synchronic integration in which both local actors like Hughan were writing Guild Socialism into their own contexts, while simultaneously the League was also reporting on these activities. As a result, both were involved in expanding the meaning of Guild Socialism from a uniquely national phenomenon to a wider international narrative.

Materially this exchange between Britain and the United States was supported by postal systems, which facilitated the physical exchange of *The Guildsman* and *The Intercollegiate Socialist* across the Atlantic Ocean and therefore extended the communication network around the League. Additionally, unlike other cases presented in this chapter this exchange was not disrupted to the same extent by geopolitical circumstances, such as the First World War, and was also more readily able to overcome spatial and linguistic barriers given the relative proximity and strong communication infrastructure between Britain and the United States as well as their shared language.

Journalists like Hughan and their associated press networks were also essential to the mutual exchange of information with the League. This drove the growing international appeal of Guild Socialism and highlights Bruno Latour's work on how knowledge systems function. For Latour, the successful movement of ideas is reliant on three interconnected factors: mobility, stability, and

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[500] L. van der Walt and M. Schmidt, *Black Flame* p.107 M.B. Levin, *Political Hysteria in America: The Democratic Capacity for Repression* (Basic Books, 1972) p.31
[501] *The Guildsman,* May 1919, p.2

combinability.[502] Although Latour's analysis has been substantially updated by the concern of moving beyond the analysis of fixed centres and peripheries and questioning how localities become central to knowledge networks.[503] These three principles nevertheless remain useful for explaining how journalists and press networks were important to the circulation of Guild Socialism. Firstly they provided a vector of mobility allowing objects like newspapers and the information they contained to physically move between locations. Secondly, they provided a physically stable medium for the transmission of ideas. This was not true in the case of the idea themselves, which were ultimately changed the information and knowledge attached to them through the process of circulation through their reinterpretation by actors like Hughan. Finally, journalists were instrumental mediators in terms of combinability by forging direct connections between Guild Socialism and local ideas, therefore aiding processes of forming intellectual synchronicity. A clear example of these principles in action was the case of the Plumb Plan, which was a postwar initiative to permanently nationalise the United States railway system. In this case, Hughan and *The Intercollegiate Socialist* played a key role in feeding the League with information and knowledge about the plan and understanding it in terms of Guild Socialism.

The Plumb Plan was first conceived in early 1918. It took its name from a former corporate lawyer, Glen E. Plumb, who had become an attorney representing railway workers unions, otherwise known as Railway Brotherhoods. The Plumb Plan proposed the permanent nationalisation of the railway network, which would be administered by a public corporation controlled by a board of 15 directors who would represent equally the interests of the public, management, and labour. This equilibrium would be ensured by the appointment of five directors each by the President of the United States, railway managers, and trade unions.[504] This proposal was formed in response to the decision taken by the United States government in December 1917 to temporarily nationalise the railways, after the entire railway system in the east of the country came to an almost complete standstill due to mismanagement through private ownership. This mismanagement caused labour shortages and blocked railway lines as a result of policies designed to maximise profits, which prevented the movement of empty carriages from the east of the county to the west where the majority of freight was loaded and then sent back eastwards.[505] As a result, of the temporary nationalisation railway

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[502] B. Latour, *Science in Action* (Harvard University Press, 2003) p.223
[503] D.W. Chambers and R. Gillespie, 'Locality in the History of Science: Colonial Science, Technoscience, and Indigenous Knowledge,' *Osiris,* Vol. 15 (2000) pp.221-240; S. Sivasundaram, 'Science and the Global: On Methods, Questions and Theory', *Isis,* Vol.101, No.1 (2010) p.158
[504] S. Zimand, *Modern Social Movements* (H.W. Wilson Company, 1921) p.107
[505] C.J. Davis, *Power at Odds: The 1922 National Railroad Shopmen's Strike* (University of Illinois Press, 1997) p.36

trade unions were effectively handed a version of workers' control by the government in the form of a direct share in the management of the railways, wages, and working conditions.[506]

In February 1918 the Plumb Plan League was established and received wide support from the railway brotherhoods.[507] Its central argument was that public ownership increased railway efficiency. This was unsurprisingly endorsed by the railway brotherhoods, which themselves were heavily influenced by the logic of scientific management. Furthermore, this argument benefitted from the favourable experience of the temporary nationalisation of the railways throughout 1918, which had resolved the previous inefficiencies caused by mismanagement.[508] Outside of the railway sector, the plan received mixed endorsements from trade unionists. Samuel Gompers the leader of one of the largest national unions, the American Federation of Labour (AFL), rejected the proposal because he believed that government involvement in the plan would result in the loss of workers' rights. This was despite overall approval for the plan by rank and file members of the AFL.[509] Additionally, coal miners represented by the United Mine Workers trade union were supportive of the proposal and in September 1919 formally endorsed the plan along with a proposal to nationalise the mining industry at a convention in Cleveland.[510]

The Intercollegiate Socialist was quick to draw comparisons between the Plumb Plan and Guild Socialism in the spring of 1919.[511] This information was quickly transferred to Britain via a newspaper exchange with the League, which led to the first reports of the Plumb Plan being published in *The Guildsman* by the autumn.[512] Here the Plumb Plan received cautious comparison and initial endorsement by the League.

"The proposal, though there are important differences, closely resembles National Guilds in many of its features. It advocates national ownership, but without political or bureaucratic control. Instead, it proposes to entrust the management of the railroads to a Commission equally representative of three groups — the railway workers organised in their Trade Unions, the

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[506] S. Zimand, *Modern Social Movements* pp.107-108; M. Derber, *The American Idea of Industrial Democracy 1865-1965* (University of Illinois Press, 1970) pp.148-151
[507] C.J. Davis, *Power at Odds* p.44
[508] K.A. Kerr, *American Railroad Politics 1914-1920* (University of Pittsburg Press, 1968) pp.160-164
[509] *The New York Times,* 25.01.1920 pp.8-9; D. Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) p.401
[510] *The New Majority,* 06.12.1919, pp.8-9
[511] *The Intercollegiate Socialist*, April-May 1919, pp.22-23
[512] *The Guildsman*, September 1919, p.13

managerial personnel, and the public represented by persons nominated by the President. There would also be regional and local Commissions, constituted on similar lines."[513]

This early assessment quickly became more enthusiastic as the League received more information about the plan and began to synthesise its own knowledge about the initiative. Discussion of the Plumb Plan League ran across numerous editions of *The Guildsman* and also began to be featured in large numbers of books, pamphlets, and reports produced by the League.[514] These sources drew attention to the "striking resemblance" between the proposal and League's own plan to form a National Railway Guild.[515] In response, some members of the League such as Cole and Hobson published articles in the Plumb Plan Leagues own newspaper, *Railway Democracy,* and attempted to claim that the Plumb Plan was itself an example of Guild Socialism in action.[516] These efforts appear to have made little impression on Plumb himself who made no mention of Guild Socialism in his book about the plan.[517] Nevertheless, this example highlights the different roles played by journalists and press networks who provided the means for physical and intellectual materials to be exchanged therefore serving as vectors of mobility, stability, and combinability, which although not necessarily always completely successful, expanded the appeal and circulation of Guild Socialism around the world.

Ultimately journalists and press networks constituted a vital part of the communication network around the League. They helped to expand the circulation of Guild Socialism internationally by connecting the League to new audiences and institutions, which also served to add new meaning to the subject as it was connected to different local ideas and contexts. In response, these efforts transformed the meaning of Guild Socialism in Britain through the creation of new knowledge as it became more obviously associated with an international context perhaps most clearly represented in Guilds at Home and Abroad

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[513] *The Guildsman*, September 1919, p.13
[514] *The Guildsman,* September 1919, p.13; October 1919, p.9; February 1920 pp.8-9; August 1920, p.9; G.D.H. Cole, *Workers' Control for Railwaymen* (Labour Publishing Company, 1921) pp.4-5; G.D.H. Cole, *Guild Socialism Restated* (Routledge, 2011) pp.214-215
[515] *National Guilds League Annual Report, 1918-1919*, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 2, Nuffield College Library.
[516] C.R. Weinberg, 'Plumb Plan', in E. Arnesen (eds) *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-class History, Volume 1* (CRC, 2007) p.1092; G.E. Plumb and W.G. Roylance, *Industrial Democracy: A Plan for Its Achievement* (B. W. Huebsch, 1923)
[517] G.E. Plumb and W.G. Roylance, *Industrial Democracy* (Huebsch, 1923)

3.3. Trade Unionists

By far the largest group to interact internationally with the National Guilds League were trade unionists. Collectively the League received hundreds of letters sent by trade unionists interested in joining and learning more about Guild Socialism. The appeal of Guild Socialism amongst this group is particularly obvious given that so much of the efforts of the League were directed towards spreading Guild Socialism amongst trade unionists, albeit in Britain. Furthermore, their interactions were also often contingent on the work of translators and journalists who were often responsible for first introducing trade unionists to the subject. Trade unionists played an important role in the circulation of Guild Socialism which they often adapted to suit their own local circumstances. In this way, they performed a similar role to journalists and translators in the communication network by recirculating knowledge and information about Guild Socialism amongst other trade unionists and back to the League. As a result, they help to highlight once again how synchronicity played a role in the reception of Guild Socialism, while also adding new meaning to the subject which was often contingent on existing infrastructures.

In order to highlight these aspects the cases of two trade unionists, Arthur McCarthy (1862-1947) and Martin Wagner (1885-1957) who were located respectively in New Zealand and Germany, will now be examined. These cases serve to highlight the wider role played by trade unionists in the communication network around the League.

3.3.1. Arthur McCarthy

Arthur McCarthy grew up in the city of Dunedin located on the southern island of New Zealand. He was the son of a local gunsmith and followed in his father's trade by taking took over the family business along with his brother in 1890. From a young age, he was a dedicated socialist and became associated with an array of socialist groups, including the Knights of Labour, the Dunedin Fabian Society, and the Dunedin Socialist Party.[518] McCarthy's first contact with Guild Socialism occurred sometime in 1911 via a subscription he had to *The New Age*. From this point forward he became

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[518] J. Vowles, "From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism: Some Neglected Aspects of the Ideology of the labour movement, 1914-1923" in J.E. Martin and K. Taylor (eds), *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History* (Dunmore Press, 1991) p.290

involved in the development of Guild Socialism, joining the National Guilds League within a year of its creation, and corresponding regularly with its offices in London.[519]

McCarthy's connection to the League allowed him access to a wealth of publications about Guild Socialism which he was able to circulate amongst trade unionists in New Zealand. For instance, he was able to acquire by mail-order a dozen copies of Hobson's *National Guilds,* which he forwarded to the "more intellectual of the labour men in New Zealand." In addition, he was also able to use these books to reprint over a thousand copies of individual chapters, which he distributed to trade union halls across the country, in order to create in his own words, "a nucleus for New Zealand Guildsmen to gather round."[520] These efforts led to tangible results as awareness and support for Guild Socialism began to grow in New Zealand. In particular, McCarthy was personally responsible for introducing and converting the trade union leader, Thomas Bloodworth, to Guild Socialism.[521] Bloodworth was an important national figure as president of the Building Trades Federation and secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners Auckland offices. As a result, he assisted McCarthy's efforts by importing large numbers of publications from the League, which were distributed mainly amongst trade unionists in the building industry. Additionally, Bloodworth also authored his own manifesto on Guild Socialism, which he claimed in letters sent to the League was "gleaned from the guild publications" and was also commented upon in *The Guildsman*.[522]

The ability of trade unionists in New Zealand, like McCarthy and Bloodsworth, to acquire such large amounts of publications and maintain regular contact with the League indicates a different reception of Guild Socialism than other cases already discussed in this chapter. In particular, they contrast strongly with other mediators, such as Schumann in Germany, who struggled to afford the cost of importing materials from Britain; or Pór in Italy, who was cut off from communications with the League entirely due to the war. These different patterns of reception point towards the importance of wider conditions that structured connections to the League. In particular the geopolitical structure of the British empire and the differing economic consequences experienced by

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[519] A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, 3.2.1918, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[520] A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, 29.5.1919, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[521] T. Bloodworth to the Nation Guilds League, 19.6.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[522] T. Bloodworth to the Nation Guilds League, 19.6.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; G.W.A. Bush, 'Thomas Bloodworth' *Te Ara: The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* (1998) [Accessed 11 February 2021] https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4b43/bloodworth-thomas/related-biographies

certain regions in response to the First World War. These factors were particularly important in the case of New Zealand and helped to form distinct conditions, which contrast with other regions, that were connected to the local development of Guild Socialism.

Unlike the experience of many European countries, the First World War created an economic boom in New Zealand which also continued into the interwar period. This was connected to the devastating consequences the war had upon European agricultural production, which created a strong demand for exports from New Zealand that benefited the agriculturally focussed economy. Export prices remained high during the war and in the immediate aftermath with the majority of exports claimed by the British government, particularly in the case of meat, wool, butter, and cheese. As a result, the value of agricultural exports to Britain increased progressively jumping from £24 million in 1918-1919 to over £61.1 million in 1920.[523]

The relative strength of the New Zealand economy benefitted trade unionists, like McCarthy, providing them with significant finances. This allowed them to afford to pay the large costs of exchanging letters with the League and to import large numbers of books, newspapers, and pamphlets from Britain. While making no mention of experiencing any financial difficulties in doing so, unlike correspondents elsewhere.[524] As a consequence trade unionists in New Zealand received by far the largest quantity of publications produced by the League sent to any region. In addition, they were also able to find other means to overcome the problem of distance between Britain and New Zealand, such as being able to afford to reprint large qualities of guild socialist publications locally. This meant that circulation could occur even more cheaply and at greater speed instead of simply relying on imports. These factors meant that a much greater array and quantity of publications produced by the League were available for trade unionists to buy locally in New Zealand than anywhere else outside of Britain.[525]

These economic conditions were underscored by the colonial relationship Britain held over New Zealand. This influenced other factors already mentioned in this chapter, such as language and imperial communication systems, which also aided the circulation of Guild Socialism. This latter

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[523] M. McKinnon, 'Post-war Economics (New Zealand)', M. McKinnon, 'Post-war Economics (New Zealand)', (2015) *1914-1918 online International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, [Accessed 12.02.20] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/post-war_economies_new_zealand
[524] *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.
[525] G. Forsyth to the National Guild League, 14.11.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

point was particularly important in this case and helped in conjunction with the favourable local economic situation to allow the communication network around the League to overcome the spatial distance from Britain. In fact, New Zealand's position within the British empire meant that communications between these spaces were much faster, regular, and secure than with other locations. A prime example of this is the comparative time and distance it would normally take a letter to travel from correspondents in different locations to the headquarters of the League in London. In the case of correspondents like Murobuse in Tokyo, it could take as long as three months for a letter to travel the 9.5 thousand kilometres to London, whereas letters sent by McCarthy in Dunedin arrived normally within one or two months after traveling 19 thousand kilometres.[526] This is therefore indicative of the material importance of imperial communication systems to the communication network around the League, which provided faster connections between particular regions.

The difference in communication speed is important and serves to highlight the idea of political space developed by Or Rosenboim. For Rosenboim political space denotes the "theoretical conceptualisation of the geographic materiality of politics", or in other words, the intersection of geographic conditions with political and social order.[527] This idea is useful in this case because it serves to describe the relationship between imperial communications systems and spatial geography. The idea of political space is taken even further by Harvey Starr who highlights the changeability of this relationship by identifying how geopolitical factors, such as empires or wars, provide a structure of opportunities and constraints which serve to alter the relative position of objects in political space.[528] In this case, Britain and New Zealand were brought relatively closer together through imperial ties. While the opposite was true in regard to other cases, such as in the previous account of Ödön Pór when the relative position of Britain and Italy was increased due to the First World War which restricted communications. This point is indicative of how political space could change in relation to the circulation of Guild Socialism and serves to highlight how the communication network around the League was both accelerated and restricted in relation to different geopolitical factors. As a consequence, the circulation of Guild Socialism internationally

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[526] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, May 1920 until August 1922, Letters, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, February 1918 until November 1921, Letters, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.
[527] O. Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United State, 1939-1950* (Princeton University Press, 2017) p.5
[528] H. Starr, 'On Geopolitics: Spaces and Places', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.57 (2013) pp.433-437

can be seen as a profoundly unequal development, which produced different patterns of reception as a consequence.

McCarthy's interaction with the League also serve to highlight another reason for the popularity of Guild Socialism in New Zealand, which was tied to the local strength of the trade union movement. Despite having a relatively small population of just over a million in 1920 and a largely agricultural economy New Zealand possessed per-capita one of the largest populations of unionised labour in the world.[529] The League benefited from this situation and as a result Guild Socialism was particularly popular amongst trade unionists in the mining and building industries.[530] McCarthy was instrumental to this development and helped to drive a deeper wedge into the existing tensions between craft and industrial unionists by assisting in the formation the National Industrial Alliance of Labour in 1919.[531] This industrial union initially brought together a variety of unions including the United Federation of Labour, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, the Waterside Workers' Federation, the Engine Drivers Federation, the Miners Federation, and the Bootmakers' Federation, into a single democratic federated body.[532] Although the Alliance was not explicitly anti-capitalist. Its formation nevertheless represented the growth of industrial unionism, which McCarthy and the League both interpreted as development towards forming a National Guild. In 1921 McCarthy wrote enthusiastically about the Alliance's growing membership to the League which he claimed had reached almost ten thousand and described as having, "been actually changed from craft unionists to industrial unionists, if not to Guildsmen."[533] The League replicated these claims in the *Guildsman* which celebrated the successful growth of Guild Socialism amongst trade unionists in New Zealand alongside similar initiatives elsewhere.[534]

Guild Socialism was not alone in appealing to the relative strength of unionised labour in New Zealand as other international workers' control movements also vied for support. These came particularly from the Americas and as early as 1906 the IWW began to exert influence in New

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[529] E. Olssen, 'The Origins of the Labour Party: A Reconsideration', *New Zealand Journal of History,* Vol. 21, No.2 (1987)

[530] A. Sherwood and J. Phillips, 'Coal and Coal Mining - Mining community' *Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* (2006) [Accessed 8 February 2019] https://teara.govt.nz/en/coal-and-coal-mining

[531] A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, 13.5.1919, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[532] Constitution of the National Industrial Alliance of Labour, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[533] A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, 23.11.1921, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[534] *The Guildsman,* October 1919, p.10; December 1919, pp.8-9; July 1922 pp.7-8.

Zealand supporting arguments for industrial action over political action.[535] The encounter between Guild Socialism and the IWW in New Zealand was not a singular event. Instead, it followed a pattern of interactions around the world, which also occurred in Australia, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, South Africa, and the United States that were reported in *The Guildsman*.[536]

In the case of New Zealand McCarthy provides an excellent vantage point onto this interaction through his association with labour journal, *The Maoriland Worker.* This journal was strongly rooted in working-class culture and blended together European, North American, and Australasian perspectives comfortably into the context of New Zealand.[537] Here McCarthy published several articles about Guild Socialism, which he also sent to the League alongside a detailed account of the competition brewing between trade unionist supporters of the IWW and Guild Socialism.[538] The League received this information and duly recirculated it through *The Guildsman,* which in October 1920 reported;

"There is a good deal of controversy going on just now among industrial documents in New Zealand both as to the proper use of parliamentary action, and as to the question whether the way to the Socialist Commonwealth is through is through the O.B.U. [One Big Union] alone or through something like Guild Socialism. The New Zealand Labour Press is full of arguments on this point, in which our Guild Socialist comrades over there, particularly E.J.B. Allen, are putting up an excellent fight."[539]

Although this report suggests competition between the IWW and the League for the support of trade unionists in New Zealand. In the overwhelming majority of similar cases elsewhere the IWW's One Big Union strategy was perceived by the League as coterminous with their own objectives of establishing National Guilds.[540] In this sense, both organisations can be broadly seen as possessing similar forms of knowledge in terms of their objectives and targeting the same groups, therefore, highlighting considerable overlap in terms of knowledge and spatial reach. Furthermore, attempts to integrate the two indicate an overlapping narrative about the global development of workers'

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[535] H. Roth, 'American Influences on the New Zealand Labour Movement' *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 9, No. 36 (1961) p.416

[536] *The Guildsman,* October 1919, p.10; December 1919, pp.8-9; November 1921, p.8; July 1922 pp.7-8; J. Smart, 'Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall Commune in Melbourne, 1917' *Labour History*, No. 94 (May, 2008) pp. 113-132

[537] J. Vowles, *From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism* p.284

[538] A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, 11.12.1919, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.

[539] *The Guildsman*, October 1920, p.9

[540] *The Guildsman,* October 1919, p.10; December 1919, pp.8-9; November 1921, p.8; July 1922 pp.7-8

control movements. This involved the communication network around the League and local trade unionists like McCarthy, who became important mediators of information and knowledge as a consequence.

3.3.2. Martin Wagner

Martin Wagner serves as another example of a trade unionist who worked to extend the communication network around the League by integrating it both locally in Germany and internationally. Born in Königsberg, Eastern Prussia, Wagner trained as an architect and city planner at the Technische Hochschule Berlin. He completed his doctorate in 1915 and became commissioner of city planning for the Berlin district of Schöneberg in 1918. At the end of the war, Wagner worked alongside other trade unionists in Berlin to found a new building workers union the Verband sozialer Baubetriebe (VSB) in 1920. The VSB was explicitly anti-capitalist and aimed to remove the influence of capitalist middlemen from the building industry and towards constructing working-class housing, which defied imperial and bourgeoise expectations by fusing socialist politics and architecture.[541] Funded directly by other trade unions, the VSB used its resources towards developing propaganda in the form of books, newspapers, pamphlets, and lectures aimed towards converting the rest of the building industry towards socialism.[542] In order to do this, the VSB proposed a strategy for the formation of a new kind of local institution called Bauhütte, which would serve to organise building workers locally along industrial lines.[543]

News of these developments was reported to the National Guilds League in letters sent by Wagner that were published in the organisations' newspaper in 1923. Here the League actively tied Wagner and the VSB's efforts into its own international narrative translating 'Bauhütte' directly from German into 'Building Guilds' in English and presenting Wagner's account of developments in Germany alongside other similar cases of trade union organisations woven together about the global development of Guild Socialism.[544] This development was not without precedent as an early article published by the League in 1922 entitled, 'The Building Guild Movement in Germany', had already claimed that the term Bauhütte was a medieval German equivalent for building guilds.[545] The belief

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[541] D.T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progress Age* (Harvard University Press, 1998) p.368
[542] *The Guild Socialist* No.77 June 1923 pp.9-10;
[543] *Bauhüttenarbeit*, Pamphlet, Miscellaneous Items, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[544] *The Guild Socialist,* June 1923 pp.9-10; August 1923 pp.10-11; M. Wagner, *Die Deutschen Bauhütten*, Pamphlet, Miscellaneous Items, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
[545] *The Guild Socialist,* May 1922, p.8

in this equivalence was not restricted to writers working for the League. Indeed according to Jörn Janssen, this connection was assumed well into the 1930s, particularly amongst German academics who continued to falsely believe that Guild Socialism had played a role in the formation of what became known as the Bauhütten-Bewegung (Bauhütten Movement) and that its name specifically was derived from this source.[546]

This synchronicity was clearly useful to the League which was able to use it to justify the importance of its cause in its own publications. However, it is also indicative of a major misreading of the situation in Germany. In reality, although the VBS shared clear traits with the League, such as the creation of anti-capitalist propaganda, the promotion of new trade union institutions, and a generally peaceful approach to relations with the state. The VSB was also substantially different because it was in fact in terms of its aims a conventional social-democratic trade union. Therefore it did not share the same vision of completely remaking society, or instituting industrial democracy. Instead, the VSB restricted its vision to the desire to improve the quality of housing, rents, and working condition. Clear evidence of this is found in the large number of publications produced by the VSB often written and sent by Wagner to the League (See Figures 14 and 15).[547] Additionally, it is important to understand the character of VSB in relation to the general position of trade unions in Germany at this point. In particular, it is important to note the generally conservative attitude of German trade unions in response to the 1918 German Revolution and the overwhelming support they gave towards the newly elected social-democratic government instead of more radical communist or syndicalist alternatives. Furthermore, the general refusal of German trade unionists to take serious political action until 1920 when they successfully defended the government through the use of a general strike against the Kapp Putsch.[548] Indicates general support for the social democratic collectivist vision of socialism, which the newly democratic government in Germany also represented. Rather than the guild socialist vision of workers' control which the League promoted.

The decision by the National Guilds League to reinterpret the information it received from Wagner is again indicative of the importance of translation knowledge to the circulation of Guild Socialism.

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[546] J. Janssen, 'Produktion und Konsum von Wohnungen sozialisieren? Der Verband sozialer Baubetriebe und die Deutsche Wohnungsfürsorge AG für Beamte, Angestellte und Arbeiter' in *Martin Wagner 1885-1957: Wohnungsbau und Weltstadtplanung Die Rationalisierung des Glücks* (Berlin: Hartmann, 1985) p.30

[547] M. Wager to the National Guilds League, 4.5.1923, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library; M. Wagner, *Die Deutschen Bauhütten*, Pamphlet, Miscellaneous Items, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK; M. Wagner, *Alte oder Neue Bauwirtschaft* (Berlin, Vorwärts-Buchdruckerei. 1923).

[548] A. Tooze, *Deluge* p.319

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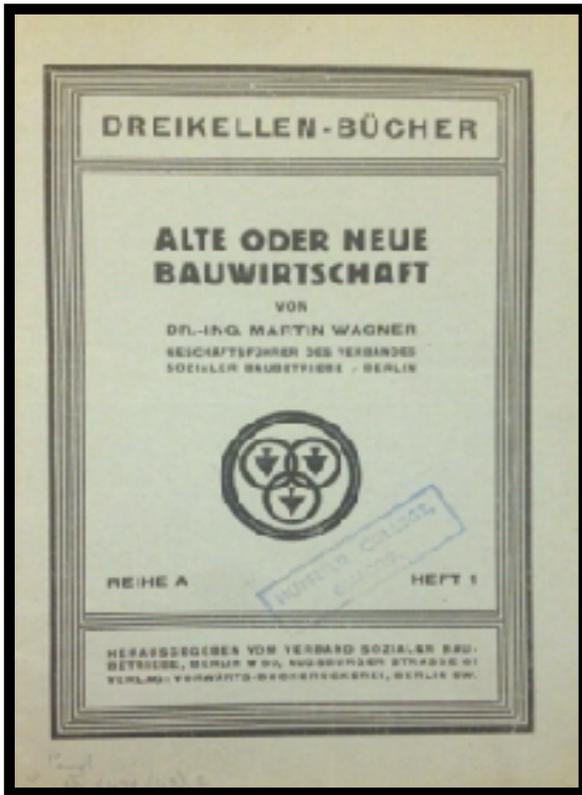
Figure 14   Figure 15

Figures 5 and 6 depict examples of the numerous leaflets and pamphlets sent by Martin Wagner to the National Guilds
League which he personally authored.
Source: Miscellaneous Items, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library, Oxford.

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This is especially true given the clear ability of members of the League to understand and translate between German and English as already discussed in relation to Eva Schumann. In this sense, the decision to reinterpret Wagner's work can be interpreted as what Sho Konishi describes as a strategic act of translation whereby historical actors creatively reinterpret meanings in order to evoke transnational feelings of "sympathy, camaraderie, common experience and shared indignation".[549] This is a convincing way to understand why the League incorporated the information it received from Wagner into its own narrative and serves as another telling example of intellectual synchronicity. What is even more interesting is that at the same time, a similar process was happening in reverse as Wagner also began a process of writing Guild Socialism into his own context in relation to the growth of trade unionism internationalism.

In October 1922 Wagner helped to establish the Internationalen Baugildenverband (International Federation of Building Guilds - IB). This new organisation brought together building trade unions from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungry, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands and

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[549] S. Konishi, *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan* (Harvard University Press, 2013) pp.15-16

would later grow to include unions from Palestine, Spain, and Sweden, and delegates from Belgium, Britain, and France.[550] The function of the IB was to create an international body responsible for providing information about the building industry, establish stable economic bonds between different national unions, and create propaganda for the purpose of encouraging socialism in the building industry.[551] Wagner was quickly elected to the position of secretary of the IB placing him largely in control of the organisation. Soon after his appointment he began to correspond regularly with the League and attempt to foster a closer institutional relationship. This was especially clear in one essay he sent to the League, which was subsequently translated and republished in *The Guildsman*, where Wagner outlined his vision of how Guild Socialism could be integrated within the international framework the IB provided.

"Building Guilds from Italy, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Luxembourg, Holland and Germany are affiliated to this federation. If it were possible to persuade the English guilds to join together internationally, the guild idea would be able to advance more strongly to the benefit of the other countries and, behind the front of the workers' councils, trade unions and political parties, would lead mankind to the goal of its desires, fighting and winning."[552]

For Wagner Guild Socialism represented "a new socialism in form and content" which could be used by the IB in order to surpass prewar international cooperation that had ultimately failed to prevent the First World War, and was reflected in the rising numbers of elected socialist parliamentarians and the increasing power of trade unions.[553] This understanding indicates the wider context, which helped to bring the IB into existence, and highlights the trend amongst most postwar socialists towards state alignment, either in reformist or revolutionary terms.[554] In this sense, Wagner identified most clearly with corporatist Guild Socialism, which was similar to his own social-democratic position that sought a new postwar compromise between the state and organised labour.

Wagner's efforts to integrate Guild Socialism were not only restricted to intellectual synchronicity as he also sought to solidify institutional ties with the League in other ways. In early 1923 he requested the League send members to participate in a two-day celebration of the fourth

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[550] *The Guild Socialist,* December 1922, p.9
[551] *The Guild Socialist*, November, 1922 p.5-6
[552] M.Wagner, *Die Deutschen Bauhütten*, Essay, Miscellaneous Items, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library; *The Guild Socialist*, June 1923, p.10
[553] *New Standards*, March 1924 pp.147-150
[554] D. Blaazer, *Guild Socialism and the Historians* p.10

Bauhüttentag (Bauhütte Day) and the third Internationaler Baugildentag (International Building Guild Day).[555] Soon after he proposed establishing a newspaper exchange between *The Guildsman* and the VSB's newspaper, *Soziale Bauwirtschaft* and for information regarding the "englischen Gilden" (English Guilds) to be sent to the IB on a regular basis.[556] These requests were also coated with friendly and persuasive language and peppered with phrases, such as "mit internationalen Grüssen!" (with international greetings) and "mit gildensozialistische(n) Grüsse!" (with guild socialist greetings) to further entice the League into collaboration.[557]

The League promptly agreed to these exchanges and began to send and receive letters, newspapers and pamphlets on a regular basis from Wagner's office at the IB headquarters in Berlin, as well as with other representatives some of whom were already familiar with Guild Socialism, such as the IB secretary in Vienna, Otto Neurath.[558] Under Wagner's direction the IB soon began to produce its own newspaper from its offices in Berlin the *Internationale Gildenkorrespondenz,* (See Figure 16) which similarly to *The Guildsman*, began to report on the progress of the various national trade union movements and relabelled them as part of larger 'Gildenbewegung' (Guild Moment). For example, in March 1924 the paper reported that an Iranian trade union, Ustica, had joined together with a French engineering guild in order to assist them with technical knowledge for the production of hydroelectric power, canals, and drinking water infrastructure.[559] By the early summer of 1923 Guild Socialism appeared to have been fully integrated into the makeup of the IB. This was especially clear in a report from a conference held in Hamburg on the 28th of May where various

Figure 16
Source: *Internationale Gildenkorrespondenz,* 15 March 1924, p.1

[555] M. Wager to the National Guilds League, 4.5.1923, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library
[556] M. Wagner to the National Guilds League, 9.6.1923, Letter, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library.
[557] M. Wagner to the National Guilds League, 20.6.1923, Letter, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library.
[558] *The Guild Socialist*, November, 1922 p.5-6
[559] *Internationale Gildenkorrespondenz*, 15 March 1924 p.1

delegates made frequent references to Guild Socialism in Britain. In particular, Swedish delegates reported having been inspired by careful study of both the British and German building guilds models, while the Palestinian delegates criticised the lack progress the IB had made since its formation and explicitly argued that the "cause of the stagnation was the crisis in the English Guild Movement".[560]

The apparent success of Wagner's efforts to integrate Guild Socialism into the IB are again indicative of processes intellectual synchronicity and material infrastructure. These allowed for wider circulation of information and knowledge about Guild Socialism. In this case, both Wagner and the League were actively involved in integrating Guild Socialism into the context of the Bauhütten-Bewegung. This was constituted through the exchange of propaganda, information and people, which was made possible by the postal system and the possibility to travel between Britain and Germany after the war. They are also indicative of a particular historical moment when similar efforts were underway to reconstruct trade union internationalism after the First World War. These developments followed wide spread disappointment felt by many socialists in response to the failure of trade unions to prevent the war.[561] Alongside the IB other organisations including the International Labour Office and the International Association for Labour Legislation sought similar objectives and also established close intellectual ties with the National Guilds League.[562] As a result, this context provided a clear opportunity for Guild Socialism to circulate widely amongst trade unionists like Wagner who were keen to take part in the revival of trade unionism internationalism.

Trade unionists like Wagner and McCarthy were therefore instrumental in the communication network that developed around the League. They worked to increase the circulation of publications produced by the League and integrate knowledge about Guild Socialism into both national and international trade union organisations. As a result, new meanings were attached to Guild Socialism, which reflected local circumstances and increasingly helped to dispel the idea of the subject as nationally bound to Britain. In fact, they actively helped to develop it into an international force.

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[560] *The Guild Socialist*, June 1923, p.10
[561] E. Marcobelli, 'Pre-war Socialist Pacifism' (2018) *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 14.08.20] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/pre-war_socialist_pacifism
[562] International Labour Office to the National Guilds League, June-October 1921, Letters, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library; International Association for Labour Legislation to the National Guilds League, 10.3.1923, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.

Conclusion

In 1922 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gave the following definition of Guild Socialism. "Guild Socialism, the name given to a school of socialist of thought which originated in England early in the 20th century, and has since spread to other parts of the world, particularly to the English-speaking countries—the United States, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa—and to Japan."[563] Although this definition captures some extent of the scale of the international appeal of Guild Socialism during the early twentieth century. It fails to highlight the much broader scope and complexity of the international circulation of this subject. These are revealed throughout the course of this chapter and the attention paid to the communication network that developed around the National Guilds League. This brings to light the important role played by knowledge and knowledge systems that influenced the meanings tied to Guild Socialism.

The international circulation of Guild Socialism reveals a number of important factors which defined the subject. In particular, it highlights a diverse cast of middle-class and working-class men and women who interacted with the National Guilds League as part of a communication network. Highly educated middle-class men and women like Jessie Hughan in the United States and Murobuse Takanobu in Japan engaged with the League alongside working-class trade unionists like Arthur McCarthy in New Zealand thereby demonstrating the broad appeal of Guild Socialism across class and gender lines. This also reflected the makeup of the National Guilds League, therefore, serving to reinforce the argument that Guild Socialism was not solely the product of middle-class male intellectuals in Britain. In fact, a variety of different kinds of actors engaged with the subject and helped to develop it through their interactions with the League. This is not to suggest that inequalities did not exist in terms of class and gender. Middle-class actors like Murobuse Takanobu were certainly able to enhance their connections to the National Guilds League through access to greater finances. While sexism also restricted the involvement of women like Eva Schumann towards the circulation of Guild Socialism. However, these examples do not exclude the point made in this chapter that a large variety of women and working-class trade unionists also engaged with Guild Socialism and helped to circulate the subject internationally.

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[563] G.D.H. Cole, 'Guild Socialism' *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 12th Edition (1922) [Accessed 17.02.20] https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1922_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Guild_Socialism

Structural forces mediate the international circulation of Guild Socialism producing stronger and weaker connections between local actors and the National Guilds League. In this regard, the consequences of the First World War and conditions set by empires, in particular the British empire, were especially important determinators of the scale and intensity of these connections. For example, particularly strong connections existed between the League and trade unionists in New Zealand like Arthur McCarthy. These were partly the result of the close colonial relationship this location shared with Britain which meant that both locations shared English as a common language. Given that English was the primary language used by the League this made the circulation of its publications in New Zealand particularly easy in comparison to non-English speaking regions. Similarly, the existence of an imperial communication system that bound the British metropole to New Zealand also enhanced the circulation of Guild Socialism. Ensuring rapid and reliable communications between the two locations via postal services, trains and steamships that brought them closer together in terms of political space. Likewise, in Japan Murobuse Takanobu also similarly benefited from his relative position in Tokyo which sat at the heart of an imperial communication system and aided his connection to the League through an inter-imperial connection with Britain. For McCarthy, the economic boom in New Zealand caused by the First World War aided his situation by strengthening the position of trade unionists. Allowing them to afford to order large quantities of publications produced by the League in Britain and even produce their own copies domestically. Thereby allowing information about Guild Socialism to circulate widely in New Zealand and overcome significant material costs and spatial barriers which hampered circulation elsewhere.

In comparison other regions physically located much closer to Britain than Japan and New Zealand experienced much weaker connections to the League due to the same structural factors. In particular, the war restricted communications and created volatile economic and political conditions in its aftermath. As a result in Italy, Ödön Pór found himself cut off entirely from the development of Guild Socialism which he had been previously connected with until communications were normalised again in 1918. Likewise in Germany Eva Schumann suffered like many other correspondents in Europe due to the economic downturn after the war that made affording to communicate with the National Guilds League and acquiring its publications prohibitively expensive. Additionally, the lack of a shared language like English between Britain, Italy, and Germany owing to the weaker European influence of the British empire presented an additional barrier to the circulation of Guild Socialism in these locations. This made translators like Schumann

and Pór essential and also helps to partly explain why Guild Socialism didn't become more popular in these locations. The differences between these cases in relation to structural factors, therefore, help to reveal the unevenness of the international circulation of Guild Socialism. This indicates that despite the obvious increase in the scale of circulation that the communication network facilitated it was not a uniform process.

Forms of knowledge were also vital to forging connections which aided the circulation of Guild Socialism. In particular, they helped to create examples of intellectual synchronicity which provided pathways for Guild Socialism to be introduced into new contexts. This is clearly demonstrated in relation to translation knowledge in the case of Eva Schumann who formed a connection between Guild Socialism and Council Communism in Germany which led to more famous figures like Otto Neurath to also engage with the subject. Similarly, Ödön Pór was also instrumental in forming connections with syndicalism and fascism in Italy through his work as a translator. In other cases knowledge relating to Guild Socialism was also appropriated by actors which also served to widen the circulation of the subject. The case of Martin Wagner and the Internationalen Baugildenverband is a clear indication of this point. As a result knowledge and its appropriation both contributed towards the expansion of the circulation of Guild Socialism.

In combination with these efforts, material communication systems also helped to extend the circulation of Guild Socialism acting as conduits for knowledge and information. These transported objects and people which carried Guild Socialism far beyond Britain. Journalists like Murobuse Takanobu and Jessie Hughan were particularly instrumental in this way and connected the National Guilds League to a series of existing press networks. These networks circulated information and knowledge relating to Guild Socialism through newspapers and magazines, such as *Hihyo* and *The Intercollegiate Socialist,* that brought their audiences into contact with the subject. This was also clearly demonstrated by trade unionists involved in the communication network like Arthur McCarthy and Martin Wagner who worked to popularise Guild Socialism amongst other trade unionists through newspapers, such as *The Maoriland Worker* and *Internationale Gildenkorrespondenz.* As such the efforts of these actors reveal how the international circulation of Guild Socialism involved a combination of intellectual synchronicities and material infrastructure. By considering both of these factors in combination this chapter helps to demonstrate how the circulation of Guild Socialism and other ideas more generally must be considered in this way. Therefore serving to highlight the point that both material and intellectual dimensions are vital to

the transmission of ideas. Furthermore, in the specific case of Guild Socialism, it helps to reveal how this subject was not simply the product of actors located in Britain. Instead, it reveals how Guild Socialism was the product of a variety of actors located around the world who interacted with the National Guilds League and contributed in different ways towards the construction of Guild Socialism.

Differences in the reception of Guild Socialism highlight the multiplicity of meanings associated with this subject. These indicate the various forms of knowledge attached to this idea and the knowledge system which produced them within the National Guilds League. Correspondents with the League appropriated these meanings and used them to suit their own needs and local contexts. For example, the medievalist meaning of Guild Socialism was clearly important to Murobuse Takanobu and Ödön Pór who used this understanding to form connections with medieval guilds in Italy and the broader reception of William Morris in Japan. In contrast, the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism was taken up by Jessie Hughan in the United States and Martin Wagner in Germany as a means to form connections with local discussions about workers' control and the prospects of international trade unionism. Elsewhere the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism allowed other actors like Arthur McCarthy and Eva Schumann to draw parallels independently with syndicalist elements of the labour movements in New Zealand and Germany. This variety of receptions highlights the role of the National Guilds League as an institutional carrier for a knowledge system that produced multiple meanings which became associated with Guild Socialism. This role is particularly clearly identifiable in relation to the large number of publications the League helped to produce which often confused international correspondents and led to divergent and sometimes hybridised understandings of Guild Socialism. In other cases, it also produced shifting understandings, such as in the case of Ödön Pór who moved between all three meanings of Guild Socialism within the course of only a few years.

These different and sometimes shifting receptions also indicate the range of motives correspondents with the League possessed. The overwhelming majority individuals were motivated by existing political commitments to forms of socialism, such as McCarthy, Hughan, Schumann, and Wagner, which shaped their understanding of Guild Socialism and how they connected it to their own circumstances. In these cases, Guild Socialism became a means towards advancing socialist ideas of workers' control and industrial democracy on different national and international levels. Others like Murobuse were motivated by a blend of political and aesthetic considerations, which drew them

towards Guild Socialism indicating the subjects' lineage to romantic socialism. Some actors such as Pór even indicate the combination of social, political, and economic motivations behind their interest in Guild Socialism. Including shifting political allegiances, elevating one's social position, and making money, which all played a role in the circulation of Guild Socialism. Ultimately this range of motivations helps to indicate the different forms of value correspondents placed upon the knowledge relating to Guild Socialism produced by the League.

Finally, it is important to note the effects that the correspondence network had upon the National Guilds League and the knowledge system which defined Guild Socialism. The circulation and recirculation of information about the local development of Guild Socialism around the world reorientated the League increasingly away from its initial national focus on Britain, and towards a broader international context. Guilds at Home and Abroad serves as a particularly telling example of this change which highlights the range of different national and international perspectives about Guild Socialism that the League began to now incorporate. The reportage on the formation of local adjuncts to the League, such as the National Guilds League of Japan, the Commonwealth Guilds League, and the National Guilds League of South Africa all serve to highlight this point. Furthermore, the coverage in publications like *The Guildsman* on the development of the Plumb Plan in the United States and the Bauhütten-Bewegung in Germany further indicates how information, which was recirculated to the National Guilds League was helping to produce new knowledge in Britain about the international advancement of Guild Socialism. This was also reinforced by contact between the League and other socialist organisations like the IWW, which shared overlapping knowledge relating to workers' control and helped to contribute to an overlapping narrative about the global development of workers' control movements. As such the knowledge system within the League was reorientated due to the influence of the correspondence network towards an increasingly international focus. The result of this transformation would have important consequences for the League, which will be explored in the next chapter, as the organisation attempted to negotiate a new landscape defined by post-war reconstruction.

Chapter Three: Redefining Reconstruction

In July 1918 Samuel Hobson published an article in *The Guildsman* about the international prospects of Guild Socialism after the First World War. According to Hobson, in the aftermath of the war Guild Socialism would have a good chance of emerging out of the "world-tumult of ideas" stronger than ever before and could become influential, "not only in Glasgow but in Berlin, not only in New York but in Tokyo".[564] In part, Hobson's optimism was premised on the vast communication network which linked the activities of the National Guilds League in Britain to members located around the world discussed in the previous chapter. However, as Hobson argued the future of Guild Socialism was also based on its fortunes in Britain. Or as he put it, "as the Guild idea has first taken root in Great Britain, it is our responsibility to justify it in theory and practice before we can offer it to other countries. And the sooner we prove its social and economic value, the sooner we shall find friends and disciples beyond the seven seas."[565]

Hobson's optimistic assessment of the potential future of Guild Socialism after the war and the importance of the British context to this development were largely correct. In fact, during the early years of the interwar period was when Guild Socialism reached its zenith. Numerous National Guilds were established alongside smaller local guilds across a range of industries in Britain which were celebrated by the League and international affiliates alike. These developments were accompanied by growing support for policies related to workers' control among trade unionists in Britain, which the National Guilds League sought to capitalise on and connect to a broader international context. Accompanying these positive steps were also more maline developments. The National Guilds League found itself increasingly divided as rival forms of knowledge increasingly came into conflict within the knowledge system the institution contained. This conflict caused a realignment of the knowledge system and very nearly destroyed the League in the process. All of these developments were intimately tied to the conditions set by the end of the First World War and the beginnings of post-war reconstruction.[566] As a result, a dual sense of crisis and optimism that defined the interwar period generally can also be seen to have particularly characterised the experiences of the League during this moment.

The idea of crisis and opportunity reflects how many historians have characterised the interwar period. Calamitists, like Eric Hobsbawm have famously painted this period as part of the "Age of

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[564] *The Guildsman,* July 1918, pp.2-3
[565] *The Guildsman*, July 1918, p.3
[566] A.J. Williams, ''Reconstruction' before the Marshall Plan' *Review of International Studies*,Vol. 31, No. 3 (2005), pp. 541- 558

Catastrophe", while Robert Overy similarly described the interwar years as the "era of crisis".[567] Hindsight of the upcoming Second World War is not the only explanation for these conclusions as contemporaries writing during the 1920s and 1930s also came to similar conclusions. The historian Edward Carr expressed similar sentiments about the lack of stability following the First World War in his book, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939).[568] Likewise, the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci gave an analogous diagnosis written from his prison cell in Turi. Here he famously claimed, "[t]he crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."[569] Gramsci's words particularly clearly highlight an intertwined sense of crisis and opportunity associated with the inter-war years. In his own case, this was embedded in a belief in the ascendence of left-wing forces around the world after the 1917 Russian Revolutions. However, it is also clear that this attitude extended across the political spectrum as right-wing nationalist and imperial forces also seized this moment to launch bold new projects.[570] Similarly, the sense of opportunity around this period has also motivated historians to present this period as a laboratory of ideas, which mixed together hopes and fears with the modernist impulse towards constructing better futures. This has resulted in works, such as Sheri Berman's account of the successful spread of social democratic politics during this period and Adam Tooze's analysis of efforts to build a new global order in the aftermath of the war.[571]

This wider context of crises and opportunities mediated the development of Guild Socialism during the interwar period and has also been reflected upon by scholars. For instance, Michael Freeden has argued that during this period Guild Socialism became "the great post-war vogue in British political thought", while Luther Carpenter has argued that, "the radical atmosphere of reconstruction which grew out of the war made the N.G.L. prominent for a short time."[572] This analysis highlights a similar connection between the fortunes of Guild Socialism and the end of the First World War that Hobson prophesied. In order to extend this analysis further this chapter draws attention to two additional factors which affected the growth of Guild Socialism during the period. The first is an appreciation for the wider international context of reconstruction which was connected to

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[567] E. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (Penguin, 1995) p.7; R. Overly, *The Inter-War Crisis, 1919-1939* (Routledge, 2014) p.18

[568] E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (Palgrave, 2016)

[569] A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1971) p.276.

[570] H. Macdonald, *Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Nelson Thornes, 1999) p.20; B.J.C. McKercher, 'The Politics of Naval Arms Limitation in Britain in the 1920s' *Diplomacy and Statecraft,* Vol. 4, No.3 (1993) pp.35-59; M. Goebel, 'Decentering the German Spirit: The Weimar Republic's Cultural Relations with Latin America' *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol.44, No.2 (2009) pp.221-245; L. Hume, *The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies 1897-1914* (Routledge, 1982) p.281

[571] S. Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment: Ideas and Politics in the Making of Interwar Europe* (Harvard University Press, 2009); A. Tooze, *The Deluge* (Penguin, 2015)

[572] M. Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought 1914-1939* (Clarendon Press, 1986) pp.66-68; L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 1973) p.32

circumstances in Britain. In this sense, this analysis goes beyond Carpenter and Freeden's assessments which are focussed on Guild Socialism in the context of reconstruction in Britain by connecting this context to a broader international context. This addition serves to continue two of the overarching arguments of this thesis about how Guild Socialism was produced in relation to various locations connected to Britain and by a wide cast of historical actors. The second consideration this chapter adds to existing scholarship on this subject is an acknowledgment of the role of knowledge and knowledge systems. This helps to explain why internal tensions developed within the National Guilds League and also serves as a means to understand why international actors became involved with the League during the period. As such this argument also connects to another broader argument of this thesis which foregrounds the importance of the category of knowledge and knowledge systems in order to understand the development of Guild Socialism and the National Guilds League. In order to explore these concerns, this chapter is guided by the central question: why did Guild Socialism flourish in the context of interwar reconstruction?

To answer this question this chapter is divided into three parts. Part One examines the broader context of reconstruction by highlighting some of the numerous social, economic, and political consequences of the war. It then zooms in on the particular circumstances in Britain and highlights how the government engaged with reconstruction through a series of reforms designed to seize potential opportunities and avert growing crises. These initiatives were not entirely unique. In fact, they closely resembled proposals made elsewhere in response to similar circumstances during the inter-war period. As a result, the British case can therefore be seen to constitute one part of a pattern of responses taken towards the questions raised by reconstruction.

Part Two evaluates how the National Guilds League responded to this new context and the reforms proposed by the government. These responses brought tensions over the different meanings of Guild Socialism into clear focus as the structure of the knowledge system within the League began to change. This led to a polarised situation within the League as different types of knowledge fought for dominance. As a consequence of this struggle, knowledge relating to the corporatist and medievalist meanings of Guild Socialism shifted into a weaker position within the knowledge system. While knowledge relating to the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism now became dominant. This shift very nearly destroyed the League and serves to highlight the intertwined reality of opportunities and crises which characterised the interwar period.

Part Three considers the emergence of the building guilds which became the most impressive symbols of Guild Socialism in action. These guilds came into existence alongside a host of others

and at the same time that it appeared the National Guilds League might fail. Therefore further emphasising the sense of crisis and opportunity which defined the interwar period. The progress of the building guilds was closely followed by observers in Britain and internationally, these produced a number of responses that contributed to the growing international reception of Guild Socialism. These responses highlight the broader global context of reconstruction in relation to the building guilds. Furthermore, they help to reveal the different connections and comparisons which were formed by historical actors interested in the building guilds.

4.1. Reconstruction

The meaning of reconstruction took different forms around the world which reflected the variety of conditions produced by the First World War. Across Europe an array of political and economic problems confronted governments. In France, the Ministry of Armaments was hastily reformed into the Ministry of Industrial Reconstruction in November 1918 which attempted to demobilise the wartime economy. However, in this case an easy return to the prewar liberal economic status quo proved impossible, due to the high cost of reintegrating returning soldiers into the economy which led to rising taxes, high inflation, and currency instability.[573] A similarly unstable economic situation also developed in neighbouring Belgium where the total cost of reconstruction was estimated to be in the region of 36 billion Belgian francs. This figure was based on damage done to industry and transportation infrastructure following the German occupation that led to a serious decline in productivity and rises in food scarcity.[574] Meanwhile in central Europe governments in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Hungary confronted revolutionary movements that emerged after the war. In response, a mixture of military repression and reforms was used by governments in order to outmanoeuvre their opponents. This led social-democratic politicians like Friedrich Ebert in Germany and Otto Bauer in Austria to attempt to tame capitalism in order to avoid revolution. As such, they argued that reforms could be just radical as a revolution, while also being cheaper and less socially dangerous.[575]

Outside of Europe reconstruction took on radically different meanings in response to different consequences caused by the war. In North America, the United States experienced a brief postwar

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[573] G. Barry, 'Demobilization' (2018) *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 06.07.20] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/demobilization?version=1.0

[574] D. Luyten, 'Post-war Economies (Belgium)' (2014) *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 14.07.20] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/post-war_economies_belgium

[575] E. Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates. Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1994) p. 275.

depression between 1919-1920, which gave way to the cultural and economic vibrancy of the Roaring Twenties.[576] In South Africa, the booming wartime economy increased productivity and created a burgeoning housing market as urban centres expanded.[577] In contrast, Australia suffered a severe economic decline which saw its gross domestic product drop sharply by 9.5 percent between 1914 and 1920. This led to rising prices and unemployment, alongside a decline in living standards that prompted social and industrial conflict throughout the 1920s.[578] Meanwhile, in Russia, the First World War stimulated two revolutions in 1917 and quickly morphed into a civil war that lasted until 1922 when the Soviet Union emerged fuelling efforts to reconstruct the entire society along socialist lines.[579]

In Britain, the debate over what form reconstruction should take began even before the war officially ended in 1918. In 1917 the Ministry of Reconstruction was established to address a range of issues including, labour relations, housing, and unemployment, which had been dramatically transformed by the war and now according to the government posed a serious threat to national stability.

Labour relations in Britain were a growing priority for the government since before the war, as discussed in chapter one in relation to the Great Unrest.[580] Tensions were temporally forestalled by the war which produced a compromise between the government and trade unions in order to maintain the wartime economy. This compromise was partly formed out of the increased demand for labour, which strengthened the position of trade unions allowing them to secure higher rates of pay. Additionally, most unions were also supportive of the war and considered political recognition of their patriotism as essential to advancing the goals of the labour movement and winning the war simultaneously.[581] Furthermore, in an effort to quell industrial action the government introduced the Defence of the Realm Act in 1914, which censored dissent, and the Munitions of War Act in 1915, that restricted the ability of trade unions to use strike action. Crucially, this legislation was passed only after an agreement was reached with trade unions and employers to ban strikes and lockouts and instead negotiate conflicts through special industrial courts. This settlement allowed the British

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[576] K.A. Kerr, *American Railroad Politics 1914-1920: Rates, Wages, Efficiency* (University of Pittsburg Press, 1968) pp.160-173

[577] L.van der Walt, 'Anarchism and Syndicalism in South Africa 1904 to 1924', PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand (2007) p.380

[578] I.W. McLean, *Why Australia Prospered: The Shifting Sources of Economic Growth* (Princeton 2013) pp.147-148

[579] S. Malle, *The Economic Organization of War Communism, 1918-1921* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp.495-514

[580] O. Tead, 'The British Reconstruction Programs'*, Political Science Quarterly* Vol.33. No.1 (1918) p.56

[581] J. Thompson, 'Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes' (2017) *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 22.03.21] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/labour_movements_trade_unions_and_strikes

economy to be restructured in order to protect and increase productivity in industries key to the war effort, such as engineering and munitions. Furthermore, it also benefited workers who were able to profit by moving to work in these now increasingly vital industries.[582]

Despite this new compromise between labour and the state pockets of worker militancy persisted. The Shop Stewards Movement emerged in 1915 around radical shop stewards who organised large strikes in Glasgow and Sheffield often in the engineering sector. This resistance was directed against the perceived weakening of trade unions position which the new compromise suggested. In response to the strikes, the government took aggressive steps to repress the shop stewards by often forcing militant leaders to move from one city to another in an attempt to weaken their influence over rank-and-file trade unionists. The introduction of conscription in 1916 also weakened labour militancy as more trade unionists were forced out of factories and into the armed forces. In spite of these efforts, resistance continued thereby emphasising the need for a permanent solution to the question of labour relations once the war was finished.[583] This issue was further stressed in 1917 with the success of the Bolshevik revolution which was widely celebrated by the British Left.[584] Despite the government's urgent need to find a solution to managing labour relations, no easy answer was insight. As a consequence, Christopher Godden has labeled the postwar period between 1919 and 1926 as "the most contentious in British industrial history."[585]

Compounded with the need to find a solution to the question of labour relations the British government was also confronted by another problem, a growing housing crisis. The issue of housing in Britain had begun to escalate since before the war when on average between 80-100 thousand new homes were required annually to meet demand. However, due to the rising costs of building materials, employers in the building industry increasingly began to hire cheaper non-unionised workers in order to offset the added cost. This led to nationwide strikes by building trade unions and a national housing shortage of between 100-120 thousand homes on the eve of the war.[586] Once the war began the government identified a link between insufficient housing and the continuation of labour militancy and took steps to mitigate it. Famously this resulted in the

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[582] C. Wrigley, 'Labour, Labour Movements, Trade Unions and Strikes (Great Britain and Ireland)' (2015) *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 19.07.20] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/labour_labour_movements_trade_unions_and_strikes_great_britain_and_ireland

[583] M. Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* (Oxford University Press, 2006) pp.96-97

[584] M. Durham, 'British Revolutionaries and the Suppression of the Left in Lenin's Russia, 1918-1924' *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 20, No. 2, (1985), pp. 203

[585] C. Godden, 'Post-war Economies (Great Britain and Ireland)' (2017) *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 20.07.20] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/post-war_economies_great_britain_and_ireland?version=1.0

[586] C.S. Joslyn, "The British Building Guilds: A Critical Survey of Two Years' Work" *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1922) pp.76-78

introduction of the Rent and Mortgage Interest Act in 1915, which restricted increases in rent and interest rates on mortgages for the duration of the war. This legislation came largely in response to rent strikes started by working-class women in Glasgow between 1914-1915 as landlords sought to capitalise on the large influx of workers into the city attracted by the demand for labour in the engineering and munitions industries.[587] These strikes spread to other working-class communities across the country and at their height involved some 20,000 people.[588] Despite government action to curb this problem, this legislation did not address the underlying housing shortage and by the end of the war, the housing deficit reached half-a-million homes.[589] As a result, the Liberal prime minister, Lloyd George, was forced to address the situation directly and make his famous guarantee of "Homes fit for Heroes" the day after the Armistice as payment to the population for the hardship of the war.[590] Despite making this promise it was not immediately clear how the government would deliver on this commitment. Especially, because neither the public or the private sector had the ability to build the necessary stock of houses quickly enough to prevent the housing deficit from becoming even greater.

Alongside the twin crises of labour relations and a housing deficit, another spectre loomed large in postwar Britain. The risk of mass unemployment threatened economic depression and even revolution in Britain. This possibility was intimately tied to the need to reduce the national deficit and demobilise the wartime economy, which had prioritised high levels of employment during the war. Famously, the war created a dramatic surge of women who flowed into the labour market and into industries traditionally dominated by men, which contributed to a rapid increase in trade union membership from 4.1 million in 1914 to over 6.5 million by 1918.[591] Similarly, men were also employed on mass in the armed forces which expanded from around 400,000 professional soldiers in 1914 to 4.5 million men in 1918.[592] This expansion of labour power was made possible through extensive government investment paid for largely by credit loaned from the United States and the sale of war bonds.[593] However, this situation was not sustainable in the long term and pointed towards the potential for an uncontrollable rising rate of unemployment once the war ended resulting in a contraction of the economy and the possibility of revolution as living standards plummeted unless a long term solution to this dilemma could be found. In the short term mass

[587] M. Castells, *The City and the Grassroots* (Edward Arnold, 1983) pp.27-37; A. Canning, 'Mary Barbour (1875-1958)' (2006) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [Accessed 13.07.20] https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:obnd/54393
[588] C. Burness, 'Remember Mary Barbour', *Scottish Labour History,* Vol.50 (2015) pp.81-96
[589] C.S. Joslyn, *The British Building Guilds* pp.76-78
[590] *The Times*, 25th November 1918, p.13
[591] N.C. Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976 (Gill & MacMillan, 1978) pp.99-104
[592] P.M. Roberts and S. Tucker, *World War I* (ABC-CLIO, 2005) p.504
[593] N. Mulder, 'War Finance' (2018) *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 15.03.21] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war_finance

unemployment was alleviated by a small economic boom in 1919. This was caused by the introduction of large amounts of private capital contained by the war into the British economy. In particular, the shipping industry grew in response to orders to replace the 7.9 million tons worth of merchant shipping stock destroyed during the war. However, this surge in demand quickly led to oversupply and an economic slump, which threatened to spiral into an economic depression in the early 1920s.[594]

At this point, the British government was badly prepared to tackle the possibility of mass unemployment. This was not only because of the state of the economy and the significant war debt it had accrued but also because of the lack of welfare provisions that could forestall the effects of unemployment. Before the war, a limited amount of welfare support for low-income unemployed workers had been guaranteed by the 1911 National Insurance Act, which offered support for some 2.3 million workers. However, this provision would be quickly overwhelmed by the potential number of unemployed workers associated with demobilisation. Due to the small postwar economic boom the threat of mass unemployment remained largely invisible in official government statistics. This was despite the rapid reduction of the armed forces to just 900 thousand by 1919.[595] By May 1920 the threat of mass unemployment was still unapparent as less than one percent of the British labour force was registered as unemployed. This situation changed dramatically a year later when this figure skyrocketed to twenty-three percent.[596] Consequently, unemployment also contributed to the tense situation alongside housing and labour relations, which defined a large portion of post-war reconstruction debates in Britain and required strong solutions if the Liberal status-quo was to be preserved.

In December 1917 the British government began to spell out its position in response to the mounting tensions in the form of a report produced by the Committee for Reconstruction. Above all else, this document emphasised two essential objectives: the need to increase industrial productivity and the necessity of a new settlement between trade unions and employers. Both of these aims would need to be secured if the government was to avoid the two-pronged threats of "national bankruptcy and possibly revolution."[597] Achieving these aims would be difficult the report

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[594] E.H. Carter and R.A.F. Mears, *A History of Britain: Liberal England, World War and Slump Vol.7* (Stacey International, 2011) p.154.

[595] G. Barry, 'Demobilization' (2018) *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* [Accessed 06.07.20] https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/demobilization?version=1.0

[596] R. Flanagan, *Parish Fed Bastards: A History of the Politics of Unemployment in Britain, 1884-1939* (Greenwood Press, 1991) p.118

[597] Committee for Reconstruction, *Reconstruction After the War*, 6.12.1917, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 7, Nuffield College Library.

continued not least because of high levels of discontent amongst workers; or as the report described them, "a large number of irreconcilables who openly advocated class warfare and the general strike, attacked the Trade Union leaders, and sought to frustrate any attempt which might be made to bring together the interests of employers and employed."[598]

According to the report, the war had taught one clear lesson that increased levels of economic productivity in the British economy could be achieved.[599] This had been clearly demonstrated by the rise in the country's gross domestic product which increased by 14 percent during the war.[600] Although this increase was contingent on the injection of credit into the war economy, it was also heavily reliant on the co-operation of trade unionists, who insured steady production without delays caused by strikes. Therefore the report argued that in order to ensure high productivity and economic growth as means to avoid depression and revolution the consent of the trade unions needed to be assured.[601]

In order to achieve this aim, the report recommended a combination of direct and indirect state action which took the form of a coalition between employers and the government. The need for indirect action was directly related to the recent experiences of the war. As the report clearly spelt out, "[o]ne effect of the war has been to cause an almost universal dislike and distrust of State interference, which is always cumbersome, expensive and irritating."[602] Instead of overt state-led intervention in the economy, the report recommended that employers should be the principal agents to ensure better relations with trade unions. This suggestion was founded on the idea that trade unions held employers directly responsible for their working conditions and therefore it was important for employers, not the government, to lead a response in order to create a lasting agreement and ensure economic productivity. To facilitate this compromise the report recommended the creation of a series of industrial councils, which later became known as Whitley Councils.[603] These councils would serve as permanent forums for the representatives of employers and trade unions to resolve their differences, in a similar way to the temporary industrial courts created during the war, and crucially would be mediated by the State in order to prevent deadlock between the two parties. In order to curb trade unionist demands for workers' control the councils would offer a form

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[598] Committee for Reconstruction, *Reconstruction After the War*, 6.12.1917, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 7, Nuffield College Library.

[599] Committee for Reconstruction, *Reconstruction After the War*, 6.12.1917, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 7, Nuffield College Library.

[600] D. Stevenson, *With Our Backs Against the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918* (Harvard University Press, 2011) p.370

[601] Committee for Reconstruction, *Reconstruction After the War*, 6.12.1917, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 7, Nuffield College Library.

[602] Committee for Reconstruction, *Reconstruction After the War*, 6.12.1917, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 7, Nuffield College Library

[603] N. C. Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions* p.96

of "joint control" in workplaces, which meant workers would share in some decision making responsibilities about their working conditions in exchange for unions abandoning the strategy of reducing production through strikes.[604] In combination with this scheme of indirect involvement the report also recommended the introduction of extensive welfare provisions provided directly by the state. These were designed to further ensure the support of trade unionists and ranged across large areas of society, including education, healthcare, housing, and unemployment which collectively constituted a renewed effort to develop the welfare state.[605] As a result of these policies, Marc Stears has argued that this new approach represented a clear acknowledgment by the British establishment that concessions were necessary, particularly regarding workers' control, in order to satisfy trade unions and ensure political and economic stability.[606]

Zooming out from Britain these responses highlight a common strategy adopted by policymakers during the interwar period. In Germany, where the welfare state had begun to emerge in the late nineteenth century as a response to socialist opposition, Betriebsräte (Work Councils) were introduced as a means for workers to negotiate their conditions with employers, aided by the state, in order to tempt them away from potential insurrection.[607] The role of these councils was initially legislated for in 1916 by the Hilfsdienstgetz (Auxiliary Services Law) but was expanded following the decisive role the councils played during the German Revolution, which led to the creation of Article 165 of the Weimar Constitution that further legally enshrined them. In Japan, civil servants and politicians were inspired by Whitley Councils and Betriebsräte and took these ideas even further during the interwar years pressing for similar institutions which could completely replace trade unions altogether as the sole form of worker representation.[608] This program had strong overtones of fascist corporatism and highlight the development of authoritarian as well as liberal reconstructionist programs during the inter-war period.[609] Similarly, these proposals were also supported by the growth of welfare policies, such as the introduction of Japan's first social insurance law in 1927, which applied to workers employed for over sixty days and covered them in case of sickness, injury, death, and childbirth.[610]

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[604] Committee for Reconstruction, *Reconstruction After the War*, 6.12.1917, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 7, Nuffield College Library.
[605] Committee for Reconstruction, *Reconstruction After the War*, 6.12.1917, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 7, Nuffield College Library.
[606] M. Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* pp.112-113
[607] H. Beck, *Origins of the Authoritarian Welfare State in Prussia, 1815–1870* (University of Michigan Press, 1995); E. P. Hennock, *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); T. Plaut, *Entstehen, Wesen und Bedeutung des Whitleyismus, des Englischen Typs der Betriebsräte* (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1922) p.241
[608] S. Garon, *The State and Labour in Modern Japan* (University of California Press, 1987) pp.42-65
[609] K. Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2014) p.141
[610] G.J. Kasza, 'War and Welfare Policy in Japan', *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 61, No. 2 (2002) p.419

In Italy state sanctioned work councils were introduced in the 1920s. These followed the revolutionary years of 1919 and 1920, also known as the Biennio Rosso (Two Red Years), when anarcho-syndicalists in Turin, Milan, and the Po Valley region instigated strikes, factory occupations and formed their own revolutionary work councils.[611] The short-lived liberal effort to form work councils in Italy preceded Mussolini's takeover in 1922. Under Mussolini's government a new corporatist strategy was adopted to the question of labour relations, which sought to amalgamate trade unions, employers, and the state. Similarly, to other examples the fledgling fascist government also supported this system with an elaborate welfare program, which covered food subsidies, health, and child care, paid vacations, unemployment benefits, public housing, wage subsidies, and insurance for old, sick, and disabled workers.[612] Italy, therefore, demonstrated over a particularly short period a range of potentially socialist, liberal, and fascist configurations, which the reconstruction of labour relations and could embody.[613]

Although a combination of welfare policies and industrial councils proved an effective instrument to secure the cooperation of trade unions for many interwar governments. This strategy was not always enticing enough to satisfy strong trade unions. Zooming back into focus on Britain. Although Whitley Councils were embraced by smaller less well organised unions, in contrast, the largest and most powerful unions remained aloof. In particular, the Miners Federation of Great Britain, the National Union of Railwaymen, and the National Transport Workers' Federation who collectively in 1914 had formed their own mutual support agreement, the Triple Alliance, saw no reason to abandon their strong position of mutual support.[614] In order to placate these powerful unions, the British government began to consider more serious concessions and proposed a series of commissions designed to explore the possibility of bringing certain industries into public ownership.

These proposals encountered the immediate problem that the idea of nationalisation had substantially changed in the minds of many British trade unionists during the war. Before the war nationalisation was largely understood in collectivist terms as a means towards improving efficiency, industrial relations, and working conditions. However, during the war this understanding had changed due to the experience of the temporary nationalisation of certain industries and growing support for workers' control particularly amongst miners and railway workers. As a result,

[611] *The Guildsman,* March 1921, p.9
[612] A. James Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (Princeton University Press, 1979) pp.258-264
[613] P.J. Davies and D. Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right* (Routledge, 2002) p.143
[614] N.C. Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976* p.96

increasingly workers' control now constituted a key ingredient in the conception nationalisation for many trade unionists who argued that it was essential otherwise administrators and bureaucrats would have no idea about how to actually improve industries or working conditions.[615] This model of nationalisation went beyond the idea of joint control proposed by the Reconstruction Committee and proved to be a major impasse for the government towards securing the cooperation of the large trade unions.

These efforts to tempt powerful trade unions into cooperation were also part of a wider trend amongst interwar policymakers similarly turned towards forms of nationalisation. In particular, mining and railways were two of the most common sectors where nationalisation was considered. In the United States, the Plumb Plan, discussed in the previous chapter, proposed a similar program of joint control and public ownership as was now being considered in Britain.[616] Similarly, the United States Senate also discussed similar proposals for the nationalisation of the mining industry in response to decades of labour militancy.[617] In Germany, nationalisation proposals went even further when a commission into the coal mining industry concluded in March 1919 that the continuation of private ownership of mines was against both modern and socialist principles. Instead of suggesting simply bringing mines into public ownership, which the commission argued would only substitute one employer for another. The commission argued that workers themselves should be given direct control, under neither public or private proprietorship, but a new economic body the Deutsche Kohlegemeinschaft, which would represent the coal industry as a worker controlled public corporation.[618] Although this proposal failed to materialise tangible results were achieved by efforts to nationalise the entire German railway system, which was brought into public ownership in 1920. The previous system of private railway companies were then reformed into a single private company controlled by the state and later repurposed after 1924 as a means to pay war reparations under the Dawes Plan.[619]

In Britain the government's proposals to ensure industrial co-operation were widely supported by all major political parties. This included not only the governing Liberal and Conservative parties, but also the Labour Party. The support of the Labour Party was tied to its own sense of ascendency at this point following its first experience in government during the war. Unlike the large trade

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[615] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* pp.48-49
[616] K.A. Kerr, *American Railroad Politics* p.228-229
[617] D. Bullock, *Coal Wars: Unions, Strikes and Violence in Depression Era Central Washington* (Washington State University Press, 2014); *The Guildsman*, September 1919, pp.13-14
[618] *The Guildsman*, May 1919, p.4
[619] A.C. Mierzejewski, *The Most Valuable Asset of the Reich: A History of the German National Railway. Vol. 1 1920-1932* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006) pp.83-120

unions, which had moved towards workers' control during the war, the Labour Party remained strongly on the conservative side of collectivism. This was the result of the continued control over the party exerted by the Fabian Society and moderate trade unionists.[620] Furthermore, the Labour Party's commitment to state-led reconstruction was clearly visible in its own policy document on reconstruction, *Labour and the New Social Order* (1918). This document laid out a set of policies approved at the 1918 annual party conference and amounted to a program calling for the nationalisation of key industries, particularly mining and railways, a minimum wage and high rates of taxation, but notably failed to offer any degree of workers control.[621]

In tandem with the British governments efforts to secure the co-operation of trade unions through Whitley Councils and the possibility of nationalisation, political reform, and welfare policies were also quickly introduced. In 1918 the Representation of the People Act was implemented which increased the male electorate by 5.2 million and enfranchised 8.5 million women for the first time.[622] This reform was designed to bolster the legitimacy of the government and repay the efforts of soldiers and workers during the war. In addition, to counter the approaching threat of mass unemployment the Unemployment Insurance Act was introduced in 1920, which provided fifteen weeks of unemployment benefits to eleven million workers in the form of weekly payments of fifteen shillings for men and twelve shillings for women.[623] Therefore providing some measure of protection against mass unemployment for a much larger section of society.

In order to tackle the housing crisis the government began a policy of state investment led by the newly formed Ministry of Health. Under the leadership of the former Minister for Reconstruction, Christopher Addison, the Housing and Town Planning Act, otherwise known as the Addison Act, was passed in 1919. This marked the first step towards the creation of social housing in Britain through the provision of subsidies to local authorities in order to finance the construction of half-a-million homes over the next three years. In response to this development the historians Simon Pepper and Peter Richmond have pointed out that the proposed new two-storey cottage homes with gardens were set in sharp contrast to the slums which were the reality for most of the urban population at the time. Furthermore, they highlight how, while the Housing Committee acting under

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[620] R. Seymour, *Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics* (Verso, 2016) pp.96-97

[621] S. Webb, *Labour and the New Social Order: A Report on Reconstruction* (National Labour Press, 1918) pp.1-5

[622] M. Roberts, *Britain 1846-1964: The Challenge of Change* (Oxford University Press, 2001) p.1; H.L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign 1866-1928* (Routledge, 2014) p.95

[623] C.L. Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars: 1918-1940* (Methuen, 1987) pp.43-46

the Ministry of Health promoted the virtues of the Garden Cities Movement,[624] the Slums Committee, also known as the Unhealthy Areas Committee, saw slums as sights of disease and estimated that in London alone 549,000 people lived under "unsatisfactory conditions" and a further 184,000 lived under, "definitely unhealthy conditions."[625] Slum clearances to make way for new housing was therefore couched in the language of hygiene which the Committee for Reconstruction also shared in its efforts to avoid economic depression, claiming that, "healthy homes for workers" were "matters of fundamental importance" and "that the satisfactory solution of these problems would contribute as much as any other factor to industrial efficiency and contentment."[626] Furthermore, it is also clear from the discussions amongst the Committee for Reconstruction and the history of rent strikes that housing was a potentially revolutionary issue. It was therefore vital for the government to address this social problem in order to calm tensions and construct a stable post-war settlement with organised labour, who were not only motivated by economic and political concerns, but also longstanding grievances about the housing stock.

Understood collectively the British government's efforts to tackle reconstruction can be interpreted as an effort to ensure against economic crisis and political insurrection. As a result, these responses correspond to the analysis, which Richard Lowenthal and Marcel van der Linden have independently formed who both similarly argue that these concerns provided the major impetus behind the growth of social democratic welfare states during the interwar period. In particular, Lowenthal has drawn attention to how particular welfare provisions, such as unemployment and social housing programs, were often implemented by governments during this period in order to prevent political and economic crises.[627] While van der Linden has argued that welfare states in conjunction with the integrating effects of advanced capitalist economies raised workers' material living standards, therefore, decreasing the risk of revolution.[628] Interpreting the British government's program for reconstruction as part of this wider trend points toward a revisionist understanding of the global upswing labour militancy during this period. This has been developed by Adam Tooze who argues that the upswing of worker militancy globally in the early twentieth century should not be viewed as a failed revolutionary moment, but rather as a transformative

[624] The Garden Cities Movement was an urban planning movement which flourished in the twentieth century and was initiated by Ebenezer Howard in Britain but quickly became a popular source of inspiration for architects around the world. For a detailed account see S. Meacham, *Regaining Paradise: Englishness and the Early Garden City Movement* (Yale University Press, 1999)

[625] S. Pepper and P. Richmond, 'Homes Unfit for Heroes: The Slum Problem in London and Neville Chamberlain's Unhealthy Areas Committee, 1919-21' *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (2009), pp.143-171

[626] Committee for Reconstruction, *Reconstruction After the War*, 6.12.1917, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 7, Nuffield College Library Oxford

[627] R. Lowenthal, "The Missing Revolution in Industrial Societies: Comparative Reflections on a German Problem", in V.R. Berghahn and M. Kitchen (eds), *Germany in the Age of Total War*, (Cromm Helm, 1981) pp. 240-60

[628] M. van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History* (Ashgate, 2003) p.36

moment in its own right when governments were forced to adopt policies of conciliation in response to the real and perceived threat of revolution.[629] Part of what makes this argument so persuasive is that it highlights the increasing trend towards nation-state-centric solutions from across the political spectrum during this period. However, in so doing it neglects to differentiate the range of political outcomes embraced by liberal social democrats, socialists and fascists to form new agreements with organised workers. Furthermore, it neglects the struggle against this trend embodied by efforts during the same period, such as the Kibbutzim in Palestine and the Bavarian Council Republic in Germany, which attempted to resist the tendency towards centralisation and state alignment.[630] Similarly, as will now be discussed the National Guilds League also struggled with this problem as it attempted to navigate how best to respond to the new context of postwar reconstruction.

4.2. Reconstruction and the Contested Meanings of Guild Socialism

Although the agenda for postwar reconstruction in Britain was chiefly defined by the government which aimed to preserve the prewar order as much as possible. Against this vision, other voices called for a different kind of reconstruction. Some militant trade unionists argued, "it would appear we must do our own reconstruction (…) and wrest control of industry from the capitalists".[631] Others went even further and began to echo the belief that the war had bankrupted the idea of nation-states completely and called for a new concept of sovereignty.[632] The mainstream British press looked upon these ideas with horror and saw these attempts to redefine reconstruction as tantamount to revolution. Amongst the throng of alternatives *The Times* noted, "the most popular of all reconstructive revolutionary schemes" was "guild socialism", which according to *The Observer,* was even "more revolutionary than original Socialism" because it "implies the break-up and total reconstruction of society as we know it."[633]

The prospect of reconstruction provoked questions and divisions within the League and revealed the underlining differences in meaning associated with Guild Socialism. In particular, the British government's responses to the perceived threat of economic uncertainty and political instability raised questions about how Guild Socialism should now relate to the state. The divisive nature of this question was visible in relation to the League as it attempted to respond to the governments'

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[629] A. Tooze, *The Deluge* p.246
[630] J. Horrox, *A Living Revolution: Anarchism in the Kibbutz Movement* (AK Press, 2009); U. Linse, *Gustav Landauer und die Revolutionszeit 1918–1919* (Kramer, Berlin 1974)
[631] J. Paton and W. Gallacher, *Towards Industrial Democracy: A Memorandum on Workshop Control* (Paisley Trades and Labour Council, 1917) p.1
[632] B. Villiers, *Britain After the Peace: Revolution or Reconstruction* (T.F. Unwin, 1918) pp.260-261
[633] *The Times*, 25th September 1917, p.9; *The Observer*, 25th March, 1923, p.12

proposals for nationalisation and Whitely Councils, which also drew on the broader international context of reconstruction. This issue was further compounded with another question that arose that was also part of the reconstruction debate: how should the League respond to the Bolshevik revolution? These questions highlighted the changing hierarchy of knowledge within the League as meanings tied to Guild Socialism began to shift altering the dominant meaning of Guild Socialism and very nearly destroying the National Guilds League in the process.

4.2.1. "What does the N.G.L. mean by the State?"

During the First World War the National Guilds League maintained a neutral position towards the state, which can be explained in relation to a number of factors. Firstly, in relation to the knowledge produced by the League this position reflected the dominant corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism. This was informed by theoretical knowledge relating to the idea of a partnership between National Guilds and the state in order to reconcile consumer and producer interests.[634] Secondly, given the high levels of British trade union support towards the government during the war. The League also had a further strategic reason to maintain at least a neutral stance towards the state given that it hoped to win the support of trade unionists. Finally, the League had an added incentive to take a neutral stance towards the state as a survival mechanism in order to avoid the harsh censorship powers the government acquired during the war through the Defence of the Realm Act. Although some criticism of the state did persist in publications produced by the League largely in relation to bureaucracy and the idea of the servile state discussed in chapter one. These criticisms were generally abstract and directed towards collectivism or the Fabian Society, rather than the government.[635] However, this cautious position would begin to dissolve as the end of the war itched closer and post-war reconstruction became an increasingly large concern for the League.

In April 1917 divergent views about the theoretical position of the state began to be openly debated in *The Guildsman*. This conversation began in response to a seemingly innocuous question, "What does the N.G.L. mean by the State?" posed by an anonymous author. Despite being nameless the questioner was clearly a keen student of Guild Socialism as they proceeded to outline two possible answers to this question. Either the state was "merely one type of association… with no right of supremacy, or even priority, over other associations", such as National Guilds, or the opposite that the state was a singular sovereign above the guilds and representative of all of society.[636] This

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[634] National Guilds League Rules and Constitution, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford.
[635] *The Guildsman*, February 1917, p.4
[636] *The Guildsman*, April 1917, p.9

seemingly harmless theoretical question exposed a previously dormant fault-line within the knowledge system contained in the League, which divided the different corporatist and syndicalist meanings associated with Guild Socialism in relation to the issue of sovereignty. Simply put was the state a Hobbesian Leviathan, which oversaw all of society including the guilds? Or was the state one association amongst many which shared sovereignty pluralistically with the guilds and could be potentially outgrown?

These divergent views of sovereignty were visible in *The Guildsman* and revealed the competing forms of knowledge which informed visions of political economy the National Guilds League was promoting. For example, in May 1917 the art historian Herbert Read wrote an article in the paper arguing in favour of internationalism where he made the point that ultimately, "International Guilds will transcend nationalities and States."[637] This claim was followed a few pages later by a statement from the executive committee of the League, which contradicted this position. Here the argument was made in favour of a continued partnership with the state and National Guilds, which was justified on the basis that it would avoid the excesses of syndicalism in the form of complete control by producers, and be sustained through taxation of the guilds.[638] This position ran contrary to the argument expressed a few months later by the editor of *The Guildsman* John Paton. According to Paton whatever association in society controls economic power, whether in the form of National Guilds or the state, would de facto become the "ultimate sovereign power".[639]

In direct response to the anonymous writer's question about the state a wildfire of commentary began to rage within *The Guildsman* around the correct way to interpret the issue of sovereignty. Some members of the National Guilds League, such as W.S. Cochran, attempted to dismiss the question by accepting both a singular or pluralistic idea of state sovereignty.[640] These attempts to dismiss the question failed and simply served to widen the debate. As a consequence, the question of state sovereignty was now connected to the additional question. What was the relationship between capitalism and the state? This argument was unearthed by critics, such as Paton, who argued that the lack of a clear orthodoxy within the League about the state was problematic because if Guild Socialism did not oppose the state then it was ultimately not opposed to capitalism, which used the state as an instrument to exploit workers and undermine democracy.[641] In response to this criticism, Cochran was forced to take a stronger position in defence of the state. This led him to

[637] *The Guildsman*, May 1917, p.4
[638] *The Guildsman*, May 1917, p.7
[639] *The Guildsman*, July 1917, p.2
[640] *The Guildsman*, August 1917, pp.8-9
[641] *The Guildsman,* July 1917, pp.1-2; November 1918, p.6; January 1919, pp.3-4

argue that, "the Guild Movement is a revolt against State Socialism" and "while we agree with our syndicalist friends as to the economic structure of the new society, we cannot accept their view that there will or should be no political super-structure."[642] This defence was supported by other commentators, such as J.L. Sabisten who accepted that the state was currently under the influence of capitalism, but disputed that this would always be the case.[643] For this reason, Sabisten stressed the need for the League to define a clear position on the state because, "if we do not define the functions of the State, it will arrogate all the function of society and call itself— it is immaterial whether it be Collectivism or Industrial Democracy."[644]

The divisions now emerging within the pages of *The Guildsman* were representative of the multiplicity of meanings attached to Guild Socialism by members of the League. These differences were in turn representative of the different forms of knowledge attached to the subject. However, what was becoming increasingly clear through this discussion was clear tensions between the various knowledges that informed different understandings of the political economy of Guild Socialism. These tensions became increasingly obvious as the League now began to launch its own propaganda campaign against the government's vision for reconstruction.

4.2.2. Whitley Councils

Soon after the British government began to announce its plans for post-war reconstruction the National Guilds League launched its offensive to redefine the meaning of reconstruction. This began with an attack against the proposal to solve the question of labour relations with the creation of Whitley Councils. As the August 1917 edition of *The Guildsman* made clear, "the Whitley Committee are not reconstructionists. They demolish nothing that is old; they build up nothing that is new."[645] This attack marked the opening salvo in a new propaganda campaign against, what the National Guilds League came to call, "Whitleyism", which flatly rejected the scheme.[646] Over the course of the next year, the League scrambled to produce several short pamphlets which were eventually synthesised into a new publication, *National Guilds or Whitley Councils?* (1918). Here the League made two unambiguous arguments against Whitleyism and attempted to warn trade unionists against the dangers of accepting this proposal.

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[642] *The Guildsman,* August 1917, p.8-9
[643] *The Guildsman,* September 1917 pp.5-6
[644] *The Guildsman* October 1917 p.7
[645] *The Guildsman*, August 1917, p.2
[646] *National Guilds or Whitley Councils?* (The National Guilds League, 1918) p.3

The first argument the National Guilds League developed was a critique of joint control as a basis for a new partnership between trade unions, employers, and the state. The League warned trade unionists against accepting this proposal which appeared to guarantee a step towards increasing workers' control over their respective industries. In fact, as the new pamphlet made clear, the opposite was true. In reality, joint control would only increase the power of the state and employers over workers and lead towards the degradation of workers' control for two reasons. Firstly, it was wrong to accept the premise of the Whitley Councils that the state could be trusted to be a neutral third-party arbiter in discussions over joint control between workers and employers. This was because both the state and employers were united by the same interests in maintaining the current economic order to ensure profitability, efficiency, stability, and the wage system, and were, therefore, natural allies.[647] As a result, Whitley Councils were unlikely to work in favour of workers because of the majority voting system they used to settle decisions meaning that employers and the state would always be able to vote together in their shared interests against workers. This situation would make it impossible for workers to increase their measure of control because any serious effort to do so, which compromised the shared interests of employers and the state, would be democratically rejected. Secondly, by entering into Whitley Councils workers were entering into a situation that would likely work to decrease unity between workers because this was in the direct interest of employers. This was especially risky in the case of industrial sectors still divided between multiple unions rather than controlled by a single industrial union.[648] In this way, the proposal of joint control through Whitley Councils represented a poisoned chalice, which workers should reject because it meant entering into a partnership with two rivals who the League was convinced could not be trusted not to exploit workers for their own benefit.[649]

This argument revealed a change in position by the League specifically towards the state which reflected the internal tensions within the institution. By adopting a more critical view towards partnership with the state this new pamphlet highlighted the receding dominance of knowledge relating to a partnership between guilds and the state. Previously, a partnership with the state was a centrepiece of the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism which was dominant in the initial propaganda produced by the League. Therefore this shift towards a more skeptical view of the state is indicative of a change in the knowledge system within the League.

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[647] *National Guilds or Whitley Councils?* (The National Guilds League, 1918) p.12
[648] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1918-1919*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 2, Nuffield College Library Oxford; *National Guilds or Whitley Councils?* p.14
[649] *National Guilds or Whitley Councils?* pp.9-10; *The Guildsman*, October 1918, p.3

The second argument the pamphlet made against Whitleyism was against the kind of democracy it represented. This critique targeted the hierarchical model of democratic decision-making the councils proposed, whereby decisions would be made between elected representatives of the trade unions, employers, and the state. For the League, the acute problem with this form of democracy was that it meant that decisions made at the top between representatives would then have to be accepted by rank-and-file trade unionists at the bottom regardless of whether they agreed with them or not.[650] Instead, the pamphlet advocated a different model of democratic decision-making organised from the bottom up in which the "first seat of authority should be the workshop."[651] This critique of representative democracy indicated a development from the earlier guild socialist attack against parliamentary systems because of their proximity to capitalism discussed in chapter one. As what was now being criticised was the topdown structure of democratic decision. This criticism was repeated at the annual conference of the League in 1919 which denounced the Whitley Council scheme and called for the further democratisation of trade unions in order to lay the foundation of National Guilds.[652] This position also highlights a change in the knowledge system within the League away from a corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism and towards a more overtly syndicalist vision. Furthermore, it also bore a clear resemblance to other criticisms of the limitations of parliamentary systems during this period, such as Robert Michels iron law of oligarchy, or the demand for industrial democracy by Italian anarcho-syndicalists and Council Communists in Germany and Holland.[653] In this sense, the critique of representative democracy and support for bottom-up democratic structures indicated the rising prominence of knowledge relating to the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism within the League. Therefore indicating a change in the hierarchical structure of the knowledge system contained within the institution.

For historians, the hostile position the National Guilds League developed in response to Whitley Councils has led to a number of different conclusions. According to Stephen Glass the fundamental problem was the close resemblance between National Guilds and Whitley Councils both of which were ideas for new institutions designed to resolve the question of labour relations. Furthermore, both were targeted explicitly towards trade unionists, proposed democratic models to address workers' control, and promoted versions of interclass alignment.[654] In contrast, Michal Easson has argued that by attacking Whitely Council the League blocked itself from pursuing, "a path towards

[650] *National Guilds or Whitley Councils?* p.11
[651] *National Guilds or Whitley Councils?* pp.11-12
[652] *The Policy of Guild Socialism* (Labour Publishing Press, 1921) p.14
[653] J.L. Hyland, *Democratic theory: The Philosophical Foundations* (Manchester University Press, 1995) p.247; G. Galli, 'Italy: The Choice for the Left', in L. Labedz (eds.) *Revisionism* (Praeger, 1962) p.331; D. Schecter, *Radical Theories: Paths Beyond Marxism and Social Democracy* (Manchester University Press, 1994) pp. 113-114; p.74; D.F. Busky, *Communism in History and Theory: The European Experience* (Praeger, 2002) p.74
[654] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* p.60-61

what could have been a fruitful policy direction" through working with the state.[655] While both of these assessments are perhaps true. What they fail to highlight is how League was beginning to put forward was a quite different alternative version of reconstruction, which indicated changes occurring within the hierarchical structure of the knowledge system it contained.

The National Guilds League's arguments against Whitley Councils found support in various quarters of the British Left. In particular, they joined a chorus of other left-wing groups, such as Silvia Pankhurst's Workers Socialist Federation, and many trade unionists who criticised the Whitley Councils inability to permit any action beyond bargaining and negotiating.[656] In particular, trade union opposition was especially strong within the engineering sector due to the continued influence of the Shop Steward Movement.[657] This dissent was rooted in demands for workers' control but also tied to forms of theoretical knowledge akin to the syndicalist meaning Guild Socialism, which was increasingly becoming prominent within the League. In particular, the version of political economy the League now appeared to be endorsing through its criticism of the state and parliamentary democracy closely matched the proposals put forward by the general secretary of the Women's Trade Union League, Mary MacArthur. MacArthur argued against Whitley Councils on the basis that she feared they would become closed corporations to the detriment of other industries and the consumer at large. Instead, she suggested an alternative solution, similar to Guild Socialism, for solving the industrial relations and argued for the creation of, "two parliaments — one in which the workers sat as workers and another in which they sat as citizens and consumers."[658] In this sense, the League's response to Whitleyism was also reflective of other parts of the broader British Left that also opposed the government's model for reconstruction, which not only rejected elements of the scheme but proposed moving far beyond it.

Internationally the League's arguments against Whitleyism also found support. This was facilitated through the correspondence network around the League, but also the international context of reconstruction. These provided means for information pertaining to guild socialist reconstruction to find common synchronicities beyond Britain. Clear evidence of this is found in the large number letters sent to the League with questions about Whitleyism and requesting pamphlets about the topic. In particular international members, such as Arthur McCarthy in New Zealand and Ödön Pór in Italy were especially interested in the criticisms of Whitelyism in relation to similar local efforts

[655] M. Easson, *New Boots from the Old* pp.396-397
[656] *The Guildsman*, September 1918, p.8; March 1919 p.7
[657] R. Hyman, *The Workers Union* (Clarendon Press, 1971) p.84
[658] F.J. Baylis, *British Wages Council* (Blackwell, 1962) p.16-22

to establish industrial councils.[659] These cases are representative of a much larger number of correspondents based in France, Italy, Japan, South Africa, New Zealand and especially the United States who corresponded with the League on this issue.[660] This indicates a wider pattern of interest towards resisting the collectivist offer of joint control, which characterised the global transformation of labour relations in relation to post-war reconstruction that defined the broader context the League was situated within. Additionally, these sources also indicate the unevenness of responses to Guild Socialism. While in most locations only a small handful of correspondents were particularly interested in Whitelyism, elsewhere the response was much stronger. For example, in New Zealand where discussion of a similar system of joint control based explicitly on Whitely Councils was underway. Trade unionists heavily promoted criticisms formulated by the League in order to combat the creation of similar industrial councils.[661] This reception is again indicative of the strong connections between Britain and New Zealand, which allowed for the introduction and wider circulation of Guild Socialism discussed in chapter two.

In certain instances, the international reception of the League's arguments against Whitelyism also went beyond the exchange of written documents and also led to physical meetings. For example, on the 13th of February 1919 at the Kingsway Hall in London, the League organised a lecture under the title, 'National Guilds or Reconstruction?'. This was attended by representatives of the Irish Transport Workers Federation and a journalist from the *New Republic* who wrote about Guild Socialism for audiences in the United States.[662] The appearance of these representatives is on the one hand indicative of the increasing levels of attention Guild Socialism was receiving internationally as a result of the end of the war and the normalisation of global communications. However, on the other hand, it is also suggestive of how these conversations were relevant to international audiences because of their shared significance in relation to the context of postwar reconstruction. Furthermore, the growing international reception of Guild Socialism within the League seemed to justify Hobson's initial earlier sentiment about the good post-war international prospects for Guild Socialism.[663]

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[659] A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, 3.2.1918, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; Ö. Pór to the National Guilds League, 23.5.1918, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, M/27, Nuffield College Library.
[660] *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 8 and 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford
[661] A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, 3.2.1918, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.
[662] *The Guildsman*, March 1919, p.7
[663] *The Guildsman*, July 1918, pp.2-3

4.2.3. Nationalisation

Alongside its criticisms of Whitley Councils, the League also confronted the British government's proposals for the nationalisation of certain industries. Unlike the Whitley Councils scheme which it rejected, nationalisation was understood by the League as an opportunity to win support for Guild Socialism amongst the largest trade unions in Britain. This opinion grew out of the experience of the temporary nationalisation of strategic industries during the war.[664] As one member of the League, the economist R.H. Tawney, succinctly claimed, "Nationalisation has more than one meaning".[665] Tawney's opinion reflected a new attempt by the League to redefine the meaning of nationalisation in the context of reconstruction. In 1918 the League began its new campaign that called for the nationalisation of a range of British industries.[666] In particular, trade unionists in the mining and railway sectors were targeted given the high levels of support for both workers' control and nationalisation in those industries.[667]

At the end of February 1919 the Coal Commission, otherwise known as the Sankey Commission, was officially established by the British government. This was a relief for the prime minister, David Loyd George, who reminded his ministers that despite the potential cost of nationalising the entire coal industry, "£71 million was cheap insurance against Bolshevism".[668] Especially, when considered against the estimated £2 billion that continuing to fight the First World War for another two years was projected to have cost.[669] The membership of the commission highlighted Tawney's point about the multiple meanings of nationalisation since it consisted of fourteen individuals who possessed a range of perspectives. Alongside the chairman, the commission included three coal mine owners, three industrialists from other sectors, three trade union representatives and four experts on industrial relations. It is important to note that among these fourteen at least two were also members of the National Guilds League. Frank Hodges, the secretary of the Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), and R.H. Tawney.[670] By June 1919 the commission had failed to reach a consensus. Instead the commission had produced four separate proposals with varying conclusions which ranged from full public ownership to completely undiminished private ownership. From

[664] G. Lloyd Wilson, 'An Appraisal of Nationalized Transport in Great Britain--Part I', *The American Economic Review,* Vol. 40, No. 2, (1950) pp.234-235; R.A.S. Redmayne, *The British Coal-Mining Industry during the War* (Clarendon Press, 1923) pp.1-87
[665] R.H. Tawney, *The Nationalisation of the Coal Industry* p.21
[666] *National Guilds League Annual Report 1918-1919*, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 2, Nuffield College Library Oxford
[667] D. Blaazer, *Guild Socialism and the Historians* p.12; G.D.H. Cole, *National Guilds and the Coal Commission* p.8-9
[668] A. Tooze, *The Deluge* p.248
[669] C. Wrigley, *David Lloyd George and the challenge of labour: The post-war coalition 1918-1922* (Edward Everett Root Publishers, 2018) p.82
[670] G.D.H. Cole, *Workers' Control in the Mining Industry* (Labour Publishing Company, May 1921) p.5

these proposals, the League was most interested in the one advanced by the trade unionist representatives who argued in favour of bringing the entire coal mining sector into public ownership and the administration of mining trade unionists. As a result, the League republished this proposal as a new pamphlet under the title, *Workers' Control in the Coal Mining Industry* (1919).[671] In support of these proposals, the League also produced another pamphlet, *Towards a Miners' Guild* (1919), which also pushed in favour of developing these ideas even further. Specifically, the League called for the MFGB to take the next step beyond nationalisation towards becoming a full National Guild.[672] This marked an important moment for the League because it represented another concrete attempt towards redefining the meaning of reconstruction.

Although it now appeared from the outside that a clear and coherent position had been adopted by the League in response to the coal commission. It is important to note that this response emerged from an array of interpretations of nationalisation, which developed within the League in response to the First World War and reconstruction. These serve to again reveal the dynamic nature of the knowledge system within the League. Initially, according to the Storrington Document, the League recognised nationalisation as a non-essential pathway towards transforming industries into National Guilds.[673] This was largely informed by prejudices against Fabian collectivism and the idea of the servile state, which furnished a dominant view of nationalisation within the League, as a state-led bureaucratic endeavour that would not necessarily advance the objective of workers' control and could even produce the opposite effect.[674] The experience of direct state involvement in the economy during the war transformed opinions within the League and led towards a generally positive view of nationalisation. This was informed by the high levels of state involvement in the wartime economy and particularly the temporary nationalisation of key sectors of the economy. Additionally increasing levels of popular support for policies relating to workers' control amongst trade unionists in these industries also contributed towards changing opinions within the League. As a result, new knowledge relating to nationalisation was generated within the League. Some individual members, such as Cole, began to argue that certain strategically important industries would need to pass through a stage of nationalisation.[675] In addition pamphlets produced by the League now argued in favour of nationalisation as an effective protection against the creation of private monopolies and means of transitioning towards a system of National Guilds.[676] While other

[671] F. Hodges, *Workers' Control in the Coal Mining Industry* (Leicester Co-operative Printing Society, 1919) p.1
[672] *Towards a Miners' Guild* (Victoria House Printing, 1918) pp.6-9
[673] Revised Storrington Document, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library.
[674] A.W. Wright, 'Fabianism and Guild Socialism: Two Views of Democracy', *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1978) pp.226-227
[675] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* p.41-42
[676] *A Catechism of National Guilds,* (Victoria House Printing, 1915) p.3

pamphlets began to argue that, "the proper function of the State is to nationalise industries and thereafter to entrust their management to the Trade Unions."[677] These opinions gradually crystallised around a new dominant consensus in favour of nationalisation in combination with workers' control, which reflected the views now being expressed by large sections of the trade union movement. This change in the knowledge system of the League influenced its proscribed strategy of transitioning to Guild Socialism. Specifically, the method of encroaching control endorsed by the League as a means to transition towards a system of National Guilds, discussed in chapter one, now featured nationalisation in a central position.[678]

According to John Lovell, the development of this new consensus around nationalisation within the League reflected the wider conditions of reconstruction. For Lovell, the power of the League's propaganda was derived from the fact that it worked with the grain of wider opinions and therefore rationalised and reinforced existing attitudes.[679] This is particularly relevant to this case where the miners' proposals seemed to reflect the League's position, precisely because the League had shaped its position in relation to the existing context of the changing demand for nationalisation caused by the war. Furthermore, this argument seems especially clear given the secretary of the MFGB, Frank Hodges, was not only a member of the League but also sat on the executive committee. Lovell's analysis can also be extended even further when brought into consideration of the international context of reconstruction where nationalisation was heavily discussed. For example, the model of nationalisation proposed by the League aroused significant interest amongst trade unionists in Germany and New Zealand where the nationalisation of the mining industries was also in question. In Germany, significant interest was expressed towards the idea of forming a National Mining Guild from an array of miners, academics, and socialists, who communicated with the League.[680] More dramatically, in New Zealand, where particularly strong connections with the League existed the Federation of Labour adopted an identical model of nationalisation as their official platform.[681] International interest in the League's position on nationalisation was also expressed from beyond the mining industry. In New Zealand, the Christchurch branch of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of New Zealand ordered 500 copies of *Towards A National Railway Guild* (1918) and 500 more of *The Guild Idea* in one order.[682] While in Manchuria the South Manchuria Railway

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[677] *Observations on the Interim Report of the Reconstruction Committee on Joint Standing Industrial Councils* (National Guilds League, 1917) p.6
[678] *The Policy of Guild Socialism* pp.16-20
[679] J. Lovell, introduction to G.D.H. Cole, *The World of Labour* (Harvard University Press, 1973) p.xv-xvi
[680] H. Bräuning-Oktavio to the National Guilds League, 07.11.1919, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.
[681] A. McCarthy to N. Young, 13.5.1919, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.
[682] W.H. Jenkins to W. Mellor, 25.8.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library, Oxford.

Company ordered a complete set of the League's pamphlets and annual reports;[683] and in Palestine, the central offices of the Zionist Organisation ordered a complete set of *The Guildsman* and all pamphlets produced by the League especially those relating mining and railways.[684] This set of responses is indicative not only of the scale of interest but also its diversity and highlights the zeitgeist of the League's energies. This evidence highlights how the League's attempt to redefine the meaning of nationalisation in the context of reconstruction also led towards strengthening international ties to Guild Socialism.

Internationalism was also a crucial component to the framing of the guild socialist argument for nationalisation. This was clearly demonstrated in the case of the League's efforts to promote the nationalisation of the railway industry in Britain.

"This demand of the railway workers for control is worldwide. It arises both where the railways are privately owned and controlled, and where they are owned and controlled by the State. It is, indeed, strongest in Italy, where State ownership exists, and in France, where one of the great railways is owned by the State. Moreover, it is growing stronger in this country as State control extends, and it has increased enormously during the present war."[685]

The use of these claims served to situate the League's own efforts as part of a much broader but uneven set of railway nationalisation programs in order to substantiate its own efforts in Britain. These examples were not limited to Europe as the League again drew attention to the Plumb Plan in the United States, as discussed in chapter two, as a model of nationalisation proposed by railway trade unionists.[686] In this sense nationalisation also served as a demonstration of Hobson's dictum on the post-war possibilities for the international development of Guild Socialism, which could be harnessed if the League was able to solidify itself around clear theoretical and practical positions.[687]

Although the National Guilds League became increasingly positive towards nationalisation it was clear that this position also raised tensions within the institution. Particularly in the case of railway nationalisation, which the British government launched a commission to examine in 1921, the League began to express similar doubts to the ones raised against Whitley Councils about a possible

[683] South Manchuria Railway Company Library to the National Guilds League, 13.8.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library, Oxford.
[684] The Zionist Organisation to the National Guilds League, 31.10.1922, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 8, Nuffield College Library, Oxford.
[685] The National Guilds League, *Towards A National Railway Guild,* (Victoria House Printing, 1918) p.3
[686] G.D.H. Cole, *Workers' Control for Railwaymen* (Labour Publishing Company, 1921) pp.4-5
[687] *The Guildsman*, July 1918, p.3

partnership with the state. These reservations were clearly expressed in a new pamphlet written by Cole entitled, *Workers' Control for Railwaymen* (1921) which highlighted the potential danger nationalisation posed in industries where there was not already a high level of trade union organisation. Unlike the mining industry, which was overwhelmingly unified under the MFGB, railway trade unionists were divided between various small and large unions.[688] These included trade unionists were divided between the large industrial unions, such as the NUR whose membership was around 450,000 and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen who possessed 70,000 members, and smaller craft unions representing railway construction, repair shops, engineering and woodworking trades totalling around 40,000 members; while supervisory workers, including inspectors and stationmasters, were organised alongside clerical workers in the Railway Clerks' Association, which had 90,000 members. Unless the divisions between these unions could be overcome and a single industrial union for all railway workers formed the goal of nationalisation was, according to Cole, a dangerous course that could potentially weaken the demand for workers' control.[689]

The danger Cole was alluding to related to the wider question of how the state should be treated in these circumstances. As the League had already stressed in relation to the proposals for Whitley Councils the state should not be counted as a neutral actor. However, what was beginning to surface now in relation to the issue of railway nationalisation was the idea of guild dominance over the state.[690] This further challenged the idea of a possible partnership between the state and National Guilds and highlighted the continuation of tensions within the League between the different meanings of Guild Socialism. For the time being this problem was forestalled by the failure of the railway trade unionists efforts to win wider political support for nationalisation. This resulted in a compromise through the Railways Act (1921) that consolidated over 120 separate British railway companies into just a handful.[691] However, these internal tensions over different knowledge relating to the state would resurface again in the relation to the question of the Bolshevik Revolution.

4.2.4. Doing the Splits: Reconstruction and the Bolshevik Revolution

The internal debate within the League over the meaning of state could perhaps have continued harmlessly if not for the emergence of a new question in relation to the context of reconstruction. How should the League respond to the Bolshevik Revolution? For the League, Bolshevism, much

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[688] G.D.H. Cole, *Workers' Control for Railwaymen* p.13
[689] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* pp.12-13
[690] The National Guilds League, *Towards A National Railway Guild* pp.8-9
[691] C. Wolmar, *Fire and Steam: A New History of the Railways in Britain* (Atlantic, 2007) pp.231-232

like Fabianism, represented another rival body of knowledge that contributed to collectivist socialism. Although these traditions were divergent in terms of their different approach towards the transition to socialism, revolutionary violence and gradual democratic reform, both nevertheless made capturing the state, albeit in different ways, their principal aim. In this way, both represented different forms of collectivism that were antithetical to Guild Socialism and the broader array of socialist knowledge orientated towards workers' control.[692]

The apparent success of Bolshevism marked by the October Revolution caused the National Guilds League to question itself and the knowledge it produced. This anxiety was combined with the already present tensions within the institution over how to understand the state. The consequences of the conjunction of the two issues revealed even deeper divisions within the knowledge system contained within the League and the different meanings of Guild Socialism. This point was candidly admitted in the editorial section of *The Guildsman* in 1920, which reflected on how, "[t]he Marxians and the Communists have challenged us to say what we mean by 'The State'… We have replied with a hundred voices, and the multiplicity of our answers has betrayed our ignorance of what we mean."[693] In response to this situation, two groups now took form within the League. "The Right" composed of members who still believed in a possible partnership between guilds and the state and rejected the revolution, and "The Left" who celebrated the Bolshevik revolution and wanted to move beyond a partnership with the state.[694] This division between these two groups corresponded to the transformation of the different meanings of Guild Socialism; as forms of knowledge associated with medievalist and corporatist Guild Socialisms increasingly became associated with support for The Right, while conversely knowledge tied to the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism moved in the opposite direction towards The Left.

The medievalist meaning of Guild Socialism was already influx owing to the wider consequences of reconstruction, which served to disrupt the possibility of the reemergence of medieval guilds. For prominent figures within the League, such as Arthur Penty, whose work, *The Restoration of the Gild System,* had been instrumental towards the construction of this meaning as discussed in chapter one. Reconstruction exposed flaws in this meaning by problematising the knowledge of craftsmanship and political economy that sustained it.

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[692] E. Screpanti and S. Zamagni, *An Outline of the History of Economic Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2010) p. 295; S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* pp.10-16
[693] *The Guildsman,* February 1920, p.2
[694] National Guilds League Annual Report 1918-1919, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 2, Nuffield College Library Oxford

The war forced Penty to revaluate his thought which he expressed in a new publication, *Old Worlds for New: A study of the Post-Industrial State* (1917). Here Penty argued that the war created new revolutionary possibilities for Guild Socialism:

"Capitalism no longer appears impregnable. Indeed, I feel the war by its reactions will break it up, and in all probability precipitate a revolution. In this light the National Guild propaganda acquires a new significance. The fact of the war has brought it within the range of practical politics, for what was impossible in times of peace may be possible in a time of revolution."[695]

Although the war seemed to increase the possibility of Guild Socialism for Penty it was nevertheless unclear how the transition towards a post-industrial guild society would occur. This possibility was increasingly doubtful in the context of reconstruction, especially due to the growth of wartime industries and trade unions which the government was now seeking to address through Whitely Councils and welfare policies. These developments seemed to make a reversal towards a de-industrialised economy based around craftsmanship appear less likely to emerge. Although reconstruction exposed this theoretical weakness in Penty's work the medievalist meaning attached to Guild Socialism remained unproblematic for many members of the League. This was due to continued importance of the historical narrative that the League worked to produce in which medievalism was a central component. This remained present in *Old Worlds for New* as well as across publications produced by the League.[696] As a result, medievalism remained bound to Guild Socialism despite the increasing contraction between theory and reality.

The Bolshevik revolution produced a further challenge to the medieval meaning of Guild Socialism. Specifically, Bolshevism represented another form of collectivism that threatened to completely overturn the historical continuity rooted in craftsmanship that produced this meaning. This threat was especially tied to the abolition of private property and collectivisation of land, which the new Bolshevik government pursued after its ascent to power at the end of 1917.[697] As such, for medievalists within the League the collectivisation of property, either through the limited forms of nationalisation discussed in Britain or more extensively in the Soviet Union, was antithetical to the kind of small-scale production based around individual craftsmanship they championed. In an effort to defend against what was perceived as the complete erasure of this kind of production defenders, such as Penty, now contradictorily wedded themselves to the idea of a sovereign state in order to act as a guarantor for the continued existence private property and craftsmanship.[698] The state would

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[695] A. J. Penty, *Old Worlds for New: A Study of the Post-Industrial State* (George Allen and Unwin, Ltd, 1917), pp. 9–10
[696] T*he Guildsman*, May 1917, pp.4-5; December 1917, pp.5-6
[697] S. Malle, *The Economic Organization of War Communism, 1918-1921* pp.29-38
[698] P. Jackson, *The Great War Modernisms* p.50; M.B. Reckitt, 'The Historical Basis of National Guilds', Guild Socialism Collection, Box 10, M/33, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK

now be a legal entity for the protection of private property which would formally certify guilds through official charters that in turn would maintain the existence of craftsmanship.[699]

The integration of the sovereign state into the medieval meaning of Guild Socialism demonstrated a restructuring of knowledge within the League. Specifically, it demonstrated how theoretical and practical forms of knowledge could be recombined in order to alter meaning therefore demonstrating the plasticity of knowledge systems. This shares parallels with the restructuring of forms of knowledge described in relation the propaganda campaign launched by the League described in chapter one. However, it also highlights the point made by Peter Burke about the institutions responsible for the organisation and production of knowledge often change slowly over time.[700] This change relates directly to the internal hierarchy of knowledge within the League which was now clearly shifting to more explicitly integrate the state.

This restructuring of meaning was not only a defensive strategy that reflected the interwar sense of crisis, but also conversely also highlighted a sense of opportunity. While for Penty reconstruction represented a moment of theoretical crisis in contrast other members of the League, such as Maurice Reckitt understood reconstruction as an opportunity to redefine the medieval character of guilds into an "organised public service".[701] This brought the medieval sounding guilds into closer linguistic proximity with the emerging welfare state and raised the idea of guilds as services under, rather than in partnership with, the state. This sense of opportunity was summarised by Reckitt in an article he published in *The Guildsman*.

"For National Guildsmen there is approaching a great temptation: all the more a temptation in that it presents itself in the guise of opportunity. The nation has suddenly become conscious of its industrial life and the problems which it presents, a banquet of "Reconstruction" is being prepared, and we may all have a finger in the pie; the "agitator" of yesterday may become— if he cares for the role — the practical reformer of to-morrow."[702]

This sentiment reinforced the sense of opportunity which reconstruction presented to Guild Socialism. Furthermore, it also underscored a new more conciliator position of 'practical reformer' rather than 'agitator', which again can be understood as bringing Guild Socialism into closer alignment with the state. In this way, both Penty and Reckitt highlight how the apparent crises and opportunities tied to the war and reconstruction were responsible for pushing the medievalist meaning of Guild Socialism towards accepting the necessity of the state.

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[699] *The Guildsman*, January 1920, pp.4-5; H. Reynard, 'The Guild Socialists' *The Economic Journal,* Vol. 30, No. 119 (1920) p.323
[700] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge* pp.25-28
[701] *The Guildsman*, September 1919, pp.7-9
[702] *The Guildsman,* April 1917, p.5

The context of reconstruction also pushed the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism into closer alignment with the state. Unlike the medievalist meaning of Guild Socialism, knowledge relating to the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism consistently emphasised the importance of the state as an economic partner with the future National Guilds and politically necessary in order to manage democracy on a top-down basis.[703] This has led Glass to argue that Fabian collectivism still exerted a large theoretical influence upon Guild Socialism.[704] This analysis is perfectly cogent especially when considered in relation to the idea that different meanings of Guild Socialism existed simultaneously. In addition, as the previous chapter has highlighted in relation to the case of Ödön Pór it was perfectly possible to adapt Guild Socialism to fit a corporatist understanding of fascism. In this sense, the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism can therefore be seen in the context of many similar political ideas during the interwar period moving along a similar axis towards the telos of the state.

The corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism was further strengthened in the context of reconstruction in relation to the proposed nationalisation of certain industries in Britain. As a result members of the League now began to argue that the state was essential to the emergence of National Guilds out of existing trade unions and even began to openly refer to guilds as "corporations" operating beneath the administration of the state.[705] These arguments marked a clear departure from the ambiguous position adopted by the League during the war and began to openly reflect a corporatist model of political economy much closer to an authoritarian model of fascism than a democratic version of workers' control.[706]

In response to Bolshevism corporatist elements within the League were strengthened. This was exemplified by C.E. Bechhofer, who argued against supporting the Bolshevik revolution on the basis that this form of socialism would place too much control over production within workshops and shop floor committees instead of centralising control of all production within government institutions. Bechhofer labeled the Bolsheviks "syndicalists" and argued the League should support the more politically moderate Mensheviks, "with whom as Guildsmen we are truly allied" because

[703] S.G. Hobson, *National Guilds and the State* (G.Bell, 1919) p.96; C. Laborde, 'Pluralism, Syndicalism and Corporatism: Leon Duguit and the Crisis of the State (1900-1925)' *History of European Ideas* Vol.22 (1996) p.228
[704] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* pp.10-16
[705] *The Guildsman*, March 1920, p.3
[706] P.J. Davies and D. Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right* (Routledge, 2002) pp.143-44

they advocated a similar partnership with the state as had emerged after the February Revolution when a dual power situation briefly existed between the provisional government and the Soviets.[707]

Bechhofer was probably more informed about the theoretical content of Bolshevism than most members of the League as both a Russian speaker and someone who had spent time in Russia.[708] However, his criticism of Bolshevism highlights a strong desire to protect the integrity of the theoretical knowledge which supported the corporatist political economy of Guild Socialism, namely a partnership between producers and consumers. In fact, what Bechhofer was reacting to was a rival body of knowledge derived from the Bolshevik interpretation of the Marxist idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which informed their version of socialist political economy. Bechhofer was not alone in this criticism as many members of the League shared this opinion and as such the dictatorship of the proletariat came to symbolise a key distinction between knowledge relating to Guild Socialism and Bolshevism.[709] Whereas corporatist guild socialists sought to create a partnership between National Guilds and the state; Bolshevism proposed capturing the state and converting it from an institution in support of bourgeoise capitalism towards one which supported proletarian socialism through the dictatorship of the proletariat.[710] The tension between these rival knowledge systems was particularly clear in a review of Lenin's *State and Revolution* (1918) published in *The Guildsman* which accepted that capitalism had corrupted the existing political system but completely rejected the idea of taking over the state through violence. Instead of "revolution" the reviewer suggested "substitution" and the gradual subtraction of powers from the state towards workers.[711] This position highlighted the rejection of Bolshevism by elements of the League who remained committed to a corporatist partnership with the existing state.

In contrast to the increasingly state-aligned positions corporatist and medievalist meanings of Guild Socialism were taking the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism moved in the opposite direction. This was supported by the development of forms of theoretical knowledge, which increasingly supported breaking away entirely from the idea of a partnership with the state. This position was highlighted by Paton who wrote in July 1917 in direct response to the discussion about the state that it was essential for "Guilds or Industrial Unions" to become "sovereign power, and that no other institution in the country will be able to seriously dispute its will."[712] The Bolshevik revolution a

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[707] *The Guildsman*, June 1918, pp.4-5; Z. Galili, *The Menshevik Leaders in the Russian Revolution Social Realities and Political Strategies* (Princeton University Press, 1989) pp.45-68
[708] M. Easson, *New Boots from the Old* pp.p.362-364
[709] *The Guildsman,* February 1918, pp.5-6; February 1920, p.1
[710] S. Malle, *The Economic Organization of War Communism, 1918-1921* pp.32-33
[711] *The Guildsman,* March 1920, pp.7-8
[712] *The Guildsman*, July 1917, p.2

few months later strengthened this position as members of the League, such as William Mellor and Margret Postgate, attempted to respond to criticisms of the revolution from medievalist and corporatist wings of the League.[713] As a result, they now became increasingly hostile towards the possibility of a partnership between the guilds and any state aligned with capitalism which would ultimately undermine any form of democratic organisation.

In order to prevent the breakup of the National Guilds League, a constitutional change was adopted in 1919 which aimed to resolve the differences between The Left and The Right.[714] This change offered a cosmetic solution to the divide by altering the wording of the objectives of the League. While the initial objectives were to abolish the wage-system and establish a system of National Guilds which would work with the state.[715] The change now adopted emphasised "National Guilds working in conjunction with a Democratic State."[716] The addition of the adjective democratic to describe the state did little to quell the dissenters on The Left, and debate over the significance of the state continued on regardless within the League.

The spring of 1920 marked a tipping point for the League as internal questions over partnership with the state merged with the question of whether to support the Bolshevik Revolution. In this moment two new theoretical statements were produced by representatives of The Left and The Right in answer to the question of how guilds should operate in relation to the state. The first, *National Guilds and the State* (1920) written by Hobson argued an explicit defence of the necessity of a singular sovereign state for a future guild society in order to defend citizenship and enhance production through cooperation between multiple guilds.[717] This argument was even illustrated by Hobson in order to clarify the hierarchical structure of the society he was proposing with a singular sovereign state mediating all other sections of the society (See Figure 17). For Hobson, the necessity of this system was because of his perception of the failed Bolshevik attempt to combine political and economic functions. As a result, he argued it was vital to keep these functions separate and therefore reiterated the need for a partnership between National Guilds and the state with the state sitting in ultimate authority in order to maintain overall stability and prevent confusion.[718]

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[713] *The Guildsman*, April 1917, p.1; August 1918, pp.2-3

[714] National Guilds League Annual Report 1918-1919, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 2, Nuffield College Library Oxford

[715] National Guilds League Rules and Constitution, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK

[716] National Guilds League Annual Report 1918-1919, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 2, Nuffield College Library Oxford

[717] S.G. Hobson, *National Guilds and the State* (G. Bell and Sons, 1920) pp.96-146

[718] S.G. Hobson, *ibid* p.351
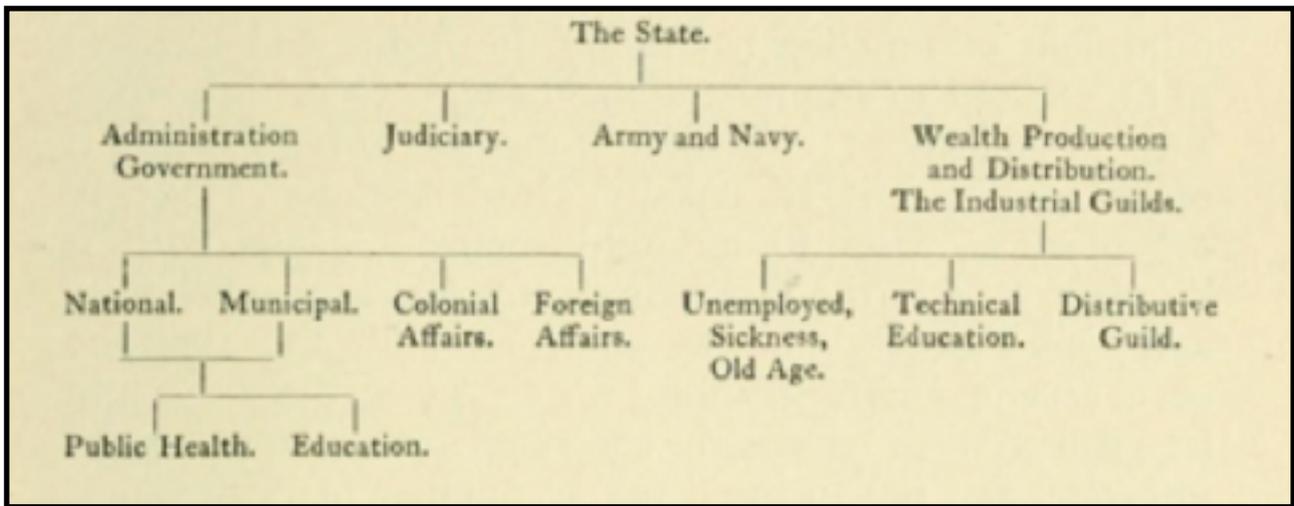
Figure 17
Illustration of Hobson's idea of the structure of a guild society
Source: S.G. Hobson, *National Guilds and the State* (G. Bell and Sons, 1920) p. 127

In contrast to Hobson's defence of the state the second book, *Social Theory* (1920) written by Cole presented a very different structure of society under Guild Socialism. This account delivered a much more abstract argument that explored the possibility of democracy in relation to different functions in society. Cole turned his attention towards the role of the state as a representative for consumers and while in the first edition of this book he claimed that this role still belonged to the State in subsequent editions in 1921 and 1923 he argued that another "inclusive body" could perform this role.[719] In fact, Cole had now begun to turn away from the state and towards other institutions, such as the Co-operative Movement, as a new potential representative for consumers, which could replace the function previously played in guild socialist theory by the State and would allow for a continuation of an equal partnership between consumers and producers.[720] This pluralist model of a guild society was illustrated by the Scottish trade unionist Mina Cowan (See Figure 18) which highlights a profoundly different model of guild society than the structure proposed by Hobson. In this new model, a singular state was entirely absent instead all political and economic functions were divided pluralistically between different guild structures.

The appearance of these two statements on the position of the state in relation to Guild Socialism reflected the development of contradictory forms of knowledge within the League. These were now becoming increasingly hostile towards each other as the tension between The Left and The Right reflected. In order to finally resolve this dispute, the League formed a special committee on the 8th of May 1920, dubbed the Committee of Five. Although this committee's official aim was to find a

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[719] G.D.H. Cole, *Social Theory* (Methuen, 1920) pp. 96–102.; G.D.H. Cole *Social Theory* (G. Bell & Sons, 1923) pp.v, 96–102

[720] G.D.H. Cole, *Self-Government in Industry* (G. Bell and Sons, 1917) p.226; *Guild Socialism Re-stated* (Parsons, 1921) pp.87-133

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solution to how the League should respond to the Bolshevik Revolution. Implicitly connected to this was the twin objective of how Guild Socialism should relate to the state.
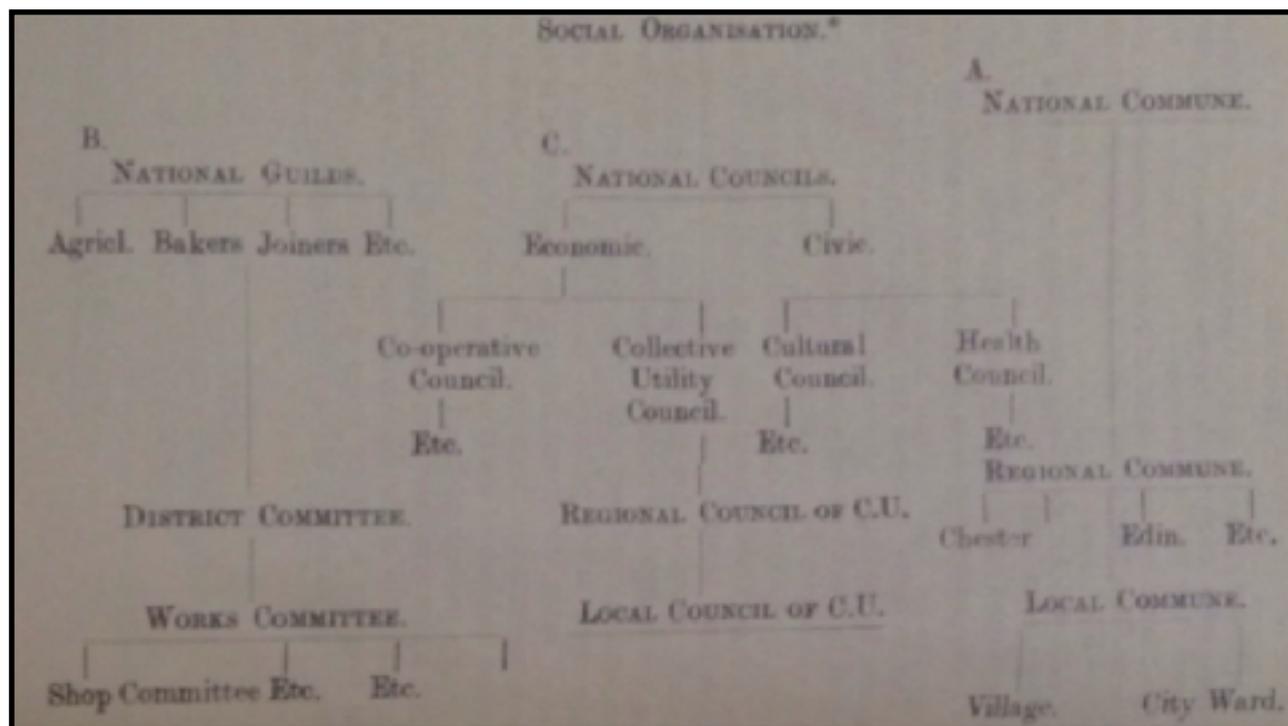
Figure 18
Illustration of Cole's idea of the structure of a guild society
Source: M.G. Cowan, *Guild Socialism* (National Unionists Association, 1923) p.16

The outcome of the Committee of Five's investigation was predictable given the individuals who made up its ranks. Robert Page Arnot, William Ewer, W.M. Holmes, William Mellor and Ellen Wilkinson, were all firmly supportive of the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism and opposed to a partnership with the state. Unsurprisingly the final report they produced concluded that the League should endorse the Bolshevik Revolution and argued that the British state should no longer be seen as a potential partner for National Guilds. Instead, a new partnership between National Guilds and co-operatives was proposed in order to maintain the economic balance between producers and consumers. As a result, the committee argued that Cooperative Movement should now be brought under the influence of Guild Socialism. While the strategy of encroaching control should be altered to place greater emphasis on encouraging worker militancy through strike actions in order to prepare for the formation of a Soviet-like system in which local government would be being taken over by workers committees.[721]

The verdict represented a decisive victory for The Left. As a result, knowledge relating to the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism now began to occupy a dominant position within the

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[721] Report from the Committee of Five, pp.4-8, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford .

League. As such in June 1920 a more dramatic constitutional change was adopted by the League which removed partnership with the "democratic state" from the constitution entirely and replaced it with, "National Guilds working in conjunction with the community."[722] Simultaneously, Cole exorcised the state entirely from his theoretical work and turn his attention fully towards the need for a concrete alternative.[723] Writing under a pseudonym in *The Guildsman* Cole now explicitly rejected the need for Guild Socialism to incorporate a partnership between National Guilds and the state or a medieval national narrative. Instead, he now claimed that the international influence of French syndicalism was the true root of Guild Socialism.[724]

By 1921 the crisis within the National Guilds League finally appeared to be over. The syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism now held a commanding position over the institution as represented by its adoption of the proposals of the Committee of Five. In response to this situation, a slew of members from The Right resigned from the League, including Penty, Reckitt, and Tawney. These departures were also accompanied by many of the most prominent members of The Left, such as Mellor and Wilkinson, who departed to join the recently founded Communist Party of Great Britain.[725] These losses placed the League in a much weaker position organisationally, but it had at least survived completely fragmenting. Furthermore, the knowledge system within the League had remained intact despite the changes which now saw the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism occupying a dominant position over corporatist and medievalist meanings.

4.3. The Building Guilds

At the same time, that internal crisis caused by the context of reconstruction was dividing the National Guilds League. Reconstruction also offered the most significant opportunities for Guild Socialism to develop. This was represented by the appearance of various National Guilds and smaller local guilds in Britain during the early phase of the interwar period. These ranged across a variety of industries and included numerous professions, such as architects, agricultural labourers, building workers, clerks, dockers, engineers, electricians, potters, tailors, furniture and instrument makers, musicians, singers, and even cricket ball makers.[726] By far the largest and most significant were the building guilds. These developed in response to the British housing crisis and the spectre

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[722] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* p.46-47

[723] *The Guildsman*, June 1920, pp.9-10

[724] *The Guildsman*, August 1920, pp.3-4

[725] National Guilds League Annual Report 1920-1921, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 2, Nuffield College Library Oxford

[726] List of Guilds, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 4, Nuffield College Library Oxford.

of mass unemployment. Additionally, the building guilds also played an instrumental role in solidifying the international reception of Guild Socialism at a time when social housing projects were being experimented with around the world for various reasons tied to reconstruction.

In January 1920 the first building guilds appeared in Manchester quickly followed by others in London, High Wycombe, Rotherham, and Warrington.[727] By the end of 1921, there were over 100 at work busily constructing mainly houses across the country. Following this development similar guilds were formed in related industries. Furniture guilds were formed first in Manchester and London and similarly spread to other urban centres tasked with furnishing the new homes. Likewise tailoring and agricultural guilds also appeared in quick succession following the building guilds that produced food and clothes for the guild workers.[728] These developments represented the exponential growth of guilds across the British economy during the early 1920s and occurred precisely at the moment when the National Guilds League appeared to be faltering due internal tensions discussed previously in this chapter. The appearance of these guilds and in particular the building guilds are therefore indicative of the dual sense of crisis and optimism which defined Guild Socialism at this point and characterised the interwar period more generally.

The emergence of building guilds was directly tied to the context of reconstruction and the British government's efforts to remedy the situation. In particular, the growing housing crisis which the government and private contractors seemed unable to solve provided a major impetus for the building guilds. The guilds were able to address this problem primarily because the business of house building had become so unprofitable for private contractors most had moved into other types of construction work. Additionally, the introduction of wartime rent restrictions also disincentivized private contractors who sought to maximise their profits even despite the introduction of government subsidies as high as £260 per house for individual builders.[729] As a result of this lack of private competition, the building guilds were, therefore, able to address this gap in the building market. In conjunction with the lack of competition the building guilds were also able to rapidly acquire funds from the British government as it attempted to tackle the housing crisis. This was provided by the Addison Act which provided loans to assist cities and towns afford the cost of building new houses and stipulated that the government would cover the cost of any financial losses for local authorities. This pool of funding created a large source of income for the guilds and as a result, the majority of early building guild contracts were for the construction of working-class

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[727] *The Guildsman,* March 1920, p.4;

[728] A. Hewes, 'Guild Socialism: A Two Year Test', *The American Economic Review*, Vol.12, No. 2 (1922) p.210; List of Guilds, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Boxes 4, Nuffield College Library Oxford.

[729] A. Hewes, *Guild Socialism* p.227

housing for municipal councils.[730] In addition, the Whitley Council scheme in response to the problem of labour relations also contributed towards the creation of the building guilds. As many of the initial building guilds grew out of committees of trade unionists who had been organised around efforts to introduce Whitley Councils into the housebuilding sector. In response, many of these trade unionists quickly abandoned this plan for joint control. Instead, they formed their own independent committees, which rapidly matured into fully operational guilds with the intent of controlling all aspects of production.[731]

While the context of reconstruction provided much of the impetus behind the formation of the building guilds the National Guilds League also played a direct role in their formation. For example, Samuel Hobson was instrumental in the development of the first building guild in Manchester and served as its secretary. Hobson helped the guild significantly by securing government approval for contracts for the first guild-built houses. Additionally, Hobson was also involved in persuading building trade unionists towards forming a guild as more effective means for them to monopolise their own labour rather than following the Whitley Council scheme. In January 1920 he addressed the Operative Bricklayers Society in Manchester to discuss the housing crisis and possibilities of Guild Socialism. This meeting was highly successful and a proposal to reform the trade union was rapidly passed up the union hierarchy to the Manchester Branch of the Federation of Building Trade Operatives who endorsed the proposal and approved the plan at a meeting on January 20th. This led to the formation of the Manchester Building Guild Committee which immediately began negotiations with the local council for the construction of houses.[732] In London, the founding of the first building guild was also guided by another member of the League, Malcolm Sparkes. Sparkes was a trade unionist who played a vital role towards establishing the London building guild and eventually became its general manager and secretary. Similarly to Hobson, Sparkes was instrumental in raising funds for the guild and was personally responsible for more than half of the £12,000 in loans that the guild secured.[733] In addition, Sparkes also publicised the activities of the guild through a stream of pamphlets he wrote about the development of the building guilds. Including, *The Call of the Guild of Builders* (1920) and *An Industry Cleared for Action* (1920), which were sold to thousands of building trade unionists.[734] In sense, members of the League therefore also played a central role towards the creation and development of the building guilds alongside the wider circumstance provided by reconstruction.

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[730] A. Hewes, *ibid* p.227
[731] *The Guildsman,* March 1920, p.4
[732] A. Hewes, *Guild Socialism* pp.227-228
[733] C.S. Joslyn, 'A Catastrophe in the British Building Guilds', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1923) p.525
[734] A. Hewes, *Guild Socialism* pp.230

Figure 19
Building contracts accepted and sanctioned by the Ministry of Health at the end of 1920.
Source: A. Hewes, 'Guild Socialism: A Two Year Test', *The American Economic Review*, Vol.12, No. 2 (1922) p.233

The success of building guilds during the early 1920s was highly visible in Britain. By the end of 1920 building guild contracts in Manchester and London were accepted by the Ministry of Health, which was responsible for administering the funding provided by the Addison Act, for over a thousand houses (See Figure 19). This was, of course, only a small drop in the ocean towards addressing the housing deficit. However, it nevertheless demonstrated the viability of the building guilds to meet this problem which was further emphasised the following year as more building guilds spread throughout the country.[735] This development continued throughout 1921 and led towards an important moment that marked their successful embodiment of guild socialist theoretical knowledge. On the 23rd of July, the National Building Guild was officially formed out of the merging of the two largest building guilds in Manchester and London and quickly incorporated smaller guilds elsewhere.[736] This represented the emergence of the first National Guild long envisioned by guild socialists and appeared to confirm the ascendency of Guild Socialism in Britain.

The formation of the National Building Guild marked a high point for Guild Socialism and was widely celebrated by League. In December 1921 the League helped to launch a new newspaper, *The Building Guildsman,* designed specifically to publicise the achievements of the building guilds. This publication increased the visibility of Guild Socialism dramatically as 20,000 copies of its first edition were printed and circulated.[737] This effort alone marked a new height for the League in

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[735] The Manchester Building Guild, *The Building Guild: Its Principles, Objects and Structure* (Co-operative Press Agency, 1921) pp.10-11
[736] *The Guildsman*, August 1921, pp.8-9
[737] *The Building Guildsman*, December 1921, p.2

terms of the visibility of Guild Socialism, which in a single month far outstripped the production of *The Guildsman*, that could only manage to circulate 15,552 copies in its best year.[738] By 1922 the League widely reported that the total value of building work undertaken by the National Building Guild was equivalent to £2,500,000. This consisted of thousands of low-density terraced houses as well as other projects, including hospitals and factories (See Figures 20, 21 and 22).[739] In addition, the League celebrated how the creation of the National Building Guild also spurred the formation of several other National Guilds, including a National Furnishing Guild and a National Tailoring Guild both formed at the end of 1921.[740]
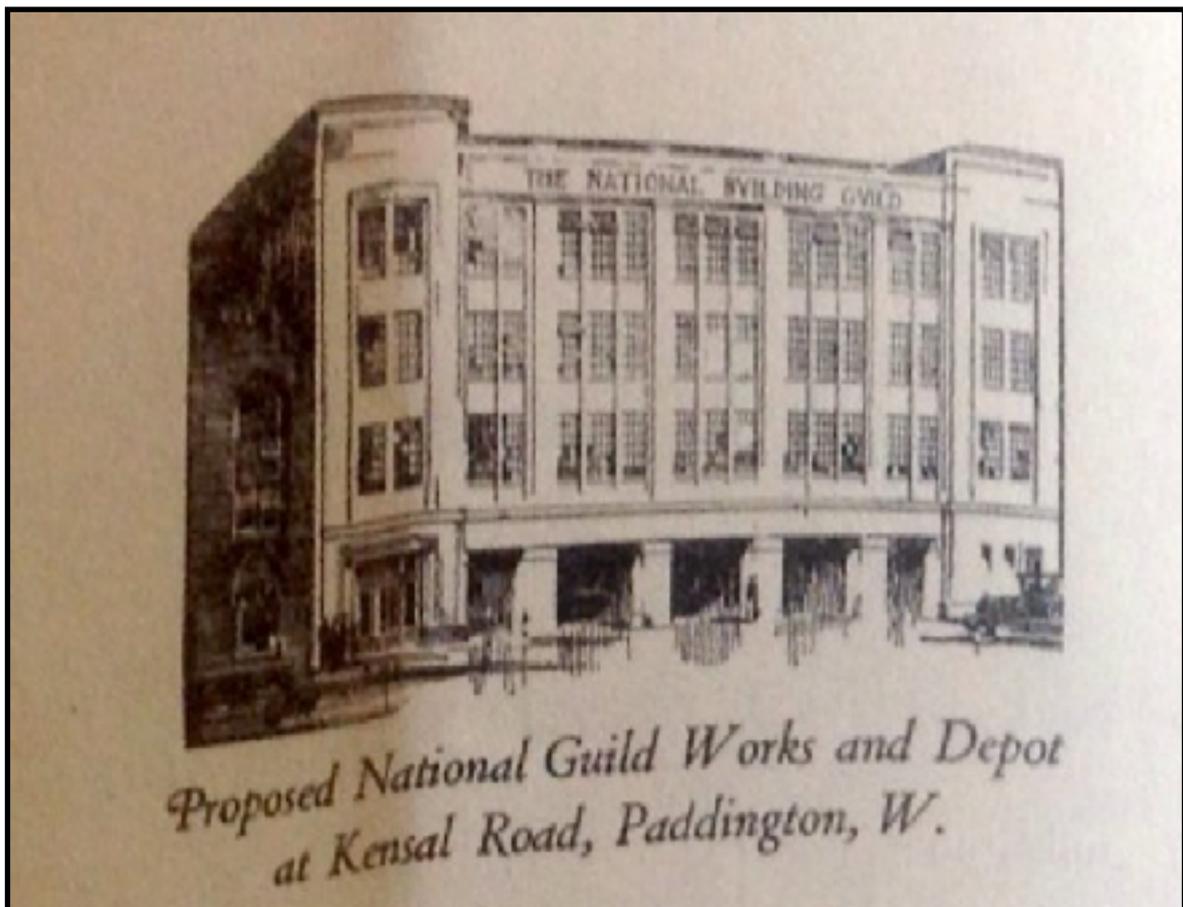
Figure 20
Illustration of a factory building proposed by the London Building Guild
Source: *The Building Guild in London* (Garden Cities Press, 1921)

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[738] Guild Socialist Statement for 1921, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, M/36, Nuffield College Library, Oxford.
[739] J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing: 1815-1985* (Methuen, 1986) p.223; *The Guildsman,* December 1920, pp.9-10; June 1922, p.9; October 1921 p.9
[740] *The Guildsman,* June 1922, p.9; December 1922, pp.3-4

Figure 21

Figure 22

Figures 21 and 22 depict examples of houses built by the London Building Guild.
Source: *The Building Guild in London* (Garden Cities Press, 1921)

4.3.1. Two Accounts of the Building Guilds in Britain

The achievements of the building guilds have largely been overlooked by historians who have tended to mention them only briefly in their accounts.[741] The only exceptions to this trend are Frank Matthews and Mark Swenarton's separate accounts which mainly focus on the roles performed by Hobson and Sparkes towards establishing the building guilds and Arthur Penty's broader influence over them.[742] In order to address this lacuna, two independent accounts of the building guilds will now be considered produced by Carl Joslyn and Ernest Selley. Both of these observers witnessed the workings of the buildings guilds during the early 1920s and provide an insight into the different forms of knowledge they employed which contributed to the meaning of Guild Socialism.

Born in the United States Joslyn was an economics student who traveled from Cambridge Massachusetts to Britain in 1922 in order to conduct a detailed study of the building guilds activities in London between March and April.[743] Joslyn was characteristic of the trend of academic socialist intellectuals who took an interest in Guild Socialism, especially in the United States as

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[741] This marginalisation is largely due to the focus historians have tended to place on key intellectuals rather than institutions such as the League or organisations like the building guilds. For an excellent study of this historiography see D. Blaazer, *Guild Socialism and the Historians* pp.1-15

[742] F. Matthews, 'The Building Guilds' in A. Briggs and J. Saville's (eds.) *Essays in Labour History 1886-1923* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1971) pp.284-331; M. Swenarton, *Artisans and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought* (MacMillan Press, 1981) pp.167-188

[743] C.S. Joslyn, 'The British Building Guilds: A Critical Survey of Two Years' Work', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1922), pp. 75-133

discussed in the previous chapter, which the League encouraged through personal visits and book sales as part of its correspondence network.[744]

Although Joslyn's account reproduced much of the celebratory propaganda produced by the League about the building guilds. This was combined with his own observations and presented a balanced, but nevertheless positive, interpretation. For example, Joslyn did not hesitate from mentioning the limited impact of the building guilds in relation to the overall housing market, which he claimed constituted only a tiny fraction somewhere between one and two percent and therefore had little effect on the overall housing crisis. These observations were balanced against the small-scale successes the building guilds were able to achieve. Including how in London building guilds had been able to secure £20,000 worth of building equipment and complete 1200 high-quality houses.[745]

Joslyn's background in economics drew his attention especially toward the cost and efficiency of guild labour. According to Joslyn, while the average privately contracted building worker would lay somewhere in the region of 350 bricks in a day, guild labourers were almost twice as efficient and laid between 700 and 800 bricks a day.[746] Despite this difference, Joslyn was quick to note that the building guilds were opposed to prioritising efficiency above other factors. Instead, he argued that they preferred to emphasise high-quality craftsmanship while attempting to avoid the dehumanising effects of industrialised production. In contrast, Joslyn noted that in the United States where the doctrine of scientific management was applied to the building industry, which meant that on average a worker would typically lay somewhere in the region of 3000 and 4000 bricks per day.[747] As a result, Joslyn concluded that the building guilds eschewed this kind of efficiency and instead aimed towards a different understanding of efficiency in relation to the cost of production.[748] This meant that the building guilds aimed towards producing houses on the basis of the cost of building materials and were, therefore, an "industry organized for service" rather than for profit. Instead of building houses for profit, guild production was seen as a form of public service which in economic terms balanced consumer and producer relations. This arrangement, Joslyn claimed, was a benefit for consumers in need of houses who would receive them at a lower price because they only had to

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[744] E.D. Ellis, 'Guild Socialism and Pluralism', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Nov., 1923), pp. 584-596; R.G. Tugwell, 'Guild Socialism and the Industrial Future', *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Apr., 1922), pp. 282-288; S. Zimand, *Modern Social Movements* (H.W. Wilson Company, 1921); N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism (D. Appleton, 1922);* H.W. Laidler, *Socialism in Thought and Action* (Macmillan Company, 1920); A. Hewes, 'Guild Socialism: A Two Year Test', *The American Economic Review*, Vol.12, No. 2 (1922); A.M. Bing, The 'British Building Guilds' *The Survey* (1921); G.D.H. Cole to the Frederick A. Stokes Company, 21.7.1920-21.3.1921, Letters, George Douglas Howard Cole Papers*,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam.

[745] C.S. Joslyn, *The British Building Guilds* p.76

[746] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* p.114

[747] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* pp.114-116

[748] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* p.90-91

pay the cost of building materials. In return guild workers, as producers, benefitted by being paid for their labour at a standard rate on a continuous basis, whether they were working or not, with any surplus inadvertently created reinvested into the building guilds. Joslyn was especially interested in this policy of continuous pay. In particular, he anticipated the criticism that this policy would lead automatically towards laziness amongst workers, without profit or poverty as an incentive. Instead, he understood continuous pay as a far more cost-effective system in comparison to similar welfare systems in France, Germany, and the United States, which provided sick-pay for workers.[749] Therefore in terms of cost and efficiency, Joslyn concluded that building guilds proved to be economically superior to other models of house building despite their small scale.[750]

As well as providing this account of the building guilds Joslyn's assessment also highlights the influence of multiple forms of knowledge which continued to influence the different meanings tied to Guild Socialism. In particular, this account highlights the importance of craftsmanship and the "quality of Guild workmanship" involved in producing "superior quality" housing.[751] The knowledge of this craftsmanship was of course tied to the medieval narrative which the League had worked to produce. As such, Joslyn claimed, "It is an ambition of the guildsmen to do work that shall equal, if not surpass, in quality that done by the craft guilds of the Middle Ages".[752] Interestingly, Joslyn linked this form of knowledge to another when he claimed that this craftsmanship would be supported by the guarantee of continuous pay, which not only served as a guard against unemployment but also reflected knowledge of political economy tied to the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism. As Joslyn pointed out, continuous pay represented the strength of the theory of bottom-up democratic structures which the building guilds exhibited whereby guild workers were directly responsible for administering all aspects of production including payment for labour.[753] Intertwined with these meanings Joslyn also highlighted the corporatist meaning of Guild Socialism in association with the building guilds when he points out their role as an "organized public service".[754] In this way, Joslyn highlighted knowledge about the theoretical partnership between the guilds and the state and specifically the agreement with the Ministry of Health which funded the building guilds. In this sense, Joslyn identified how the public service the guilds were performing by addressing the housing crisis was also tantamount to existing under the control of the state which they were reliant on for funding.[755] Joslyn's account therefore

[749] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* pp.110-112
[750] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* p.112
[751] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* p.107
[752] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* p.96
[753] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* p.123
[754] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* p.91
[755] C.S. Joslyn, *ibid* p.78

serves to represent the diversity of forms of knowledge tied to the building guilds which were generated by the knowledge system within the National Guilds League.

In contrast to Joslyn's account, Ernest Selley provided a much richer regional study of the building guilds. This was due to the fact that he lived in Britain, which allowed him to conduct a more extensive study of building guilds in London, Bolton, and Manchester. Selley was an advocate of the Garden Cities Movement and a member of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association and as a result, was deeply interested in the prospect of self-sufficient urban planning. Despite studying a wider selection of building guilds Selley's account identified many of the same aspects of the building guilds which Joslyn identified. Furthermore, it also provided another example of firsthand insight into many of the practices of the building guilds which also serve to reveal the multiple forms of knowledge and different meanings tied to Guild Socialism. For example, Selley's account also drew attention to the democratic structures the guilds used to elect managers and committees, which he claimed served to severe some of the distinction between rank-and-file members and supervisors, or as he put it, "[a] man may be a rank-and-file bricklayer and a director at one and the same time."[756] These practices of democratic organisation were fundamental according to Selley, alongside the guarantee of continuous pay which he claimed produced better quality of work.[757] As result, Selley drew attention to precisely the same practical application of forms knowledge that Joslyn drew attention, in the building guilds that defined the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism. In addition, Selley also drew attention to the high-quality craftsmanship performed by the building guilds which he noted also had received positive endorsements from officials at the Ministry of Health, urban surveyors, and the workers themselves. Knowledge of craftsmanship was central to the building guilds in Selley's account. Allegedly one worker Selley interviewed in Manchester described their efforts as, "work worthy of the Middle Ages", while another was claimed to have said, "[w]e are craftsmen and the first thing with us is our craft. We like doing our work well. There's no pleasure in scamping. Any man who is a craftsman will tell you that."[758] These statements indicate the high esteem lavished on knowledge of craftsmanship within the building guilds, which was associated with medievalist meaning of Guild Socialism promoted by the National Guilds League.[759]

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[756] E. Selley, 'An Inquiry into the Working of the Building Guilds' in *The Building Guild in London* (Garden Cities Press, 1921) pp.4-6
[757] E. Selley, *ibid* p.6
[758] E. Selley, *ibid* p.9
[759] A.J. Penty, *Old Worlds for New: A study of the Post-Industrial State*, (1917) pp.45-46; *Post-Industrialism* (1922) p.86, 103

Despite these similarities, Selley's account also differs from Joslyn's in relation to the question of public service. For Selley, the building guilds provided a distinct form of public service through their response to the housing deficit because unlike private building contractors they were not motivated by profit. This understanding of the guilds response to the housing situation and threat of unemployment was distinct from Joslyn's in that Selley noted that this was not intensionally in service of the state. Instead, Selley argued that the building guilds represented an independent synthesis of consumer and producer interests which formed a balanced economic relationship between the two.[760] This analysis highlighted how Selley's account rejected the corporatist overtones present in Joslyn's work, therefore, re-emphasising the point made in the previous chapter about the different receptions of knowledge related to Guild Socialism.

Ultimately, despite their differences both Joslyn and Selley's accounts painted favourable pictures of the building guilds which are indicative of the different forms of knowledge they embodied in relation to the knowledge system within the National Guilds League. Furthermore, they are also indicative of growing interest in alternative models of reconstruction which were developing in Britain. This interest was not limited to Britain as the international reception of building guilds will now consider.

4.3.2. The International Reception of the Building Guilds

The international reception of the building guilds was widespread and varied. This highlights different factors which motivated local actors to become interested in knowledge relating to building guilds. Furthermore, it also highlights the role of the National Guilds League which actively worked to promote the building guilds among international audiences. However, before examining this development it is important to highlight the wider context of social housing experiments that were mushrooming around the world during this period that the building guilds also fit into. This subject has been taken up by Owen Hatherley who argues that during the interwar period utopian ideas combined with post-war material needs in order to create new models of housing. In particular, Hatherley highlights post-revolutionary Russia, Germany, Austria, Latvia and Poland where modernist ideas of town planning were adopted, often inspired by the Garden Cities Movement, to produce small houses and low-rise flats in green spaces without gaudy nineteenth-century bourgeois or imperial ornamentation.[761]

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[760] E. Selley, *The Working of the Building Guilds* p.3
[761] O. Hatherley, *Landscapes of Communism: A History through Buildings* (Penguin, 2015) pp.13-16

In addition, it also is important to understand that new house building projects during the interwar period were by no means the exclusive domain of leftwing progressives. As such modernist ideas for housing were also adopted as part of right-wing and colonial projects during the interwar period. Algeria, for example, became an important sandbox for the Société des architectes modernes (Society of Modern Architects) and was a testing ground for Le Corbusier's ideas, particularly the ultimately unimplemented Plan Obus that sought to radically redevelop Algiers.[762] In Indonesia, the Dutch authorities on the pretext of improving public hygiene passed a series of housing acts empowering city councils during the 1920s to undertake major urban redevelopment through the creation of housing companies that would ultimately make conditions far worse for the urban masses and intensify divisions between colonial and indigenous populations.[763] Furthermore in Italy, Mussolini's ascendency in 1922 had led to an elaborate program of modernist public housing aimed not only toward working-classes, but also the middle-classes, and was spearheaded by the Instituto per le Case Popolari (Institute for Social Housing), which by 1930 had provided apartments for 60,000 of Rome's 900,000 inhabitance.[764]

Understood in this wider context of social housing experiments the building guilds in Britain were therefore part of a much larger trend of attempts to address what was surfacing as a global housing question in the interwar period. In this moment when new housing solutions were being actively sought out the apparent successes of the building guilds drew international attention shedding a wider spotlight onto Guild Socialism and the activities of the National Guilds League.

In general, the international reception of the British building guilds was overwhelmingly positive. However, it is important to distinguish the varying factors which helped to determine this. Different local actors clearly appropriated knowledge relating to the British buildings guilds to suit their own needs. This was particularly clear represented by the efforts of Martin Wagner and the Internationalen Baugildenverband discussed in the previous chapter, which attempted to position the building guilds and Guild Socialism within its broader framework of trade union internationalism. Wagner himself understood reconstruction as a major motivation for international cooperation and also drew attention to the rising number of socialists represented in parliaments around the world and the increasing power of trade unions as symptoms of this.[765]

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[762] M. Lamprakos, "Le Corbusier and Algiers: The Plan Obus as Colonial Urbanism" in N. Al Sayyad's (eds) *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Aldershot, 1992) pp.183-210
[763] J.L. Cobban, 'Public Housing in Colonial Indonesia 1900-1940' *Modern Asian Studies,* Vol.27, No. 4, (1993) pp.871-896
[764] H. Bodenschatz, 'Public Housing in Fascist Rome: A European Perspective', *Journal of Architectural Culture* (2017) pp.97-111
[765] *New Standards,* March 1924, pp.147-150

The National Guilds League was also actively involved in promoting the international reception of the building guilds. In particular, *The Guildsman* and especially its regular column, Guilds at Home and Abroad, described in chapter two, featured numerous accounts about the international significance of the building guilds. These celebrated the British building guilds and also recirculated information from around the world about local efforts to develop building guilds elsewhere. Collectively the paper announced building guilds either in existence or in the process of forming in Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Hungry, Italy, Ireland, Palestine, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and the United States.[766] Although little evidence exists to support these claims they nevertheless represent the increasingly international narrative the League was attempting to construct around itself via the reception of the building guilds.

Beyond describing the international reception of the building guilds in *The Guildsman*. The National Guilds League also actively attempted to position the building guilds within other journals and encyclopaedias connected to international labour organisations. For example, the League worked particularly hard to appeal to the International Labour Office of the League of Nations in order to have the building guilds listed in the *International Labour Directory*. In this case, the League was successful and managed to persuade the journal to accept the National Building Guild in the same section as the VSB, the Federation Italian dei Consorzi e delle Cooperative Edili (Italian Union of Building Guilds) and the Consorzi Delle Cooperative Metalurgiche Italian (Italian Federation of Metal Workers' Co-operative Guilds).[767] Similar efforts were also made by guild socialists to position the building guilds within large international events, such as the Exposition Internationale de la Cooperation et les Ouevres Sociales (International Exhibition of Cooperation and Social Works) in Brussels in 1924. In this case, pressure was put on the director of the exhibition, Victor Serwy, to include the building guilds and feature French and German language translations about their efforts.[768] These actions ultimately indicate the willingness of the League to promote the building guilds internationally signifying that it was not only actors like Wagner and the Internationalen Baugildenverband who were interested in connecting the British building guilds to international audiences.

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[766] *The Guildsman,* July 1920, p.6; August 1920, p.5; July 1921, p.7; February 1922, p.4; May 1922, pp.7-8; July 1922, pp.4-5, August and September 1922, p.7; February 1923, p.8; April 1923, pp.6-7; May 1923, p.4
[767] G. Fauquet to the National Guilds League, 9.5.1923, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford
[768] V. Serwy to the National Guilds League, 17.6.1924, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford

Besides these efforts to position the building guilds in relation to international trade unionism the international reception of the building guilds was also mediated by other factors tied to the wider context of reconstruction. These reveal the varied nature of reconstruction during the interwar period and produced different motivations which explain why local actors became interested in the building guilds.

In Japan interest in the building guilds emerged particularly strongly after the Great Kantō earthquake in 1923. This event devastated Tokyo and caused widespread damage throughout the Kantō region leaving 2.5 million people homeless and over 110,000 dead.[769] The scale of this event was on the minds of many Japanese members of the National Guilds League who made frequent mentions of the earthquake in their correspondences and served to motivate their interest in house building.[770] In particular, many Japanese correspondents expressed opinions similar to the university lecturer, Teijiro Fukunaga, who taught at the Tokyo University of Commerce and claimed to be studying with great interest, "the recent tendency of reconstruction theory in England, especially the Guild Socialism of Mr G.D.H. Cole."[771] Fukunaga was particularly affected by the earthquake which according to his own testimony destroyed university buildings and the homes of almost a quarter of his students. As a result, he showed particular interest in knowledge about the successes of the building guilds and the conditions which gave rise to them. This led him to order backdated copies of *The Guildsman* from between 1920 to 1922 in order to understand this period in detail.[772]

Similar to many other Japanese members of the League Fukunaga's interest in the building guilds were also subsumed within an existing local narrative of reconstruction. This took many forms, but was often expressed as "social reconstruction" by Japanese correspondents who promoted this message and advocated Guild Socialism in journals and magazines including *Hihyō* (Critique), *Kaizō* (Reconstruction) and *Shakai-shugi-Kenkyū* (Studies of Socialism).[773] As a result, interest in Guild Socialism increased dramatically in Japan, particularly after 1923. This was demonstrated by

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[769] J.C. Schencking, 'The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Culture of Catastrophe and Reconstruction in 1920s Japan' *The Journal of Japanese Studies,* Vol. 34, No. 2 (2008) p.296

[770] T. Yamanaka to G.D.H. Cole, 3.2.1924, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford; K. Ukita to G.D.H. Cole 1.4.1924, Letter, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam.

[771] T. Fukunaga to the National Guilds League, 28.5.1923, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford

[772] T. Fukunaga to the National Guilds League, 17.12.1923 and 28.5.1923, Letters, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford

[773] K. Murobuse to the National Guilds League, 7.5.1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford; K. Yamakawa to the National Guilds League, February 1920, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford; S. Yamamoto to the National Guilds League, 5.9.1921, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford

the rising frequency of letters received by the League from Japan and the increasing numbers of translations from English to Japanese of books written about Guild Socialism by members of the League.[774] This ultimately suggests that the existing narrative of social reconstruction in Japan, plus the damage caused in 1923, and the knowledge constructed by the League about the successes of the building guilds combined to make the building guilds a desirable model to study in Japan.

In South Africa interest in the building guilds was motivated by different factors. In part, it was stimulated by the demand for housing in South Africa which was tied to the growth of the economy during the war which stimulated urbanisation. In particular, the mining, farming, and manufacturing sectors grew rapidly in response to import substitutions during the war which continued until 1920. This economic growth drew workers to the cities and led to housing shortages. Especially, in areas close to large centres of employment which made housing a focal point for workers to organise around.[775]

In addition to the increased demand for housing parts of the South African labour movement also shared close ties with the National Guilds League and wider international syndicalist movement. These connections also aided the positive reception of the building guilds in South Africa. In June 1916, a group of mainly white craft unions banded together to form the Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU) which aimed along syndicalist lines to organise all workers in the building industry into a single union and to increase workers' control in their workplaces.[776] These aims were the product connections between trade unionists in South Africa, Britain and the United States. In particular, the IWW played a strong role in converting immigrant workers like the provisional secretary of the BWIU Charlie Tyler to syndicalism.[777] Likewise, Guild Socialism also played a significant role in influencing the BWIU, in particular one of its founding members, William Andrews. In 1918 Andrews travelled to Glasgow in order to meet trade unionists from across Britain.[778] Upon his return to South Africa Andrews had now held a new view of trade unionism influenced by knowledge relating to Guild Socialism.[779] This experience led to the formation of the National Guilds League of South Africa in Johannesburg in 1919 and the announcement in 1922

[774] K. Ukita to G.D.H. Cole, 1.4.1924 and 16.1.1925, Letters, *George Douglas Howard Cole Papers,* Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam.
[775] L.van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism in South Africa* p.380; M. Nicol, "A History of Garment and Tailoring Workers in Cape Town, 1900-1939", PhD thesis, University of Cape Town (1984) p.446
[776] E. Gitsham and J.F. Trembath, *A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa* (Durban: E.P. and Commercial Printing, 1926.) p.19
[777] I.L.Walker, and B. Weinbren, *2,000 Casualties: A History of the Trade Unions and the Labour Movement in the History of South Africa* (South African Trade Union Council, 1961) p.191; L.van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism in South Africa* p.237; L. van der Walt and M. Schmidt, Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism (AK Press, 2009) *pp*.16-17
[778] R.K.Cope, *Comrade Bill: The Life and Times of W.H. Andrews, Workers' Leader* (Cape Town, 1940) pp.186-200
[779] *ibid* p.68-69

that the BWIU would reform itself into a building guild. According to reports sent to the League this building guild was in full operation in Grahamstown in 1923.[780] The growing appeal of the building guilds in South Africa during this point was also recounted in many of the memoirs from building trade unionists. For example, Ernst Gitsham and James F. Trembath point out that both the building guilds and Guild Socialism served as plausible alternatives for the labour movement to follow which prioritised workers' control.[781] As a result interest in the building guilds and knowledge about Guild Socialism more generally in South Africa was tied to the character of the labour movement during this period in conjunction with the expanding pressure for housing brought on by the war.

In Austria the reception of the building guilds was motivated by a different set of conditions created in response to the war. The breakup of the Austro-Hungarian empire at end of the war produced a new socialist government in Austria. Under the control of Austro-Marxists from the revolutionary years of 1918-1919 until 1934 the new government pursued a vigorous house building program.[782] Although the new administration was unable to nationalise land entirely, it nevertheless began a program of urban reconstruction based on close cooperation between local government and trade unions funded by a luxury and housing tax. These measures enraged private landlords who accordingly would form the backbone of support for the later rise of fascism. However, before this resistance could gather itself in the 1930s, rents were frozen at between 2-4 percent of the average workers income and between 1925 and 1934 60,000 new flats were built.[783]

Central to these efforts in Vienna was the Siedlungs-, Wohnungs- und Baugilde Österreichs (Austrian Builders' and Civic Improvers' Guild) which was formed in 1921. This organisation combined the support of building trade unions, the Austrian Garden Cities Association, and tenants associations under the direction of the Austro-Marxist philosopher and admirer of Guild Socialism, Otto Neurath. Neurath was keen to form connections with the building guilds in Britain, which he made particularly clear in a letter sent to the League in 1922.

"We beg you to help us enter into contact with all English organisations that are interested in the Guild Movement or that are themselves guilds. We beg you to inform these organisations of the foundation of our guild and to send us the adresses [sic]. Will you kindly also send us rules and

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[780] A.E. Jordan of the National Guilds League of South Africa to the National Guilds League, 21.3.1919, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford; C.T. Campion to the National Guilds League, 9.5.1922, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford; C.T. Campion to John Langdon Davies, 18.4.1923, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 9, Nuffield College Library Oxford.
[781] E. Gitsham and J.F. Trembath, *A First Account* pp.142-143
[782] H. Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working Class Culture, 1919-1934* (Oxford University Press, 1991) p.12
[783] O. Hatherley, *Landscapes of Communism* p.15

orders, statements of conditions and other publications referring to the Guild Movement? At the same time we thank you for the valuable informations [sic] sent to the Forschungsinstitut für Gemeinwirtschaft in Vienna, they have been very helpful to us."[784]

Direct communication and the exchange of information was not the only connection Neurath helped to form with British building guilds. Indeed it seems likely that the choice of name Siedlungs-, Wohnungs- und Baugilde Österreichs, which featured 'Baugilde' a direct German translation of building guild, was itself an attempt to use translation knowledge to link the two together. This thereby constituted another example of intellectual synchronicity which had already been discussed in chapter two as a means of connecting knowledge relating to Guild Socialism to other locations.[785] In this case, the reception of Guild Socialism was also influenced by the wider intellectual context which had formed in Vienna following the war and the popularity of the subject amongst many German-speaking socialists at this point also discussed in chapter two. Furthermore, thanks largely to the efforts of economist Karl Polanyi Guild Socialism had become particularly popular in Vienna amongst both German-speaking intellectuals and the emigre Hungarian communities in the city.[786] In relation to these factors, the positive reception of the building guilds in Austria can therefore be seen to be tied to the socialist house building projects already underway in Red Vienna and existing connections to the National Guilds League. These factors facilitated the positive reception of the building guilds, especially amongst socialists, in Vienna.

These examples serve to highlight the growing international reception of the building guilds which was tied to different factors associated with post-war reconstruction. Both local actors and the National Guilds League were actively involved in promoting the building guilds and connecting them to different locations. This was mediated by different factors associated with the larger context of post-war reconstruction that structured these encounters and made housing in various ways a global concern. As such knowledge related to the British building guilds became increasingly popular internationally during the early 1920s in relation to different local circumstances.

Conclusion

The flourishing of Guild Socialism in relation to post-war reconstruction brings into focus various factors which mediated this development. Firstly it confirms Samuel Hobson's prediction in 1918

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[784] O. Neurath to the National Guilds League, 13.1.1922, Letter, pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library, Oxford.
[785] S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* p.66; C.L. Hill, *Conceptual Universalization* pp.134-158
[786] G. Dale, 'Karl Polanyi in Vienna: Guild Socialism, Austro-Marxism and Duczynska's Alternative', *Historical Materialism,* Vol.22, No.1 (2014) pp.34-66

that the future of Guild Socialism would be intimately tied to the context of reconstruction in Britain.[787] This can clearly be seen in relation to the range of responses the National Guilds League adopted over the next few years in response to policies adopted by the British government to tackle labour relations, housing, and the threat of mass unemployment. In particular, the League's rejection of Whitley Councils and change of policy towards nationalisation indicate this point. Furthermore, the formation of National Guilds and smaller local guilds in Britain highlights how the context of reconstruction created the conditions for these developments. In particular, the growth of the building guilds and the National Building Guild were the result of the demand housing which neither the government nor the private contractors were able to directly solve, the availability of funds provided by the Housing and Town Planning Act, and the growth of support for workers' control amongst trade unionists.

Secondly Hobson's argument that the international development of Guild Socialism after the war would also be tied to the situation in Britain was also correct. In fact, the broader international context of reconstruction influenced the development of Guild Socialism in Britain. Characteristic of this was the number of similar responses around the world to the question of reconstruction, which mirrored developments in Britain. Including enhanced welfare policies, industrial councils, nationalisation programs and social housing projects. This broader context of policies towards reconstruction helps to situate the British case. Furthermore, it serves to reinforce the broader argument that Guild Socialism was not solely produced in relation to circumstances in Britain. Instead what is revealed is that the development of guild socialist responses to reconstruction in Britain was informed by this wider context. This involved connections and comparisons formed by the National Guilds League to similar nationalisation proposals like the Plumb Plan in the United States and the Deutsche Kohlegemeinschaft in Germany. While in the opposite direction international interest in the League's responses to Whitley Councils and proposals for joint control strengthened connections between the development of Guild Socialism in Britain and correspondents elsewhere, such as Arthur McCarthy in New Zealand and Ödön Pór in Italy. This evidence indicates that the National Guilds League's efforts to redefine the meaning of reconstruction in Britain were intimately tied to the broader international context of reconstruction. Furthermore it also indicates that a range of locations and different historical actors were involved in facilitating connections between themselves and the League.

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[787] *The Guildsman*, July 1918, pp.2-3

A dual sense of crisis and opportunity characterised the development of Guild Socialism during the early interwar years. This reflected the wider conditions of the interwar period and post-war reconstruction specifically. Acknowledging these circumstances has helped to expand the scale of analysis of Guild Socialism beyond the national boundaries of Britain. Additionally, it also allows for knowledge to be used as a potent category of analysis to explain the effects wrought by reconstruction on the multiple meanings tied to Guild Socialism.

Crisis defined the National Guilds League as it sought to reconcile itself with the changing context of reconstruction in Britain. This was particularly visible in relation to the debate that emerged within the League over the relationship between Guild Socialism and the state. This brought to light internal tensions within the knowledge system contained within the League as different types knowledge relating to visions of political economy came into direct conflict. Interconnected questions of sovereignty, capitalism, and the lack of a clear central orthodoxy characterised this struggle. These tensions in the knowledge system were especially visible in relation to theoretical knowledge about the possibility of a partnership between National Guilds and the state, which was increasingly criticised as the League began its campaign against the government's proposals to introduce Whitley Councils and nationalise the mining and railway industries. The Bolshevik revolution intensified this struggle as the League scrambled to respond to this event producing a clear split in the organisation between what became known as The Right and The Left. The appearance of these two groups reflected the growing tensions between different forms of knowledge within the League and the changing meanings associated with Guild Socialism. On the one hand, knowledge relating to medieval and corporatist meanings of Guild Socialism was increasingly reformulated towards supporting the state. This occurred as a result of the perceived threat posed by Bolshevik understandings of dictatorship of the proletariat, forms of collectivisation and the changes to the British economy and trade unionism as a result of the war. While, on the other hand, knowledge relating to the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism moved in the opposite direction and became increasingly hostile to the possibility of a partnership between National Guilds and the state. This crisis reveals a shift in the hierarchical structure of the knowledge system within the League as knowledge related to the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism now became hegemonic within the organisation. This transformation very nearly destroyed the League in the process and led to a slew of resignations which significantly weakened the institution in the years still to come.

Accompanying this moment of internal crisis within the National Guilds League was a sense of intense opportunity. This was characterised most clearly by the emergence of the building guilds

and the National Building Guild. The guilds highlighted the range of different forms of knowledge associated with Guild Socialism. Including valuing high-quality craftsmanship over efficiency, continuous pay, democratic managerial structures, and competing understandings of public service. These served to demonstrate the continued existence of a multiplicity of meanings associated with Guild Socialism. The reception of building guilds both in Britain and internationally further reinforced this point and also brings to light a range of additional factors that motivated interest in the building guilds which was also tied to the broader context of reconstruction. For instance, the devastation to housing caused by the Great Kanto earthquake in Japan motivated local affiliates with the National Guilds League to become particularly interested in knowledge relating to the building guilds combined with an existing narrative of social reconstruction. Elsewhere political and economic consequences of the First World War in relation to house building spurred efforts to develop connections with the League and the building guilds in Austria and South Africa. These cases help to highlight the broader argument that local actors found a variety of motivations to engage with knowledge related to Guild Socialism and adapted it to suit their needs thereby adding to the overall content of the subject. The League was also actively involved in promoting these interactions and actively sought to construct interest in building guilds by promoting them internationally through journals and encyclopaedias as well as its own publications, such as *The Guildsman*.

As a direct result, the subject of Guild Socialism was now becoming increasingly international and divorced from its earlier national framing. The conditions for this development were shaped by the wider international context of reconstruction. Furthermore, despite the internal divisions within the League this moment represented a high point for the development of Guild Socialism. This would begin to unravel in the following years as will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Precarious Guild Socialism

On the 14th of October 1925, the offices of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* wrote to G.D.H. Cole with bad news. "[F]or reasons of space" the editor explained, the upcoming edition of the encyclopaedia would not be able to include an entry about Guild Socialism. Instead, the editor suggested that the subject could be included in a general entry about "Socialism" which Cole could write.[788] Several years later Cole received a similar letter this time from, *The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. In this case, the editors decided that Guild Socialism did warrant its own section which would be 1,000 words long. However, this amount of words was comparatively much smaller than other apparently more important subjects that would feature in the encyclopaedia. For instance, both "Bolshevism" and "Fascism" were each given 5,000 words, while "Imperialism" received 10,000 words.[789] These two incidents highlight the decline in popularity of Guild Socialism during the 1920s which this chapter examines. This contrasts with previous chapters in this thesis which have examined the rising prominence of Guild Socialism during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The decline of Guild Socialism has received relatively little attention from scholars. Those few who have examined this phenomenon have argued that Guild Socialism was quickly subsumed within larger British political institutions during the interwar period. For instance, Mark Bevir has claimed that the subject became integrated within the Labour Party during the late 1920s in an attempt to revitalise the party's democratic impulses.[790] While Tim Rogan has claimed that Guild Socialism was used as a means to defend the corporatist proposals of the Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan against their association with fascism during the early 1930s.[791] These assessments are broadly true as knowledge relating to Guild Socialism was integrated into a range of new hosts across the political spectrum, but predominantly on the British Left. Building on these accounts this chapter highlights the variety of different institutions which began to integrate Guild Socialism in order to construct a more comprehensive picture of what happened to the knowledge attached to this subject. This serves to reiterate part of the overall argument of this thesis that different forms of knowledge were associated with Guild Socialism and led to a multiplicity of meanings which were

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[788] The Encyclopaedia Britannica to G.D.H. Cole, 14.10.1925, Letter, George Douglas Howard Cole Papers, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[789] The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences to G.D.H. Cole, 22.03.1928, Letter, George Douglas Howard Cole Papers, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[790] M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton University Press, 2017) p.312

[791] T. Rogan, *The Moral Economists: R. H. Tawney, Karl Polanyi, E. P. Thompson, and the Critique of Capitalism* (Princeton University Press, 2019) pp.112-113

then adopted by a variety of different actors. In addition, this chapter also serves to highlight another core aspect of this thesis, namely how the changing fortunes of knowledge related to Guild Socialism reflect the wider condition of the British Left during the interwar period.

Where current scholarship largely falls short is by considering the decline of Guild Socialism as a linear process that occurred only in relation to Britain. As this chapter argues the decline of Guild Socialism was not a linear process but instead one characterised by efforts to reverse this possibility. This involved historical actors located both inside and outside of Britain. Thereby, re-articulating the need to consider the global dimensions of Guild Socialism in order to understand the decline of this subject. In order to examine all of these concerns this chapter is guided by two questions: why did Guild Socialism decline? And, what were the consequences of this decline?

In order to answer these questions, we must now turn our attention to the title of this chapter. The term 'precarious' is used in direct reference to the concept of precarious knowledge developed by the historian Martin Mulsow which is used to explain the decline of Guild Socialism. According to Mulsow, wherever there is knowledge there is also the potential for its destruction along with those who bear it. As a means to explore this phenomenon, Mulsow develops the concept of precarious knowledge which he uses to explain the potential threats to knowledge and knowledge carriers as well as strategies used to defend against these dangers. According to Mulsow multiple threats exist including the physical destruction of containers of knowledge, such as books or people, or the changing social status of knowledge carriers, which allows certain knowledge to be considered acceptable or illicit. In order to guard against these potential dangers, Mulsow describes how knowledge can be preserved through different strategies, like printing or institutionalisation, to secure its long-term survival.[792] These insights are relevant in the case of Guild Socialism because they provide a means towards understanding both how the subject came under threat and the strategies employed by historical actors like the National Guilds League to defend it. This, therefore, builds upon previous chapters in particular chapter one which has already described in detail how the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism defined and protected knowledge relating to this subject.

The preservation of knowledge is also taken up by Peter Burke who stresses the importance of centralisation and materiality. For Burke, the physical preservation of carriers of knowledge in the form of written paper increasingly led towards the creation of state archives and the

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[792] M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen: Eine andere Ideengeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012) pp.11-37

professionalisation of archivists trained to administer huge quantities of knowledge. These archives were explicitly designed to preserve knowledge. However, as Burke points out the centralisation of knowledge in such a way can also prove dangerous, such as in the case of the burning of the Great Library of Alexandria. As such, Burke highlights an important potential risk inherent to this strategy of preserving knowledge through the centralisation of physical vulnerability of materials because they reveal an obvious target, which if destroyed can cripple a knowledge system.[793] This observation combines with Mulsow's understanding of threats and defensive strategies towards precarious knowledge. In the case of Guild Socialism this analysis can also be used to describe the National Guilds League. While the League had certainly worked to strengthen and refine Guild Socialism by marshalling and excluding different forms of knowledge. Its centrality to the development of Guild Socialism also made it an obvious weak point.

Another means to consider the precariousness of knowledge is described by Simone Lässig who draws attention to the constantly changing tensions between different knowledges. For Lässig the rivalry between different forms of knowledge, which results in the creation of dynamic and hierarchical knowledge systems is an important consideration.[794] This is commensurable with Mulsow's reflection on the social position of knowledge carriers. As it helps to highlight how changing social conditions can result in the elevation or decline of knowledge within a broader knowledge structure. This is important to consider in relation to Guild Socialism because it helps to highlight the changing context it was situated within and the adjacency of other ideas which it competed against for support. This has already been demonstrated in the case above, in relation to Bolshevism and Fascism, which both gained increasing attention as the interwar period progressed, thereby contributing towards the marginalisation of Guild Socialism.

The structure of this chapter is divided into three parts. Part One focuses on the period between 1921 and 1923 and assesses the conditions which led to the collapse of the League in 1923. In order to understand the reasons behind this event, it is necessary to examine three factors that contributed to this moment. The failure of the National Building Guild, internal pressures within the League's knowledge system, and external pressures from other socialist institutions within the British Left. Collectively these factors help to demonstrate how threats against the League became manifest.

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[793] P. Burke, *What Is the History of Knowledge?* (Polity Press, 2016) pp.134-138

[794] S. Lässig, 'The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda' *Bulletin of the GHI Washington*, Issue 59 (2016) pp.51-53

Part Two analyses the period directly after the collapse of the League between 1923 and 1926 when various actors associated with Guild Socialism attempted to prevent its further decline. This pays attention to the strategy of re-institutionalisation and efforts to construct a new institutional body, the National Guilds Council, for Guild Socialism to inhabit. These efforts were partially successful resulting in the creation of several new local guilds and coincided with growing international interest amongst academics in Guild Socialism which was also mediated by the Council. This section, therefore, serves to demonstrate the efforts taken to stabilise knowledge relating to Guild Socialism constituting a small resurgence during this period.

Part Three examines the consequences of the 1926 British general strike and miners' strikes in relation to Guild Socialism. As such it explores how these events highlighted the precarity of knowledge associated with Guild Socialism and led towards an assertion of collectivism which displaced the demand for workers' control in Britain. In addition, this section also examines the consequences which followed 1926 when individual carriers of Guild Socialism scattered and attempted to find new institutional hosts to implant the knowledge they possessed.

5.1. The Failure of the National Guilds League

In June 1923 National Guilds League formally ceased to exist. This followed a successful vote to disband the institution taken at its last annual conference, which was attended by just 33 people. Those few who opposed this decision were members of The Right, whose position had been weakened by the internal battle within the League over the meaning of Guild Socialism, discussed in the previous chapter, and resulted in an internal change that lessened the influence knowledge relating to the medievalist and corporatist meanings of Guild Socialism.[795] In contrast, those in favour of abolishing the League represented the winning side of this argument, The Left, who supported the now dominant syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism. The decision to abolish the institution they had won control over was reached due to a combination of challenges that confronted the League between 1921 and 1923. Collectively these factors served to weaken the League as an institutional container for Guild Socialism while also undermining the knowledge that produced the meanings associated with the subject. In order to understand this situation each of these three challenges will now be assessed individually.

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[795] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control: The Formation of British Guild Socialism* p.381

5.1.1. The Collapse of the National Building Guild

The most immediate reason behind the failure of the National Guilds League was the collapse of the National Building Guild at the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1923. This event was cataclysmic for the League in two ways. On the one hand, the successful rise of building guilds in response to the housing crisis after the war had been heavily celebrated by the League, which had come to associate the National Building Guild in particular with an embodiment of Guild Socialism in action. In this sense, the building guilds represented a clear target in the terms described by Burke, which if destabilised would call into question the theoretical and practical precepts of Guild Socialism the League had worked to construct. On the other hand, the National Building Guild was also by far the largest financial commitment tied to the League. As such this connection presented a significant liability towards maintaining the League as an institution and therefore undermining the primary container of Guild Socialism. Thereby also highlighting the important material dimension of knowledge preservation Burke also describes.[796] In these ways, the National Building Guild presents an important case to consider in relation to the decline of Guild Socialism, which makes visible the precarious nature of both knowledge and its carriers in the process, while also highlighting the close relationship between material conditions and knowledge.[797]

The primary reason behind the failure of the National Building Guild was the removal of its main source of financial capital provided by publicly funded building contracts. These had been made available by the introduction of the Housing and Town Planning Act in 1919, which provided large amounts of public money for house building after the war and was administered by the Ministry of Health. However, while the initial post-war years were defined by the agenda of reconstruction in Britain, as discussed in the previous chapter, characterised by widespread public spending and state intervention to avoid economic depression and political revolution. This period was followed by the introduction of a new austerity program in Britain, which reversed the previous policy of public spending and cut the main source of income for the building guilds.

The introduction of this austerity program began in 1922 and quickly became known as the 'Geddes Axe'. Named after the Conservative MP, Eric Geddes, who chaired a government committee on reducing national debt and expenditure in 1921.[798] Initially, cuts were made to defence spending, which dropped from £189.5 million between 1921-1922 to £111 million between 1922-1923.

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[796] P. Burke, *What Is the History of Knowledge?* pp.134-138

[797] M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen* pp.18-19

[798] D. Boothroyd, *The History of British Political Parties* (Politico's Publishing Ltd, 2001), p.15

However, these cuts were soon expanded to the new welfare provisions created after the war meaning that public investment in education, healthcare, housing, pensions, and unemployment fell from £205.8 million to £182.1 million during the same period. The cuts to welfare spending were even more sustained than the ones made to defence, as the following year defence spending increased while welfare was further reduced to £175.5 million between 1923-1924.[799] These cuts were devastating for the building guilds, which were heavily reliant on the large amounts of government funding provided under the Housing and Town Planning Act for the creation of social housing to address the ongoing national housing crisis.

The trigger for this change in government policy was an economic slump that began in 1921 and marked an end to the post-war economic boom experienced in Britain.[800] In response, political groups, such as the newly formed Anti-Waste League, pressured the government to reverse public spending and high taxation at a time when the economy was going into recession.[801] In addition, the threat of a serious global recession was quickly felt in the export-dependent British economy resulting in rising unemployment figures and reducing exports to half of prewar levels.[802]

Rising unemployment and cuts to welfare had a devastating effect on trade unions in Britain which in turn weakened the building guilds who were exclusively reliant on trade union labour. In June 1921 government estimates placed the total number of unemployed workers at just over 2 million, while guild socialist estimates, which tried to include unregistered workers, placed the figure much higher at around 2.5 million.[803] The rise in unemployment corresponded to a huge decline in trade union memberships as workers struggled to afford membership fees and unions floundered to support their shrinking pool of members with dwindling financial reserves. As such this moment marked the beginning of a long period of stagnation for British trade unions which would continue throughout the 1920s and only begin to recover during the late 1930s.[804]

In tandem with the worsening economic situation for the building guilds, a political struggle was also emerging at the same time. This conflict pitted the National Guilds League and the building guilds on the one hand against the government, moderate trade unionists, and private building

[799] G. Peden, *The Treasury and British Public Policy 1906-1959* (Oxford University Press, 2000) p.169

[800] R. Dimand, *The Origins of the Keynesian Revolution* (Aldershot, 1992) p.7

[801] M. Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts: Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars* (Pimlico, 2006) p.76

[802] E.H. Carter and R.A.F. Mears, *A History of Britain: Liberal England, World War and Slump* (Stacey International, 2011) p.154

[803] G.D.H. Cole, *Unemployment and Industrial Maintenance* (Labour Publishing Company, 1922) p.2

[804] N.C. Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976* p.104

contractors on the other. At the core of this dispute was a demand for more funding made by the building guilds, under pressure from the League, precisely at the moment when public funding was being reduced. This demand was not only a response to the new austerity program, which placed pressure on the building industry, but was also a product of the newly dominant syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism within the League that reshaped the institution accordingly. Among the modifications was a change in name for its main organ, *The Guildsman,* which became, *The Guild Socialist,* and a serious reevaluation of the strategy of encroaching control used to develop workers' control. Initially encroaching control was envisaged by the League as a means for workers to gradually take over their workplaces by gaining increasing control over different functions, such as deciding managerial structures, paying wages, hiring and dismissing workers. However, in response to the new syndicalist direction within the League, a new more aggressive approach emerged. This was based on the now prominent belief within the League that the state was merely an instrument of capitalist class interests and therefore could not be trusted to idly allow the erosion of employers' dominant position.[805] As a result, the League began to promote guilds and trade unions to be more aggressive in their efforts to adopt continuous pay policies, which were now referred to as "industrial maintenance", and towards obtaining collective contracts, in order to protect against the rising levels of unemployment.[806]

In order to distinguish this new model of encroaching control, the National Guilds League drew attention to the difference between this system and the unemployment benefits provided by the state. As such guild socialists argued, while benefits amounted to little more than "State charity" and equated it with the centuries-old Poor Law which had been aimed to curb vagrancy. In contrast, industrial maintenance suggested that workers should be paid regardless of whether they were working or not, in order to increase their social status, security, and freedom.[807] This system would be ensured by collective contracts, which meant all workers would be equally protected and would be administered by trade unions and guilds. In accordance with this new strategy, the League pushed for these policies to be written into all new building guild contracts, therefore, representing the turn against the state and the now dominant syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism promoted by the League.[808]

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[805] *The Guildsman,* August 1918, pp.2-3; May 1920, pp.5-6
[806] *The Guild Socialist* February 1921 pp.1-2
[807] G.D.H. Cole, *Unemployment and Industrial Maintenance* p.5
[808] S.G. Hobson, *Building Guilds Ltd: Future Forms of Contract*, Memorandum, 27.06.1921, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, Nuffield College Library.

The arrival of this new policy alarmed the Minister for Health, Christopher Addison, who was directly responsible for authorising all building contracts provided to the guilds. In particular, Addison was disturbed by the unspecified cost implied by industrial maintenance for each new building contract, which led him to announce a moratorium on all future building guilds contracts at the end of 1920. Initially, this threat did not faze the League or the leaders of the building guilds who remained confident that the unresolved housing shortage and popular support for a solution would force Addison to change his mind.[809] However, in February 1921 tensions between the two sides increased as unemployment figures began to rise dramatically. In light of the worsening economic situation, the League and building guilds argued even more forcefully for all new building contracts to include clauses for industrial maintenance.[810] In response, Addison refused to change his position due to the now spiralling cost of building materials caused by the recession. Furthermore, he became increasingly isolated within the government attacked from the left for not delivering on the reconstructionist plan for 'Homes for Heroes', and from the right by the anti-waste campaign. As a result, Addison was removed from his position at the Ministry of Health in March 1921 and replaced by a new health minister, Alfred Mond.[811]

This change of ministers did nothing to affect the intractability of the Ministry of Health. In response, the League now began to argue that private building contractors and moderate trade unionists were responsible. In particular, figures, such as the ex-president of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers, Stephen Easton, were identified as also being responsible for supporting Addison's decision to withhold contracts from the building guilds. As such, members of the League argued, "[Easton] is willing to cut off his nose or any other prominent feature to spite the nose of the Building Guilds."[812]

According to the National Guilds League Easton belonged to a group of moderate trade unionists who opposed the anti-capitalist implications of Guild Socialism. Furthermore, this group was responsible for conspiring with employers in the building industry and lobbying the government against the building guilds with the demand that the guilds should operate on the same commercial principles as themselves.[813] There is some validity to these claims since Easton did hold a position

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[809] *The Guildsman*, December 1920, p.7

[810] *The Guildsman*, February 1921, pp.1-2

[811] K. O. Morgan, 'Christopher Addison (1869–1951)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2011) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30342?rskey=NEQBfw&result=4

[812] *The Guildsman*, February 1921, p.1

[813] S.G. Hobson, *Building Guilds Ltd: Future Forms of Contract*, Memorandum, 27.06.1921, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, Nuffield College Library.

as an official advisor to the Ministry of Health. He even resigned this position due to the alleged preferential treatment given to the building guilds claiming, "the building guilds were doing a gross injustice to the building trade" by not operating on the same profit motive as private building contractors.[814] However, beyond this evidence, it is difficult to determine how real this conspiracy was, in particular, due to the worsening economic situation at this point, which is a far more convincing explanation for why funding to the building guilds was cut.

Confronted with the reality of no longer being able to obtain public building contracts the National Guilds League and the building guilds retreated from the demand for industrial maintenance in the summer of 1921. They consoled themselves at this moment as the National Building Guild came into existence, which seemed to represent the solidification of Guild Socialism. Seizing this moment the Ministry of Health proposed a series of new "Guild Labour Contracts", which would reopen public finances to the building guilds.[815] These contracts amounted to a system of joint control which would allow local government to take over control of the supply of materials and machinery necessary for building projects while leaving the guilds in charge of organising labour. This offer divided the League and building guilds who were torn between the need to secure funding and the risk of compromising the demand for workers' control. Instead, a counter-proposal was created by the League for "Maximum Sum Contracts", which proposed that building guilds would retain complete control over labour, materials, and machinery, but would give full costings of each building contract in advance with any excess costs being covered by the guilds.[816] This system would ensure that the price of houses built by guild labour was still cheaper than other contractors, but was rejected by the Ministry of Health, therefore leaving the funding issue for the building guilds to continue.[817]

Alongside the worsening economic situation and political opposition, the building guilds were also undermined by internal mismanagement. In particular, the actions of Samuel Hobson as the secretary of the National Building Guild have been drawn attention to by historians who argue that he was directly responsible for allowing the building guilds to expand and centralise too rapidly while accepting more work than necessary thus exacerbating the need for funding at a time when

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[814] *The Manchester Guardian*, 4th March 1921, p.7; G.D.H. Cole, 'The Progress of the Building Guilds in Great Britain' *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (1922) p.178

[815] S.G. Hobson, *Building Guilds Ltd: Future Forms of Contract*, Memorandum, 27.06.1921, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, Nuffield College Library.

[816] S.G. Hobson, *Building Guilds Ltd: Future Forms of Contract*, Memorandum, 27.06.1921, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, Nuffield College Library.

[817] *The Guild Socialist*, August 1921, p.8-9

they arguably should have been consolidating and reducing their operations.[818] Hobson's role went further than this as he was largely responsible for maintaining the bullishly confident image of the National Building Guild despite the financial crisis undermining it. This was particularly evident when Hobson failed to reveal the extent of the desperate situation the National Building Guild found itself in as it attempted to secure loans to avoid financial ruin. Hobson can perhaps be partly excused for not revealing the full extent of the building guilds ruinous position by the psychology of market capitalism, which required a positive image to encourage investment. This problem speaks to the difficulty the building guilds found themselves in while operating in a capitalist environment and a lack of effective management in response.[819] Indeed, despite the best efforts of the League, guilds and trade unions, to raise the necessary sum of £40,000 to support the National Building Guild only around £12,000 could be gathered in the form of donations and loans, thus financially dooming the building guilds.[820]

Hobson's actions also serve to highlight the high degree to which the success of Guild Socialism was invested in the building guilds and in particular the National Building Guild, which made their shortcomings and material instability difficult to divulge. This placed significant pressure on both to demonstrate their ability to embody Guild Socialism and tackle the housing crisis. This hubris was widely reflected in publications produced by the League, which excessively celebrated the achievements of building guilds, despite the relatively small impact they made towards reducing the housing deficit.[821] This was particularly clearly represented in *The Guild Socialist* which continuously carried positive accounts about the building guilds activities in Britain and the international attention they were receiving during this period.[822] In addition, the National Building Guild became the focus of a large number of pamphlets and was often cited as a paradigmatic example of Guild Socialism in terms of its validation of theoretical positions, such as democratic workers' control.[823] As a result, the National Building Guild came to embody a significant concentration of the theoretical knowledge which defined Guild Socialism. Due to this position, the failure of the National Building Guild served as a devastating indictment against Guild Socialism and a reputation of its theoretical principles. Additionally, the collapse of the National Building Guild was a major financial loss for the League which weakened its operations. This serves to

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[818] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Workers's Control* p.381; G. Ostergaard, *The Tradition of Workers Control* p.76
[819] M.I. Cole, *The Control of Industry* (Labour Publishing Co.Ltd, 1921) p.4
[820] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Workers's Control* p.349
[821] C.S. Joslyn, *The British Building Guilds* p.76
[822] *The Guild Socialist,* November 1921, p.8; April 1922, pp.5-8; May 1922; August 1922 p.7
[823] The National Guilds League, *The Policy of Guild Socialism* (Labour Publishing Company, 1921) pp.16-20

highlight the precariousness of knowledge in relation to certain material carriers of knowledge and the danger of centralising knowledge in a particular location.[824]

The detrimental effects of the failure of the National Building Guild were omnipresent in *The Guild Socialist,* which itself ceased production several months later due to a lack of finances. Members of the League wrote opinion pieces mourning the failure and placing blame on the government's austerity program, alongside opponents to the building guilds and Hobson.[825] These accusations were accompanied by international voices, such as, Dov Hos, who served as the Palestinian representative to the third congress of the International Building Guild Federation in May 1923. According to Hos, the lack of progress made by the international organisation was directly tied to "the crisis in the English Guild Movement" in response to the collapse of the National Building Guild, which many of the different national building guild movements looked to explicitly.[826] As a result, the collapse of the National Building Guild was a critical blow that demonstrated the vulnerability of investing knowledge about Guild Socialism into one central location. However, it was not the only serious challenge that emerged during this period.

5.1.2. Pressure within the League

Alongside the collapse of the National Building Guild pressure within the National Guilds League over the meaning of Guild Socialism also came into question between 1921 and 1923. In particular, a new idea, Douglasism, caused consternation within the League and threatened to reorientate the knowledge system within the institution and change the dominant meaning of Guild Socialism. This was particularly damaging since the League had only narrowly survived the previous conflict in response to reconstruction, discussed in the previous chapter, and had not recovered in terms of its membership which had declined steadily since 1921. The new divide caused by Douglasism thereby highlighted the precariousness of the League as a knowledge carrier. Due to the lack of central orthodoxy it instilled as an institution and its inability to effectively exclude forms of knowledge that threatened to contradict the existing dominant meaning of Guild Socialism.

Douglasism, also known as the Douglas Social Credit System, was the name given to a new vision of political economy which emerged in Britain around the First World War and took its name from its principal advocate, Clifford Hugh Douglas. It rivalled Guild Socialism by offering alternative

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[824] M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen* pp.18-19
[825] *The Guild Socialist,* June 1923 pp.4-6
[826] *The Guild Socialist,* July 1923 p.10-11

solutions to many of the same problems the League sought to address, including the wage system and balancing consumer and producer interests.

Born in 1879 Douglas grew up in Manchester and from an early age was attracted to study engineering. He pursued a career in engineering after completing his initial education at Stockport grammar school and became a member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (1904–20) and later the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (1918–36). During the First World War Douglas worked for the Royal Aircraft Establishment in Farnborough, where he organise production and accounted for costs. In this position, the germ of Douglas's idea began to grow based on his recognition that the wages paid to workers, which he took to be the amount available they had to purchase goods, were less than the collective price of those products. In order to remedy this deficiency in purchasing power, Douglas advocated that additional money should be given to consumers, or that subsidies should be provided to producers in order to allow them to lower costs. Through these means, which became known as social credit, production and consumption would be liberated from the price system, allowing for increasing worker prosperity without altering the system of private ownership or profit.[827]

Douglas's investigations into this problem lay the foundation for his argument in favour of the creation of a national dividend as a means to distribute debt-free credit equally to all citizens. This would be distributed universally on top of all individual earnings and was designed to bridge the gap between purchasing power and prices as a means of addressing the unequal relationship between production and consumption.[828]

Douglasism, therefore, presented an alternative form of theoretical knowledge as a means towards solving the same inequality that Guild Socialism addressed through the creation of National Guilds. Additionally, this new solution was also aimed directly at the same target the League had attacked, the wage system. Despite these similarities, the two ideas led in radically different directions. Instead of advocating the development of workers' control or the reorganisation of the ownership of the means of production, which the League promoted, Douglasism proposed an expanded form of state welfare, which would be controlled by the government in order to guarantee economic stability.[829] In tandem with the idea of social credit Douglas also advocated the creation of a price

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[827] C. B. Macpherson and M. Pottle, 'Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879–1952)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* (2004) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32872
[828] C.H. Douglas, *Social Credit* (Cecil Palmer, 1924) pp.17,111
[829] G. Ostergaard, *The Tradition of Workers Control* p.73

mechanism to fix prices, which would also be administered by the state in order to prevent inflation from rising above incomes.[830]

According to Frances Hutchinson and Brian Burkitt, Douglasism represented a monetary reform movement, which arose in parallel with Guild Socialism. However, unlike the latter which addressed a wide selection of problems across different industrial sectors, in contrast, Douglasism remained solely focussed on the issue of monetary reform.[831] Furthermore, Geoff Ostergarrd has argued that despite its "guild flavour" Douglasism departed theoretically from the idea of workers' control and instead proposed that industrial democracy could only be achieved through the regulation of finance.[832] Despite these divergences, contemporaries at the time were often confused by the apparent similarities between Douglasism and Guild Socialism, which was largely due to the way they were presented side by side.

Between 1916 and 1920 Douglas developed his idea and began to publicise it in various newspapers eventually published two books on the subject, *Economic Democracy* (1920) and *Credit-Power and Democracy* (1920).[833] Douglas soon came into contact with the editor of *The New Age,* Alfred Orage, who offered him a weekly platform to publicise his idea. Orage had kept a careful distance from Guild Socialism since the founding of the League, which he had refused to join. Although *The New Age,* still featured articles that positively endorsed Guild Socialism, as the war years progressed and the syndicalist elements within the League grew stronger Orage became increasingly unsympathetic towards the subject.[834]

A conspicuous example of Orage's growing hostility towards Guild Socialism and the League came in 1920. In reaction to the suggestion that French syndicalism was the true inspiration behind Guild Socialism published in *The Guildsman*.[835] Orage wrote a series of letters where he refuted this argument and reaffirmed the nationalist claim that Guild Socialism was the sole product of, "English Socialists."[836] In addition to this incident, Orage was also deeply hostile towards the Bolshevik revolution. This event led him to conclude that the whole idea of workers' control was deeply flawed and he now believed that without extensive technical training workers would not be

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[830] F. Hutchinson and B. Burkitt, *The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism* (Routledge, 1997) pp.50-54

[831] F. Hutchinson and B. Burkitt, *ibid* pp.7-29

[832] G. Ostergaard, *The Tradition of Workers Control* p.73

[833] F. Hutchinson and B. Burkitt, *The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism* p.7

[834] G. Ostergaard, *The Tradition of Workers Control* p.72

[835] *The Guildsman*, August 1920 pp.3-4

[836] *The Guildsman,* September 1920, p.11

able to manage large industries by themselves. These reactions are indicative of the way in which Guild Socialism had through the creation of the League drifted away from Orage's control causing him to search for a new political program to influence. Douglasism, therefore, emerged as a new candidate for Orage to promote, which he claimed overcame the limitations of workers' control by shifting attention towards the control of monetary policy.[837]

The National Guilds League was initially curious about Douglasism and began to seriously consider its implications after becoming aware of it via *The New Age*. In March 1920, G.D.H. Cole wrote a review of *Economic Democracy* in *The Guildsman*, which attempted to distinguish Guild Socialism and Douglasism. Here he argued that Douglasism appeared to be more of an adaptation of capitalism which preserved its fundamental inequalities rather than an alternative form of political economy, which Guild Socialism represented.[838] This assessment was met with approval by other members of the League who agreed with this conclusion.[839] In this sense, the League although curious about Douglasism at this stage was nevertheless hesitant to integrate it into its own knowledge system because of its apparent theoretical incompatibility with the anti-capitalist implications of Guild Socialism. This response was also shared by others on the British Left, such as the Labour Party who also rejected the idea of social credit in 1922 despite the considerable interest Douglasism was attracting in Britain during the early 1920s thanks largely to *The New Age*.[840]

Despite the initial skepticism within the National Guilds League internal support for Douglasism began to grow over the next several months. This prompted a resolution passed at the National Guilds League's annual conference in May 1920 for an official inquiry into the viability of integrating the subject into the meaning of Guild Socialism.[841] The response to this decision was similar to the previous inquiry into the Bolshevik revolution and led to a polarisation of opinion within the League by 1921. Opponents to the idea of accepting Douglasism into the meaning of Guild Socialism were united around several arguments. These included the initial argument that social credit did not reject capitalism instead it only "reshuffled the cards" and promoted a fairer version of the same system.[842] Another common criticism claimed that despite its intention social

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[837] G. Ostergaard, *The Tradition of Workers Control* pp.72-73

[838] *The Guildsman*, March 1920, pp.8-9

[839] *The Guildsman*, April 1920, p.8

[840] C. B. Macpherson and M. Pottle, 'Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879–1952)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32872

[841] National Guilds League Annual Report 1919-1920, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

[842] *The Guild Socialist*, August 1921, p.9

credit would in fact weaken purchasing power for consumers and producers because it would simply lead to inflation.[843] While others argued the system would result in an overwhelming state bureaucracy which would be necessary to sustain such a scheme.[844] These arguments reflected the now dominant syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism within the League firmly opposed to capitalism, in favour of developing guild structures and adverse to cooperation with the state.

Against these arguments, dissenters argued that the integration of the Douglas social credit system was necessary, especially after the collapse of the National Building Guild.[845] This event demonstrated the vulnerability of Guild Socialism and the precariousness of its carriers, therefore, necessitating a change in theoretical direction in order to reestablish the crumbling guilds. Furthermore, they also argued that the critics of Douglasism had misunderstood the theory, which they found perfectly reasonable, and exaggerated fears of a bureaucratic state.[846] These conclusions indicated the continued existence of other meanings of Guild Socialism within the League. In particular, corporatist Guild Socialism was still present in the idea of a partnership with the state through the social credit system.

The consequences of this debate were dire for the National Guilds League. Since neither side was willing to concede the League began to haemorrhage support. In March 1922 regional branches in Coventry, Glasgow and Paisley, formally withdrew from the League and explicitly cited the intractability of the Douglasism debate as justification for their decision.[847] This was especially significant because it illustrates how the debate within the League over Douglasism weakened the institution during this period prior to the collapse of the National Building Guild. Additionally, as Alan Clinton has pointed out trade unionists in particular postal workers who had previously been supportive of Guild Socialism now began to switch allegiances to Douglasism due to the infighting within the League and the worsening economic conditions in Britain.[848]

The declining support for Guild Socialism amongst trade unionists also extended beyond Britain as the debate over Douglasism was circulated through the communication network around the League. In New Zealand, the gunsmith Arthur McCarthy, who had been instrumental for the circulation of guild socialist propaganda among local trade unionists abandoned support for the League and

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[843] *The Guild Socialist*, September 1921, pp.6-7
[844] *The Guild Socialist*, April 1922, p.4
[845] *The Guild Socialist*, January 1923, p.10
[846] *The Guild Socialist*, May 1922, pp.5-6; July 1922 p.11
[847] *The Guild Socialist*, March 1922 p.9
[848] A. Clinton, *Post Office Workers: A Trade Union and Social History* (George Allen & Unwin, 1984) p.392

became an advocate for Douglasism.[849] Douglasism also became increasingly popular in other locations where Guild Socialism had previously been popular amongst trade unionists. For example, in Australia, Canada, Japan, and New Zealand several small political parties were formed in support of social credit after Douglas himself conducted lecture tours there during the 1920s.[850] Simultaneously communication between trade unionists in these locations and the League also declined. This is indicative of the general decline in support for the demand for workers' control amongst trade unionists globally during the interwar period as support for welfare-state solutions, like social credit, increased.[851]

The National Guilds League was aware of this danger and fought to prevent the loss of its international membership by attempting to distance Guild Socialism from advocates of Douglasism. In one letter sent in 1923 to a correspondent in the small Danish town of Skive the League sought to clarify its position, "The New Age did good work for the Guild idea before and during the war, but long ceased its connection with our propaganda, having become an organ of the Douglas Credit scheme."[852] Similarly, in 1922 Margaret Cole (nee Postgate) attempted to distance the two ideas in her response to the first lengthy scholarly analysis of Guild Socialism published in the United States by Niles Carpenter.[853] In her review, Cole frankly argued that the book had devoted a disproportionate amount of space to Douglasism and considered the idea far too closely in relation to Guild Socialism.[854]

Ultimately the efforts of the League to first integrate and then exclude Douglasism from the meaning of Guild Socialism indicate the vulnerability of the subject and its associated knowledge carriers. In particular, the niche appeal of Guild Socialism among certain audiences, specifically socialist intellectuals and trade unionists, made the subject easy to confuse and contest with similar ideas such as Douglasism. This posed a particular problem within the League where different meanings of Guild Socialism existed and had already recently come into conflict. Speculatively, if conditions had allowed the League to recover members and form a clear orthodoxy around syndicalist Guild Socialism perhaps the internal threat of Douglasism could have been averted.

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[849] J. Vowles, *From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism* p.299

[850] C. B. Macpherson and M. Pottle, 'Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879–1952)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-32872; J. Martin-Nielsen, 'An Engineer's View of an Ideal Society: The Economic Reforms of C.H. Douglas, 1916-1920' *Spontaneous Generations: A Journal for the History and Philosophy of Science*, Vol.1 No.1, (2007) p.100

[851] M. van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History* p.78

[852] The National Guilds League to T. Sparre, 14.12.1923, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 8, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

[853] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism: An Historical and Critical Analysis* (Appleton, 1922)

[854] *The Guild Socialist*, December 1922, p.9

Indeed, previously the League had been able to exclude certain forms of knowledge in order to refine Guild Socialism as discussed in chapter one. However, in an already weakened state, the League found itself unable to do this, thereby illuminating the potential danger of a dynamic knowledge system, which could be undermined through internal tension, thereby destabilising the institutional protection the League provided for Guild Socialism.[855]

5.1.3. External pressures from other parts of the British Left

Alongside the internal pressures placed upon the National Guilds League by Douglasism, another serious threat was posed by alternative knowledge systems within the British Left. These threatened to subsume knowledge associated with Guild Socialism and produced their own alternatives. In particular, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was ascendant during the early 1920s and actively promoted its own brand of Bolshevism in affiliation with the Third International. Simultaneously, the Independent Labour Party (ILP), Fabian Society, and the Labour Party also rallied during this period producing a congested environment that highlighted the precariousness of the League within the context of the British Left. This situation indicated a new polarity within the British Left between the CPGB and Labour Party, which left smaller socialist institutions like the League in an increasingly marginalised position. As a result, this demonstrates how the changing conditions around knowledge carriers can affect the value of knowledge and induce a state of precarity.[856]

The founding of the CPGB was widely supported by many members of the National Guilds League. Ellen Wilkinson was an especially prominent example of this trend. Wilkinson was the secretary of the Manchester branch of the League in 1918 and by 1921 sat on the governing executive committee of the whole institution. In these positions, she encouraged other members of the League to embrace a more revolutionary position and called for an immediate transition to communism in Britain. As a result, she was labeled the most prominent, "guild communist" within the League by G.D.H. Cole.[857] Wilkinson had also been a member of the Committee of Five, discussed in the previous chapter, that conducted the League's own inquiry into the Bolshevik revolution and decided to support it. Unsurprisingly the other four members of this committee, Robert Page Arnot, William Ewer, W.M. Holmes, and William Mellor, were also founding members of the CPGB along

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[855] S. Lässig, *The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda* pp.51-53

[856] M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen* pp.20-22

[857] National Guilds League Annual Report 1917-1918 pp.16-17; National Guilds League Annual Report 1920-21; pp.5-6 *The Guildsman*, May 1920 pp.5-6 ; September 1920, p.8

with various other guild communists who joined.[858] The fact that many members of the League were also members of the CPGB did not cause a problem for the League initially. Indeed, since the League had adopted an official position in support of the Bolshevik revolution this made sense. This possibility was also openly discussed in *The Guildsman* which in 1920 saw no problem with the two institutions sharing an overlapping membership.[859]

By the beginning of 1921, this situation began to change and the National Guilds League increasingly began to lose members to the CPGB. As one renegade, William Mellor, wrote bitterly,

"Anyone who has been closely associated with the inner workings of the National Guilds League must recognise that from the very start, ineffectiveness has been its lot… [Guild Socialism] was the doctrine of the middle-class man… Fabianism was dying and the Russian Revolution had not yet come. Here was a theory which seemed to have taken the best out of all of the existing proposals and that seemed to hold out, if not to the workers, at any rate to the workers' advocates, hopes of cudos and ultimate power"[860]

For the Mellor, the arrival of Bolshevism showed the inconsistencies of knowledge relating to Guild Socialism and its enviable result would be the collapse of the League.[861] This testimony provided by a former member of a political organisation does not, as has been reflected upon by Jay Winter, necessarily paint an adequate picture of the problems within League.[862] However, in this case, Mellor's account does highlight a clear leftwing perspective on the League from someone who was involved with the institution since its beginning.

The formation of the CPGB dwarfed National Guilds League immediately materially and intellectually. During its first years, the membership of the CPGB quickly reached roughly five thousand which massively overshadowed the League by a factor of almost ten to one during the same period.[863] This asymmetry was intensified by the significant amounts of financial aid the CPGB received provided largely by the Third International. In 1922 the CPGB received £5000 from Moscow alongside its funds raised by individuals members. In addition to this annual subsidy, the CPGB also received additional funds for specific expenses, such as £2000 to help fight the 1922 general election and in 1923 a further £2000 in order to protect documents, maintain lines of

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[858] J. Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Volume One: Formation and Early Years, 1919-1924* (Laurence Wishart, 1968) p.24

[859] *The Guildsman*, September 1920, pp.4-5

[860] *Labour Monthly*, 15th November 1921 pp.398-399

[861] *Labour Monthly*, 15th November 1921 pp.398-399

[862] J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of the War* (Routledge, 2016) p.281

[863] J. Eaden and D. Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920* (Palgrave, 2002) p.17

communication, passport facilities, produce propaganda and gather special intelligence.[864] These figures far outstripped anything the League was ever able to generate through donations, membership fees, or the sale of propaganda, by a huge magnitude. In fact, during its most profitable year in 1920, the League only managed to raise just under £2000.[865] The availability of large amounts of capital particularly during a period of economic recession in Britain gave the CPGB a formidable material advantage, which allowed them to establish a strong institutional framework, that overshadowed the comparatively small network of branches established by the League. The material scale of the CPGB was also coupled with the clearly consistent meaning of Bolshevism and its obvious successes after 1917. This must have seemed attractive to many members of the League, like Mellor, who were, as has been discussed throughout this thesis, constantly struggling to define different meanings associated with Guild Socialism. In this sense, the CPGB represented an obvious rival institution to the League, which possessed significant material and intellectual advantages. As such, it can therefore be considered as containing an alternative knowledge system, which was responsible for the production of knowledge about a different version of socialism that was clearly more successful than Guild Socialism. In this sense, the CPGB came to occupy a more dominant position within the context of the British Left. This indicates Mulsow's point that wider social conditions influence the value of knowledge and therefore influence the position of knowledge carriers.[866]

In response to the rising prominence of the CPGB the remaining members of the National Guilds League fought to keep the institution intact. In May 1921 Cole delivered a speech in London where he argued that both Bolshevik communism and Guild Socialism were compatible with the former serving as the method and the latter as the ideal.[867] These efforts to reconcile the two knowledge systems were in vain and over the next two years, the membership of the League continued to decline while the CPGB expanded. As a consequence, the League lost control of the Labour Research Department which was taken over by the communists and the membership of the League dwindled to less than 50 in 1923.[868] Internationally a similar pattern of decline in response to Bolshevism was also visible amongst former supporters of Guild Socialism. For example, Guido Baracchi, Bill Earsman, and Thomas Walsh, who had been instrumental towards the popularisation

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[864] F. Beckett, *Enemy Within: The rise and fall of the British Communist Party* (John Murray Ltd, 1995) pp.21-22

[865] National Guilds League Annual Report 1920-1921 p.11

[866] M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen* pp.20-22

[867] *The Guildsman,* May 1921 pp.9-11

[868] D. Goodway, 'G.D.H. Cole: A Socialist and Pluralist' in P. Ackers and A.J. Reid's (eds.) *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) p.249-250; J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Workers's Control* p.381

of Guild Socialism in Australia also shifted their allegiances during the same period and helped to establish the Communist Party of Australia.[869]

For many historians the formation of the CPGB represented the final death knell for Guild Socialism. According to Anthony Wright, the 1917 Bolshevik revolution exposed the deep tensions within the League over the meaning of Guild Socialism, but it was formation of the CPGB, aided by the 1921 economic slump that forced trade unionism into retreat, that finally ended the League.[870] Other historians, such as Ken Coates and Tony Topham have argued a similar line and contended that although the failure of the National Building Guild was certainly significant it was not the death of the guild idea. Instead, they argue the greatest factor which routed Guild Socialism was the rise of Bolshevism.[871] This opinion was also endorsed retrospectively by G.D.H. Cole who much later acknowledged that the guild socialist call for workers control was "ill defined and impractical about means" and that this indeterminacy in the early 1920s led to a schism between those on one side who joined the CPGB and those "idealists of workers' control" who remained in the League.[872]

Despite the significant pressure placed on the League by the CPGB during the early 1920s in relation to other socialist institutions on the British Left Guild Socialism faired differently. Older institutions, such as the ILP and the Fabian Society, responded to Guild Socialism during this period highlighting the changing political landscape of the British Left.

In 1922 the Independent Labour Party adopted a new constitution that incorporated clear aspects of knowledge related to Guild Socialism.[873] In particular, it featured promises to deliver workers' control and industrial democracy following the dissatisfaction with the experience of state-led nationalisation during the First World War.[874] Even more strikingly the constitution called for the creation of "a dual authority of consumer and producer", which according to one of leading members of ILP, Harry Wilson, "was apparently intended to attract the Guild Socialists without committing the Party to their programme."[875]

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[869] J. Smart, *Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall Commune in Melbourne, 1917* p.118; T. Walsh to the National Guilds League, 28.12.19, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 9, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

[870] A. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* pp.96-97,105

[871] K. Coates and T. Topham, *Workers Control: A book of Readings and Witnesses for Workers' Control* (Panther, 1970) p.76

[872] G.D.H. Cole, forward to B. Pribićević's, *The Shop Stewards Movement and Workers Control* p.v

[873] R.E. Dowse, *Left in the Centre* (Longmans, 1966) pp.65-69

[874] I. Bullock, *Under Siege: The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain* (AU Press, 2017) p.67

[875] I. Bullock, *ibid* p.69

The adoption of this new platform by ILP was indicative of the newly polarised condition of the British Left which found itself caught between the Labour Party and the CPGB. In order to make sure that the ILP was neither absorbed into the Labour Party, or intimidated by the communists, a new direction via Guild Socialism was adopted.[876] This is indicative of how potent knowledge relating to Guild Socialism still was within the context of the British Left. However, it also represented another potential threat to the League which exposed its precarious position as a knowledge carrier for Guild Socialism. Similarly, to the CPGB the ILP significantly overshadowed the League in terms of numbers possessing some 35,000 members at this point.[877] Therefore the potential that knowledge relating to Guild Socialism could be absorbed within this much larger institution was a real possibility demonstrated by ILP's constitutional change. This represents another example of the competing knowledge systems within the British Left, which confronted the National Guilds League. Furthermore, by adopting guild socialist positions the ILP also highlighted the potential for the League to be moved into a position of irrelevance as its distinctiveness was eroded by its wider acceptance. This situation is indicative of the importance of considering the changing social position of knowledge carriers, such as the League and the ILP. Precisely, because it helps to highlight how changing conditions can result in the elevation or decline of knowledge within a broader knowledge structure.[878]

A similar threat was also posed by the Fabian Society during this period which since the end of the First World War had begun to reconcile itself with Guild Socialism. After the war, Sidney and Beatrice Webb published, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (1920) which provided a new blueprint for a democratic socialist state that also included a measure of workers' control.[879] This work departed from the Webbs earlier skepticism towards workers' control and similarly to the new ILP constitution can be interpreted as an effort to integrate knowledge relating to Guild Socialism into the knowledge system within the Fabian Society. While the Webbs did not go so far as to fully endorse all aspects of theoretical knowledge related to workers' control developed by the National Guilds League, such as democratic managerial structures for workers in all industries. They did now support a more decentralised system of local democracy via the state and consumer co-operatives.[880] This change mirrored the League's own shift towards supporting consumer co-operatives as an alternative representative to the state, discussed in the previous

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[876] I. Bullock, *ibid* p.67
[877] F. Beckett, *Enemy Within* p.12
[878] M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen* pp.26-32
[879] B. Webb and S. Webb, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (Longmans, 1920)
[880] L. Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb: Fabian Socialists* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1984) p.223

chapter. As such the Webbs can therefore be seen to have been responsive to both Guild Socialism and the same conditions which previously in the context of reconstruction reshaped the knowledge system within the National Guilds League. Despite this change, the knowledge system within the Fabian Society was also consistent and retained an overall concern towards supporting knowledge related to collectivism. Above all the Fabians retained their belief in the necessity of winning political power through parliamentary elections as opposed to developing new institutions such as National Guilds to further develop workers' control.[881] As such the Fabian Society can therefore be considered to constitute a similar threat as the ILP to the League. In the sense that this much larger institution within the British Left presented the possibility of absorbing knowledge related to Guild Socialism and potentially making the League irrelevant in the process.

Alongside these developments the other great pole of the British Left, the Labour Party was ascendant during this period. This placed additional external pressure on the National Guilds League and knowledge related to Guild Socialism. Buoyant after its first experience in government during the war as part of the coalition government by 1922 the Labour Party became the second-largest political party in parliament after winning over 4 million votes and claiming 142 MPs. The following year another general election produced a hung parliament and the Labour Party was able to form its first government at the beginning of 1924. This rapid ascendent proved the real possibility of the parliamentary system delivering a successful route towards socialism in Britain, which appeared to disprove the guild socialist conviction that this was impossible. While at the same time the extra-parliamentary route proposed by Guild Socialism appeared to be turning towards decline due to the stagnation of the trade movement and the collapse of the National Building Guild. As a result the gains of the Labour Party also contributed towards the increasingly weakening of the strength of Guild Socialism, especially between 1922 and 1923.[882]

The combined pressure of these other constituents of the British Left upon the National Guilds League, therefore, served to undermine Guild Socialism. These influences were combined with the internal pressure of Douglasism and the failure of National Building Guild all of which combined towards the collapse of the League in 1923. Although the disbandment of the League would seem to indicate the immediate destruction of Guild Socialism, or its absorption into another institution

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[881] J.F. Milburn, 'The Fabian Society and the British Labour Party' *The Western Political Quarterly* Vol. 11, No. 2 (1958) p.320
[882] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* p.62

within the British Left, the opposite occurred. Surprisingly, what now began was a period of consolidation in which Guild Socialism appeared to be resurgent.

5.2. Slowing the decline

The failure of the League in 1923 did not mark the end of Guild Socialism. In fact, over the next three years, Guild Socialism was resurgent and found new institutional settings to embed itself within alongside a revival in support. This period has received little attention from historians who have tended to view the decline of Guild Socialism as an uninterrupted downwards progression during the 1920s.[883] However, will now be examined this was not entirely the case between 1923 and 1926. At the centre of this resurgence was a new institution, the National Guilds Council, which took over the role previously filled by the National Guilds League as the primary container for knowledge relating to Guild Socialism.[884] Alongside providing a new institutional home the Council also helped to establish and coordinate a series of new guilds thereby highlighting the continued appeal of Guild Socialism amongst certain trade unionists in Britain. Furthermore, a new swell of international support developed among academic audiences during this period, which also interacted with the Council. As a result, these developments help to illustrate how between 1923 and 1926 the decline of Guild Socialism was slowed as efforts to combat the precarious position Guild Socialism found itself in since 1921 were enacted.

5.2.1. New Guilds and the National Guilds Council

In April 1922 the idea of creating the National Guilds Council was first announced. The intention behind this new institution was to create a new centre to work alongside the League for the development of, "research and propaganda in connection with the formation and development of Guild organisations".[885] For members of the League, the immediate need behind this venture was born out of the recent loss of control of the Labour Research Department, which was taken over by communists after the formation of the CPGB.[886] The creation of the National Guilds Council was therefore a direct response to the changing situation on the British Left and the declining support for Guild Socialism between 1921 and 1923.

[883] J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.320 S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society* pp.48-56
[884] Henceforth referred to as the Council.
[885] *The Guild Socialist*, April 1922, p.10
[886] D. Goodway, *G.D.H. Cole: A Socialist and Pluralist* p.249-250; J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.381

As an institution, the National Guilds Council operated almost identically to the League. Organisationally, the Council the League and was staffed by many of the same figures who were also members of the League. These included figures like Margaret Cole and Samuel Hobson who both sat on the executive committee of the Council, while also retaining important roles within the League.[887] Financially the Council was funded directly by trade unions and the League, while it still existed, and also received warm endorsements from parts of the British labour movement which remained committed to Guild Socialism.[888] As a result of its almost identical appearance to the League the Council was an ideal candidate around which to attempt to re-institutionalise Guild Socialism after the League was dissolved in 1923.

Although the Council mirrored the makeup of the League in many ways it also went beyond it. In particular, unlike the League, the Council was explicitly tasked with coordinating the development of new guilds. This reflected the now dominant syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism which no longer aimed to develop a partnership between the guilds and the state. Instead, it represented the development of an idea of a Guild Congress. This idea was originally expressed in 1914 within the Storrington Document and called for the creation of a new institution designed to connect, co-ordinate and represent different guilds across all industries. Initially, this congress was intended to constitute the institutional partnership between guilds and the state through the organisation of joint committees and subcommittees.[889] However, it now took the form of the Council which was tasked explicitly in its constitution with taking a central role in assisting the development and coordination of all guild activities and "to get in touch, and take common action, with other bodies at home and abroad."[890]

The Council played a particularly active role in rejuvenating the building guilds following the collapse of the National Building Guild at the beginning of 1923. Despite this failure, a severe housing shortage persisted in Britain which provided the conditions for a revival of the building guilds. By 1924 new building guilds had formed in Bolton, Glasgow, London, Manchester, Wigan, and across South Wales, and completed building work worth £1,760,500.[891] Over half of this work was conducted in London under the leadership of the trade unionist Malcolm Sparkes, who was an

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[887] *The Guild Socialist*, May 1922, p.2

[888] *The Guild Socialist*, July 1922, p.4; August-September 1922, p.8; March 1923, p.5

[889] Revised Storrington Document, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 1, M/1-3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

[890] Constitution of the National Guild Council, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

[891] The National Guilds Council, Draft Memorandum on the Agricultural, Building, Engineering, Furnishing and Tailoring Guilds, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.

influential local member of the Council and had formally been heavily involved in the creation of the first London building guilds in 1920. Sparkes was instrumental in the revival of two building guilds, the Co-operative Builders Guild and the Guild Housing Limited, which alongside building houses took on other projects, such as constructing trade union halls and clubhouses, as well as decorating and refurbishing dilapidated homes.[892] Beyond Sparkes's individual role as a leader, the wider structure of the Council was also vital to the regrowth of these building guilds by producing leaflets and pamphlets which promoted their services. Furthermore, the Council also created memorandums for guild members that explained the principles and structure of the guilds, while maintaining the commitment to solving the housing shortage by producing high-quality low-cost homes built "by men working in a democratic comradeship of service."[893] Additionally, the Council also corresponded with each of the new building guilds helping them to organise meetings and conferences, therefore, maintaining communications between the separate guilds to ensure their joint survival.[894] In this sense, the Council played a vital role that was similar to the League in terms of providing an institutional framework for Guild Socialism. However, also went further than the League in this regard by also helping to directly organise the building guilds themselves.

Similarly to the League the Council was also active as a means to bring together different forms of practical and theoretical knowledge towards the meaning of Guild Socialism. This is particularly evident in the leaflets and pamphlets produced by the Council for the Guild Housing Limited. Here the continued importance of high-quality craftsmanship, shop-floor democracy, and workers' control was emphasised as central to Guild Socialism.[895] The presentation of these forms of practical and theoretical knowledge departed from earlier propaganda produced by the League, which was often complex and densely written, which made them difficult to follow. Instead these new publications embraced a new style of presentation. In particular, short clear sentences replaced the earlier style and were combined with visual images, such as printed photographs and illustrations. These provided a more accessible visual language that illustrated the combination of modern technology and traditional craftsmanship used by the building guilds (See Figure 23).[896] Furthermore, this created a new and more enticing aesthetic language through the juxtaposition of

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892 The National Guilds Council, Draft Memorandum on the Agricultural, Building, Engineering, Furnishing and Tailoring Guilds, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
893 The National Federation of Building Trade Operatives, *An Industry Cleared For Action: The Preliminary Prospectus of the Guild of Builders* (National Federation of Building Trade Operatives, 1924) p.5
894 The National Guilds Council, Draft Memorandum on the Agricultural, Building, Engineering, Furnishing and Tailoring Guilds, Guild Socialism Collection, 1924, Box 3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK.
895 Guild Housing Limited, *The New Works at Acton Vale: A New Development in Guild Enterprise*, pamphlet, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, 1924, Box 3, Nuffield College Library.
896 Guild Housing Limited, *ibid* pp.1-12

images of modern machinery and romantic quotations about work, which served to express the underlining continuity between the medieval past and the modern present associated with Guild Socialism. While also serving as an attractive means to solidify knowledge about Guild Socialism in a new print format.
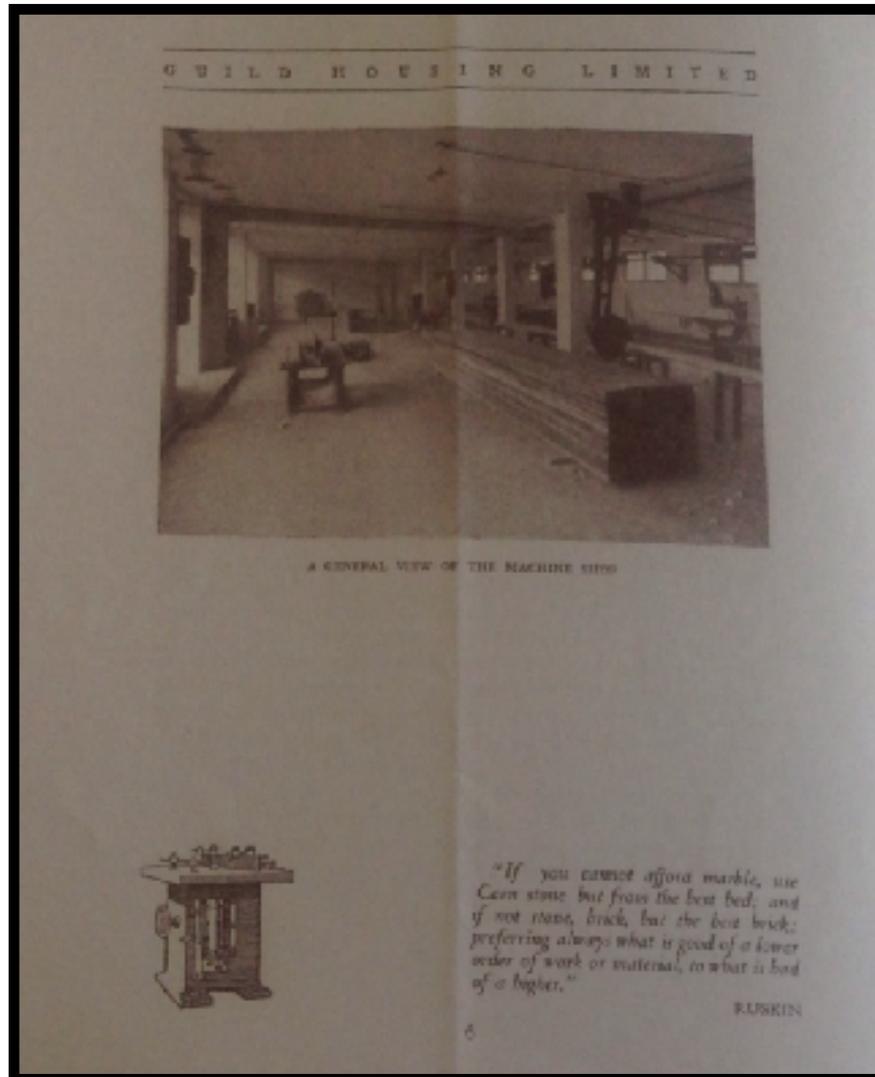
Figure 23
Photograph and illustration of work at the Guild Housing Limited.
Source: Guild Housing Limited, *The New Works at Acton Vale: A New Development in Guild Enterprise*, pamphlet, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, 1924, Box 3, Nuffield College Library.

As a result of the Council's efforts to reestablish the building guilds associated industries were also encouraged to do the same. For example, the London Furniture and Furnishing Guild was formed in 1924 and shared a close relationship with the local building guilds producing furniture for trade union leaders and furnishing homes that the building guilds constructed. The Council helped to facilitate these connections, therefore, serving to sustain the furnishing guilds materially. Similarly, to the earlier National Furnishing Guild, which collapsed not long after the National Building Guild

due to their close working relationship, both the newly resurrected building guilds and furnishing guilds possessed a shared commercial interest.[897] However, unlike the earlier National Guilds, these local guilds were much smaller often consisting of less than ten individuals per guild, largely due to the lack of available capital due to the economic depression.[898]

Alongside helping to regrow the building and furnishing guilds the Council was also responsible for establishing new guilds in other industries. The engineering sector was one in particular which also had a strong history of support for Guild Socialism, due to the militant support for workers' control championed by the Shop Stewards Movement during the First World War.[899] In contrast to the building guilds, which were relatively inexpensive to establish in terms of materials and labour, the engineering guilds were significantly more costly because not only did they require larger amounts of capital and advanced machinery, but they also required highly skilled workers. Through cooperation between the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Council, these barriers were surpassed in 1924 when two engineering guilds were founded in Birmingham and London.[900]

Sustaining the engineering guilds in the context of austerity and economic depression in Britain was a significant challenge, especially due to their high material cost. However, the Council quickly found a novel solution to supply the guilds with necessary work contracts through trade with the Soviet Union. Beginning in 1924 the British embargo on trade with the Soviet Union was lifted, which allowed international trade to resume to rebuild the Soviet economy following the devastation caused by the Russian Civil War.[901] This situation allowed the Council to organise a meeting in February 1924 between representatives from the engineering guilds and Soviet trade officials in London. Here an agreement was finalised for the guilds to supply machine tools, press tools, internal combustion engines, agricultural implements, and railway rolling stock, to the Soviet government. As a result of these large and continuous orders, a National Engineering Guild was

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[897] *The Guild Socialist*, March 1923, p.5

[898] *New Standards*, October 1924, p.365

[899] G.D.H. Cole, *Workers' Control in Engineering and Shipbuilding: A Plan for Collective Contract* (Labour Publishing Company, 1921) p.2; K. Coates and T. Topham, *The Making of the Labour Movement: The Formation of the Transport & General Workers' Union 1870-1922* (Spokesman, 1994) p.708

[900] The National Guilds Council, Draft Memorandum on the Agricultural, Building, Engineering, Furnishing, and Tailoring Guilds, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK

[901] H. Wish, 'Anglo-Soviet Relations during Labour's First Ministry' *The Slavonic and East European Review,* Vol.17, No.50 (1939) p.389

allegedly formed in Britain soon afterward with the support of the Amalgamated Engineering Union.[902]

The decision to implement this international trade deal is again indicative of the important role played by the Council towards slowing the decline of Guild Socialism. In fact, arguably the announcement of a new National Guild can be understood as evidence that the Council was even responsible for reversing this decline. In addition, this was also not an isolated case and the Soviet Union became a valuable trading partner with several other guilds also through coordination with the Council. In 1924 the National Tailoring and Clothing Guild, which formed through the cooperation of trade unionists in Glasgow, Leeds, and London, established trade deals with the Soviet government to provide clothing for Soviet workers.[903] In the same year, the Welwyn Agricultural Guild struck a similar agreement to export pedigree cattle, pigs, and chickens to the Soviet Union.[904] This deal was particularly significant given the scale of this agricultural guild which produced significant quantities of fruit, vegetables, and milk, from its 1000 acres of land where it also held several herds of cattle, pigs, and a large poultry farm that produced 180,000 eggs per year.[905]

Similarly to the other guilds, the agricultural guilds offered a particularly clear example of the different meanings tied to Guild Socialism. This was clearly represented in a draft memorandum produced by the Council about the Welwyn Agricultural Guild which noted that, "the Guild is well equipped with Scientific Agricultural advice" and noted that its director was previously in charge of experimental farming at Cambridge University. This idea of scientific farming was combined with an idea of workers' control whereby workers would elect their own management committee and hold control over the conditions of their labour.[906] This syndicalist understanding of the guild contrast heavily with the image presented in a pamphlet produced about the guild which drew heavily on romanticised ideas of rural medieval life and noted how, "the milking cows are housed in a converted, three-century-old, tithe barn" and how although most of the land cultivation is done by

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[902] The National Guilds Council, Draft Memorandum on the Agricultural, Building, Engineering, Furnishing, and Tailoring Guilds, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK; G.W. Thompson to the National Guild Council, 16.1.1924, Letter, *Guild Socialism Collection*, Box 3, Nuffield College Library.
[903] The National Guilds Council, Draft Memorandum on the Agricultural, Building, Engineering, Furnishing and Tailoring Guilds, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library.
[904] W.T. Close to the National Guild Council, 15.12.1923, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 6, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK
[905] The National Guilds Council, Draft Memorandum on the Agricultural, Building, Engineering, Furnishing and Tailoring Guilds, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, UK
[906] The National Guilds Council, Draft Memorandum on the Agricultural, Building, Engineering, Furnishing and Tailoring Guilds, 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 3, Nuffield College Library.

modern tracts, "a few Shire Mares (the old English cart-horse) are kept and, may be seen in stable adjoining the cowshed."[907] This duality is also represented in the photograph below (See Figure 24) promoting "guild farming" and representing milk production which simultaneously displays modern production machinery, while also emphasising the traditionally gendered nature of diary work.
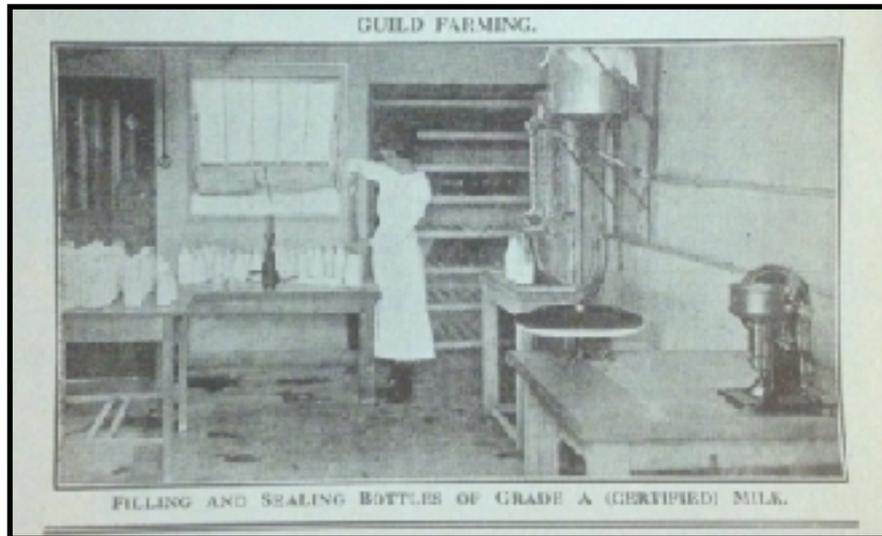
Figure 24
Guild Farming
Source: *The Land Worker,* August 1922, p.1

Ultimately the efforts of the Council served to slow and in some cases reverse the decline of Guild Socialism between 1923 and 1926. In particular, the Council provided a new institutional container for Guild Socialism, which prevented the complete destruction of this idea after the failure of the League. This demonstrated the importance of institutionalisation as a strategy to preserve knowledge. Furthermore, through the creation of new guilds, propaganda, and international trade deals with the Soviet Union, the Council was able to prevent the disappearance of Guild Socialism as an active force in Britain by sustaining it materially in the context of an economic depression.

5.2.2. International Academic Circuits

Alongside the actions of the National Guilds Council to re-institutionalise Guild Socialism in Britain through the creation of new guilds, propaganda, and trade deals with the Soviet Union. Another means used to combat the decline of Guild Socialism was through an increasingly active academic communication network that emerged around the Council. The blossoming of this

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[907] Welwyn Agricultural Guild, *Farming Civic Lands as a Public Service* (New Town Agricultural Guild Welwyn Garden City, 1921) pHD 6479(43).B, Nuffield College Library.

network was a continuation of the one which formed around the League, as discussed in chapter two, and provided another means to ensure the survival of Guild Socialism. Noticeably it was composed primarily of highly educated individuals often affiliated with universities who were interested in the economic implications of Guild Socialism. In response members of the Council released new publications and translations of older books constituting another way in which knowledge about Guild Socialism was preserved through printing and international discussions. Simultaneously, while these academic circuits mushroomed during this period international interest from trade unionists towards Guild Socialism wained. This contributed towards an even more rarified academic understanding of Guild Socialism, which still persists today.

International interest in Guild Socialism remained strong during the 1920s, especially amongst economists. In particular, economists focussed on the implications and possibilities of the political economy of Guild Socialism and the pluralist relationship between the state and other bodies, such as trade unions. In France, the future finance minister, André Philip, made Guild Socialism an object of study for his doctoral dissertation *Guild-Socialisme et Trade-Unionisme* (Guild Socialism and Trade Unionism - 1923). Here he discussed the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism by highlighting the importance of freedom for producers, while supporting the guild socialist critique of bureaucratic state socialism embodied by the Fabian Society. Philip also engaged with the different forms of knowledge that produced varied meanings associated with Guild Socialism. This led him to even deny that Arthur Penty could even be described as a guild socialist because of the medievalist idea of guilds which he propagated.[908]

Philip first came into contact with Guild Socialism in 1921 when he traveled to Britain and met with members of the League with whom he stayed in contact upon his return to Paris. Although Philip tried to promote Guild Socialism amongst trade unionists in Paris he was by his own account unsuccessful and therefore undertook a purely academic study of the subject.[909] Additional evidence of the failure of Guild Socialism to circulate in France amongst trade unionists is measurable in the comparatively small number of letters, requests for pamphlets and subscriptions to *The Guildsman* received by the League from correspondents in France in relation to other locations.[910] This was likely due to the strong existing tradition of French syndicalism which made Guild Socialism

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[908] A. Philip**,** *Guild-Socialisme et Trade-Unionisme* (Paris, Les Presses Universitares de France, 1923) pp.18,39-49
[909] A. Philip to the National Guilds League, 17.1.1923, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.
[910] Guild Socialism Collection, Box 8, Nuffield College Library.

theoretically superfluous.[911] However, more decisively because of the comparably much stronger anti-statist tradition in France than in Britain, which made the subject unappealing because of its ambiguous and sometimes conciliatory position towards the state exemplified by knowledge relating to a partnership between National Guilds and the state.[912]

Despite failing to attract the attention of French trade unionists Philip's work did make an impression on other European academics. In the Netherlands, Arie Goote, heavily referenced Philip's work in his own dissertation about Guild Socialism, *Het Gilden-Socialisme in Engeland* (Guild Socialism in England - 1926).[913] In particular, Goote responded to Philip's criticism of the medieval meaning of the Guild Socialism and argued that following the collapse of the League this seemed like the most likely association which would survive. While reflecting on the failure of building guilds in Britain and Amsterdam, Goote concluded that the only way the guild model of production could survive was through protection provided by a partnership with the state.[914] In this sense, Goote reiterated the changing meaning of knowledge related to the medievalist meaning of Guild Socialism discussed in the previous chapter.

In Germany, the economist Charlotte Leubuscher who sat at the centre of German-speaking discussions about Guild Socialism also considered Philip and Goote's work.[915] There was good reason for this since both, especially Goote, had referenced her own work on the subject in their studies of the subject.[916] As a committed Marxist, Leubuscher offered a critique of Guild Socialism which agreed with Goote's conclusion and focussed on how the control of the industry and a balance between production and consumption would be difficult without the direction of the state.[917] This criticism was also echoed by other German-speaking commentators such as the "pope of

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[911] W. Thorpe, "Uneasy Family: Revolutionary Syndicalism in Europe from the Charte d'Amiens to World War I" in C. Bantman and D. Berry (eds.) *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour, and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) pp.16–17

[912] C. Bantman, *The Franco–British Syndicalist Connection* p.88

[913] A. Goote, *Het Gilden-Socialisme in Engeland* (Bosch & Keuning, 1926) pp.21,34,62

[914] A. Goote, *ibid* pp.90-100

[915] C. Leubuscher, 'Review of Het gilden-socialisme in Engeland by A. Goote' *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, Vol. 25 (1927) pp. 272-273; T. Plaut, "Gildensozialismus", in L. Heyde's (eds.) *Internationales Handwörterbuch des Gewerkschaftswesens* (Werk und Wirtschaft Verlagsaktiengesellschaft, 1931) pp.720-726; O Leichter, *Die Wirtschaftsrechnung in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft* (Wien: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1923); R. Wilbrandt, 'Genossenschaftssozialismus und Gildensozialismus' *Die Arbeit: Zeitschrift für Gewerkschaftspolitik und Wirtschaftskunde*. H. 5, (1924), pp.284–292

[916] C. Leubuscher, 'Deutsche Literatur über den englischen Gildensozialismus' *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik,* Vol.65, No. 3 (1923) pp. 266-273; A. Goote, *Het Gilden-Socialisme in Engeland* pp.20-21,55,62,65,78,80,82

[917] C. Leubuscher, *Sozialismus und Sozialisierung in England* (Jena, 1921) pp.98-102

marxism", Karl Kautsky, who also criticised the tendency amongst some guild socialists to reject the state.[918] According to Kautsky,

"Guild Socialism goes too far when it postulates the guild organisation as the sole form of socialist production. Its primitive conception of the State and inadequate economics may be overlooked as mere academic questions, although they might also involve practical drawbacks. But to force the whole'- of the economic undertakings of the socialist society into the narrow groove which Guild Socialism proposes would be most detrimental. Its fundamental idea is excellent, but it should not be carried too far."[919]

Other famous voices within German-speaking academia also joined in this criticism but from other perspectives, such as the Austrian liberal economist, Ludwig von Mises. Von Mises dismissed the idea of balancing producer and consumer interests through National Guilds entirely. Instead, he argued in favour of non-intervention in the economy and free markets as a solution, while rejecting Guild Socialism as part of his broader criticism of planned socialist economies.[920] While, from a less critical perspective the infamous political theorist, Carl Schmitt, also became involved in this discussion. For Schmitt, Guild Socialism represented a useful example of pluralist state theory which he incorporated into his own genealogy of the subject.[921] In this sense, knowledge related to Guild Socialism was during this period increasingly a focus of attention for economists and political thinkers, thereby serving as another means by which to preserve this knowledge through international academic discussions.

Alongside these academic circuits in Europe, elsewhere others developed independently. In the United States Guild Socialism was already an established subject in academic journals, particularly among economists and political scientists.[922] For example, writing in response to the demise of the National Building Guild the economist Amy Hewes described the development of the building guilds as a positive solution to the British housing crisis. However, she questioned whether the guilds could be sustainable under less acute circumstances.[923] Additionally, like many others in Britain and the United States, Hewes also confused Guild Socialism and Douglasism. For her Douglasism was a positive development which highlighted how little progress in guild theory had been made since 1921. "Once again" she wrote, "the intellectualists have languished in leadership

[918] P. Blackledge, 'Karl Kautsky and Marxist Historiography' *Science & Society* Vol. 70, No. 3 (2006) pp.338

[919] K. Kautsky, *The Labour Revolution* (National Labour Press, 1925) p.197

[920] L. von Mises, 'Neue Beiträge zum Problem der sozialistischen Wirtschaftsrechnung', *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Vol. 51, (1923) p.488-500

[921] C. Schmitt, 'Staatsethik und pluralistischer Staat' *Kant-Studien,* Vol. 35 (1930) pp.28–42

[922] L. Holthaus, *Pluralist Democracy in International Relations* (Palgrave, 2018) p.147

[923] A. Hewes, 'Guild Socialism: A Two Year Test', *The American Economic Review*, Vol.12, No. 2 (1922) p.236-237

and the advances are left to exporters in the field of actual production and its everyday business relations."[924] In direct response to this positive treatment of Guild Socialism another scholar, Ellen Deborah Ellis, attacked the subject in 1923. According to Ellis, Guild Socialism was a highly inconsistent subject due to the numerous meanings attached by different authors.[925] As such, she criticised the idea that it represented a useful model of pluralism citing the division between different corporatist and syndicalist understandings of the subject as the main reason for skepticism.[926]

Debates between American scholars about Guild Socialism were also not purely restricted to only academic journals. In fact, the political magazine, *The New Republic,* served as a particular forum to elevate these discussions to a broader public forum in the United States.[927] These discussions became so popular in 1925 that special advertising was even devised by the paper to promote certain books on the subject.[928] This commercial aspect is also indicative of how publishing served as means to preserve knowledge about Guild Socialism which also became important in relation to other academic circuits. For instance in Japan, growing interest in Guild Socialism among economists and political scientists resulted in numerous proposals for new texts and translations during the 1920s. The economist Shirō Kawada published his own study, *Nōgyō shakai shugi to kumiai shakai shugi* (Agrarian Socialism and Guild Socialism - 1923) followed shortly after by the political scientist, Ukita Kazutami, who proposed to translate from English into Japanese for the first time G.D.H. Coles's, *Self-Government in Industry* (1917) and Ryukichi Ogiwara who translated Cole's, *A Short History of the British Working Class: Volume 1* (1925).[929] These works represented a growing trend of new books and translations about Guild Socialism in Japan which highlighted the increasing commodification of the subject that also served as means to preserve knowledge about the subject.[930] This pattern was played out in other markets, such as Germany, where

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[924] A. Hewes, *ibid* p.237

[925] E.D. Ellis, 'Guild Socialism and Pluralism' *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 17, No. 4 (1923) pp.585-586

[926] E.D. Ellis, *ibid* pp.586-596

[927] *The New Republic,* 16.3.1918, p.208; 6.8.1919 p.23; 8.12.1920 pp.50-51

[928] Frederick A. Stokes Company Publishers to G.D.H. Cole, 21.03.1921, Letter, George Douglas Howard Cole Papers, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis; Frederick A. Stokes Company Publishers to Curtis Brown Limited, Report of Royalties, 01.07.1925, George Douglas Howard Cole Papers, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[929] S. Kawada, *Nōgyō shakai shugi to kumiai shakai shugi* (Kōbundō Shobō, 1924); G.D.H. Cole and U. Kazutami, *Sangyō jichiron* (Tōkyō: Dainihonbunmeikyōkaijimusho, 1925); G.D.H. Cole and R. Ogiwara, *Eikoku rōdō kaikyū undō ryakushi (*Tōkyō: Ganshōdō Shoten, Shōwa 2, 1927); K. Ukita to G.D.H. Cole, 16.1.1925, Letter, George Douglas Howard Cole Papers, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis; R. Ogiwara to G.D.H. Cole, 26.3.1927, Letter, George Douglas Howard Cole Papers, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

[930] S.G. Hobson, *Nashonaru girudo chingin seido oyobi sono zempai no kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Kyōchō-kai, Taishō 13, 1924); G.D.H. Cole and T. Tanabe, *Rodo no sekai* (Fachokaku College, 1925); G.D.H. Cole and J. Ishikawa, *Kinōteki shakaikokka ron* (Tōkyō : Shinchōsha, Taishō 15, 1926)

increasing numbers of translations began to appear particularly during this period thereby further securing knowledge about Guild Socialism from declining.[931]

In response to these separate academic circuits members of the National Guild Council in Britain also contributed to this activity. By granting copyright licenses and communicating via letters with separate correspondents the Council was also involved in these efforts to promote academic publishing about Guild Socialism. Furthermore, members of Council also took an active role to encourage this discourse through the production of a new journal, *New Standards,* which served as the successor to, *The Guild Socialist*. This publication followed a similar pattern of international circulation, via paid subscriptions and exchanges with other publications that its defunct predecessor had followed, which meant that it also shared many of the same readers.[932] Furthermore, the majority of new recipients of the journal were overwhelmingly affiliated with academic institutions, such as universities, research institutes, and libraries.[933] Additionally, *New Standards* also included many articles from these academics and about global developments thereby constituting a concerted effort to promote the international discussion of Guild Socialism.[934]

The increase in international conversation amongst academics was also accompanied by a lapse in the interest shown by trade unionists. This was particularly visible in locations where support for Guild Socialism had previously been relatively strong, such as New Zealand and South Africa. In South Africa, prominent trade unionist leaders, like Bill Andrews and organisations, such as the Social Democratic Federation, which had previously been inspired by Guild Socialism now helped to form the South African Communist Party constituting a similar transition as had occurred in Britain.[935] While in New Zealand a similar shift in loyalties also occurred amongst trade unionists

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[931] A.J. Penty, *Gilden, Gewerbe und Landwirtschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922); A.J. Penty, *Die Überwindung des Industrialismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923); A.J. Penty, *Auf dem Wege zu einer christlichen Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1924)

[932] New Standards Free Exchange List, August 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, Nuffield College Library.

[933] Musée Social to New Standards 14.9.1923, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 8, Nuffield College Library; Indiana University to New Standards, 25.10.1923, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; New York Public Library to New Standards, 18.12.1923, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; The Rand School of Social Science to G.D.H. Cole, 12.11.1923, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; The Warsaw Academy of Commerce to New Standards 12.12.1923, Letter, Box 8, Nuffield College Library; T. Yamanaka to New Standards, 3.2.1924, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; New Standards Free Exchange List, August 1924, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 11, Nuffield College Library.

[934] *New Standards,* March 1924, pp.147-150; October 1924, pp.366-367

[935] W. Visser, 'Exporting Trade Unionism and Labour Politics: The British Influence on the Early South African Labour Movement', *New Contree*, Vol. 49 (2005) p.151; L van der Walt, 'Anarchism and Syndicalism in an African Port City: the Revolutionary Traditions of Cape Town's Multiracial Working Class, 1904–1931' *Labor History*, Vol. 52 (2011) pp.145,157

who now moved towards either Bolshevism or the New Zealand Labour Party, which was accompanied by the decline in trade unions membership and accelerated by economic depression in the 1930s.[936] As a result of this decline in international support amongst trade unionists Guild Socialism was increasingly pushed towards becoming solely a topic of discussion amongst academic audiences.

The growth of new international attention towards Guild Socialism during this period ultimately highlights another way in which knowledge about the subject was secured after the collapse of the League. In particular, it reveals how academic publishing and translation played an important role in the continued international circulation of information about Guild Socialism after 1923 in cooperation with its new institutional container, the Council. As a result, knowledge about the subject was increasingly discussed only by academic audiences and ceased to be a topic of interest for trade unionists. However, also meant that it was secured against completely disappearing altogether.

5.3. The End of Guild Socialism in 1926?

The year 1926 has often been understood by historians as marking the end of Guild Socialism.[937] The reasoning behind this judgment is largely tied to the failure of the 1926 British general strike which marked a turning point for the British labour movement. The powerful trade unions were already under pressure in the 1920s due to austerity and economic recession. However, now became even weaker causing the demand for workers' control to largely disappear from the landscape of the British Left. In its place support returned to collectivism and the parliamentary methods of the Labour Party.

Although 1926 was without question a decisive moment in the history of Guild Socialism it did not represent an end for subject. Instead, it is better understood as a transformative moment that did result in the disappearance of the primary knowledge carrier of Guild Socialism, the National Guilds Council. This did not mark the complete destruction of Guild Socialism as the former

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[936] J. Vowles, *From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism* pp.298-299; M. McKinnon, 'Post-war Economics (New Zealand)', *1914-1918 online International Encyclopaedia of the First World War,* (2015) https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/post-war_economies_new_zealand; A. McCarthy to the National Guilds League, 7.1.1919, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 9, Nuffield College Library; National Guilds League to W. Nash, 26.11.1923, Letter, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 9, Nuffield College Library.
[937] M. Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought 1914-1939* p.76; J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.9; P. Hirst, *Associative Democracy* p.111

members of the Council now sought new institutional settings to situate themselves and the knowledge they possessed. As a result, what followed after 1926 was a series of attempts to find a new vessel to stow Guild Socialism that once again revealed the diversity of different meanings attached to the subject.

5.3.1. Guild Socialism and the General Strike

At midnight on the 3rd of May 1926 the largest ever industrial strike in Britain began as between 1.5 and 1.75 million people protested in support of over a million locked-out miners.[938] In total the strike lasted for nine days and involved around 4 million people who supported the strike, including the striking workers themselves, trade unionists who joined in solidarity, and families who provided support. While the general strike was called off on the 12th of May by the General Council of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), the miners continued to strike for another six months until they were finally forced back to work under their employers' conditions.[939]

Guild Socialism was intimately tied to the causes behind the strike action. In particular, the unresolved question of nationalising the coal industry, discussed in the previous chapter, which the League had campaigned in favour of following the end of the First World War was an important precedent behind the strike actions in 1926. Continuing indecision over the question of ownership and control of British coal mines intensified in 1921 as the demand for British coal dropped and the economy began to enter into a recession leading to a drop in coal prices. In response mine owners began to propose wage reductions in order to cover the loss of profits resulting in a rising number of localised strike actions across the mining industry. Despite a minor recovery of prices over the next two years in 1924 after the introduction of the Dawes Plan, which reorganised German war reparations, allowed large quantities of free coal to be exported to France and Italy that lessened the demand for British coal. These unstable conditions resulted in a general decline in employment in the mining industry which was around 30 percent lower during this period than in 1913.[940] The rise

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[938] K. Braskén, "The British Miners' and General Strike of 1926: Problems and Practices of Radical International Solidarity", in H. Weiss (eds.), *International Communism and Transnational Solidarity: Radical Networks, Mass Movements and Global Politics, 1919–1939* (Brill, 2016) p.168

[939] C. Ferrall and D. McNeill, *Writing the 1926 General Strike: Literature, Culture, Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) p.21; A. Perkins, *A Very British Strike* (Pan, 2007) p.40; R.H. Saltzman, 'Folklore as Politics in Great Britain: Working-Class Critiques of Upper-Class Strike Breakers in the 1926 General Strike' *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 67, No. 3 (1994), p.105; J. Symons, *The General Strike* (Cresset Press, 1957) pp.137-138

[940] N.K. Buxton, "Coal mining" in N.K.Buxton and D.H. Aldcroft (eds.), *British Industry between the wars: Instability and industrial development 1919-1939* (Scolar Press, 1979) pp.49-50

in unemployment increased tensions further in the mining industry which was still by far the largest and among the most well organised sectors of the British economy.

In 1925 the situation became even more acute following the government's decision to return to the gold standard, which immediately caused a reduction of coal exports due to the increased value of the currency and led mine owners to announce proposals for the reduction of wages at the end of June. Leaders of the mining unions quickly rejected these proposals and called on the TUC for support, which swiftly came on July 10th and was followed by similar statements of solidarity from other unions in the transport sector that perceived the risk of a successful attack against the miners forming a precedent for subsequent threats against themselves.[941]

During this period guild socialists had continued to argue in favour of nationalisation and workers' control in the mining industry. In 1921 the League produced two new pamphlets, *The Control of Industry* and *Workers' Control in the Mining Industry,* which both explicitly made the case for nationalisation and for mining trade unions taking full control over the running of British coal mines.[942] A message that was repeated in subsequent pamphlets over the next few years.[943] At the same time, *The Guild Socialist* also carried regular articles about the miners' situation and placed their demand for control in relation to similar efforts by miners in France and Italy.[944] In addition, guild socialist attention also became focussed on the general threat of mass unemployment, which was blamed on the government's austerity policies pursued through the Geddes Axe, and called for nationalisation and industrial maintenance as a means to avert the danger.[945]

In order to avoid the growing possibility of a general strike in 1925 the British government pursued the same strategy of offering the possibility of nationalisation, it had adopted to entice the large unions into cooperation during reconstruction. An official inquiry into the reorganisation of the mining industry, dubbed the Samuel Commission, was formed at the end of 1925. In addition, until this new investigation was complete the government also created a subsidy to increase the miners' wages to their previous levels. In exchange, all strikes and lockouts would have to be suspended

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[941] T. Lane, *The Union Makes Us Stronger* (Arrow Books, 1974) p.121

[942] M.I. Cole, *The Control of Industry* (Labour Publishing Co.Ltd, 1921) pp.1-9; G.D.H. Cole, *Workers' Control in the Mining Industry* (Labour Publishing Company, 1921) pp.4-17

[943] M. Fordham, *Agriculture and the Guild System* (P.S. King & Son Ltd, 1923) p.14

[944] *The Guildsman,* May 1921, p.1-3; July 1921, p.6; *The Guild Socialist*, February 1922, p.10; July 1922, p.7-8

[945] *The Guild Socialist*, March 1922, p.1-3

until May 1st, 1926 when the commission was supposed to deliver its final report. This outcome was accepted by the trade unionists and hailed as a victory for working-class solidarity.[946]

On the 10th of March 1926, the Samuel Commission published its results in a final report. Although the report supported the miners' position and argued, "we cannot agree with the view presented to us by the mine owners that little can be done to improve the organisation of the industry and that the only practical course is to lengthen hours and to lower wages."[947] The report concluded with a meagre list of recommendations on how the mining industry could be reformed. Including improving working conditions and the partial nationalisation of profits from the mining industry. Even worse for the miners, the report supported a 13.5 percent reduction in wages and the withdrawal of government wage subsidies.[948] The government and the mine owners quickly supported these recommendations. However, the trade unionists were divided. While some, like the president of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), Herbert Smith, rejected the report outright.[949] Other trade unionists, such as Jimmy Thomas, the general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, declared their support for the proposals; while Arthur Cook, who sat on the executive committee of the MFGB, argued that in order to preserve the support of other trade unions some willingness to accept the proposals should be given.[950]

Following this mixed response to the inquiry, the government made a final effort to avoid a strike by organising a meeting of mine owners and trade unionists. This attempt was quickly undermined by the mine owners who believed they were in a dominant position and took this opportunity to announce changes to the miners working conditions through the introduction of new employment directives. These lifted the limit on seven-hour working days and reduced wages for all miners in the region of 10 and 25 percent. Furthermore, the mine owners threatened that if these terms were not accepted then miners would be locked out of coal pits from the start of May.[951] After refusing to accept these terms the on the 1st of May miners were locked out and in response the TUC announced a call for a general strike to begin two days later, "in defence of miners' wages and hours."[952]

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[946] A. Perkins, *A Very British Strike* (Pan, 2007) p.53

[947] H.L. Samuel, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry Vol.1* (H.M. Stationery Office, 1926) p.232

[948] D.H. Robertson, 'A Narrative of the General Strike of 1926', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 143 (1926) pp.376-377; D. Griffiths, *A History of the NPA 1906-2006* (Newspaper Publishers Association, 2006) p.67

[949] J. Symons, *The General Strike* (Cresset Press, 1957) p.35

[950] P. Davies, *A.J. Cook* (Manchester University Press, 1987) p.99; W.M. Citrine, *Men and Work: An Autobiography* (Greenwood Press, 1964) p.194

[951] P. Davies, *ibid* p.95

[952] M. Morris, *The General Strike* (Penguin, 1976) p.214

In support of the strike guild socialists rallied to unite with the other defenders of the miners. Members of the National Guild Council, such as Margaret Cole (nee Postgate), helped to organise local strike committees in London and Oxford, which worked to communicate with the TUC and distributed information and propaganda about the strike.[953] Furthermore, all available funds were diverted from the Council and the remaining guilds towards strike funds to support the trade unionists. Although these actions were extremely marginal given the scale of the strike and the relative size of the Council, which in total was only able to send £134 towards strike funds.[954] It did nevertheless demonstrate the continued commitment on the part of guild socialists towards trade unionism as the correct path towards building workers' control. Furthermore, while the general strike only lasted a total of nine days the Council remained committed to supporting the ongoing miners' strikes and continued to divert funds at least until the end of May.[955] As a result, the Council demonstrated the continued active involvement of Guild Socialism as part of the British Left during this moment. Beyond this point, it is difficult to determine what level of support was given due to the lack of sources. However, it seems likely that members of the Council continued to give financial and organisational support given their prior commitment to the miners' and support for workers' control.

The consequences of this support were nevertheless revealing of the weakened state of Guild Socialism in 1926. In particular, the limited funds and organisational support the Council was able to supply clearly demonstrated its relative weakness of the institution, especially in comparison to five years previously when its predecessor, the League, had a membership close to six hundred and an annual income of almost £2000. In this sense, Guild Socialism was therefore in a much more precarious situation at this moment in 1926, due to the weakened material position of the Council, which ultimately prevented it from being a more decisive force as it had done previously in support of miners. This situation clearly endangered knowledge about Guild Socialism, especially since the historical record of the existence of the Council ends at the end of 1926. Therefore, most likely, the Council itself collapsed due to its efforts to support the miners' strikes.

The apparent disappearance National Guilds Council at this point is revealing not only the material vulnerability of the institution but also the precariousness of the knowledge it contained. Indeed

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953 M. Cole, *Growing up into Revolution* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1949) p.123
954 Financial Statement for the National Guild Council 1926, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 7, Nuffield College Library Oxford.
955 Financial Statement for the National Guild Council 1926, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 7, Nuffield College Library Oxford.

following the failure of the general strike and miners' strikes the strength of the demand for workers' control in Britain was significantly weakened, which placed additional pressure on Guild Socialism. Following the strikes many participants and supporters, especially miners, found their situations worsen and often had no jobs to return to afterward often due to practices of victimisation, such as the creation of blacklists that circulated amongst employers, that meant many trade unionists were never able to work in same industries again.[956] This systematic punishment alongside the failure of the strikes themselves to win concessions pushed many former supporters away from extra-parliamentary politics and the idea of workers' control, resulting in a shift towards support for the Labour Party and CPGB, which both supported parliamentary means towards socialism.[957] As a result, the relative position of knowledge relating to Guild Socialism in Britain became even more marginalised as support for one of its central pillars was eroded.

This development was prophesied by Beatrice Webb who gleefully wrote in her diary the day after the general strike began. "The failure of the General Strike of 1926 will be one of the most significant landmarks in the history of the British working class. Future historians will, I think, regard it as the death gasp of that pernicious doctrine of 'workers' control' of public affairs through trade unions, and by the method of direct action." As she continued, this "absurd doctrine" was introduced and promoted by syndicalists and guild socialists but was nevertheless, "[a] proletarian distemper which had to run its course".[958]

Webb's words have certainly been compelling enough to convince numerous future historians of her argument.[959] However, her assessment is not entirely correct. Although 1926 certainly was a historic turning point for the British labour movement, it was not entirely the end of the demand for workers' control or Guild Socialism. Indeed as will now be examined efforts were soon underway to find new institutions to develop guild socialist knowledge carried by former members of the Council. In this sense, although Guild Socialism certainly was significantly weakened by the consequences of general strike and miners strikes. Its vitality was not completely depleted.

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[956] P. Davies, *A.J. Cook* p.134

[957] F.S. Northedge and A. Wells, *Britain and Soviet Communism: The Impact of Revolution* (Macmillan Press, 1982) p.205

[958] M. Cole, *Beatrice Webb's Diaries 1924-32* (Longmans, 1956) pp.92-93

[959] M. Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought 1914-1939* p.76; J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control* p.9; P. Hirst, *Associative Democracy* p.111

5.3.2. Integrating Guild Socialism after 1926

In the initial aftermath of 1926 Guild Socialism did appear to be a spent force. However, by the early 1930s, concerted efforts were underway to integrate knowledge related to the subject into other institutions. These efforts were divergent confirming David Blaazer's claim that the eclecticism of Guild Socialism made it extremely likely to produce disparate revivals.[960] Furthermore, without a centralised institutional framework, which in the past was provided by the League and the Council, the forms of knowledge which gave meaning to Guild Socialism became separated.

The Labour Party and Fabian Society were locations where the many former members of the League attempted to re-institutionalise Guild Socialism. Specifically, these individuals worked to re-solidify the demand for workers' control and migrated to the Labour Party, especially after the party was elected to government in 1929. This effort marked an attempt to create a new synthesis of Guild Socialism and Fabianism which aimed to revitalise the democratic impulses of the Labour Party.[961]

G.D.H. Cole was central to this endeavour and rejoined the Fabian Society in 1928. The following year Cole published a new book, *The Next Ten Years in British Social and Economic Policy* (1929), which has often been understood by scholars as marking his departure from Guild Socialism.[962] In fact, *The Next Ten Years* incorporated aspects of both Guild Socialism and Fabianism side by side. Specifically, the state, rather than National Guilds, was now understood by Cole as the sole actor capable of overcoming the unemployment crisis thereby highlighting a shift towards collectivism and away from syndicalist Guild Socialism. However, in order to achieve this Cole remained committed to an understanding of workers' control and proposed the more moderate idea of work councils, rather than National Guilds, which were similar to the earlier model of Whitley Councils proposed by the government.[963] Unlike the National Guilds, these elected work councils would not directly control industries, but instead would be composed of workers who would advise on their administration as well possess the ability to sanction employers and provide input on industrial

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[960] D. Blaazer, *Guild Socialists after Guild Socialism* p.136

[961] M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton University Press,) p.312; N. Riddell, "The Age of Cole'? G.D.H. Cole and the British Labour Movement 1929-1933' *The Historical Journal,* Vol.38, No.4 (December, 1995) pp. 933-957

[962] N. Riddell, *The Age of Cole* p.940

[963] G.D.H. Cole, *The Next Ten Years* (Macmillan and Co, 1929) p.50,55-64

legislation created by parliament.[964] Alongside this proposal, *The Next Ten Years* also suggested the creation of "national labour corps", which would function as a labour pool in order to provide workers for a wide array of functions.[965] Notably, both of these proposals signified a corporatist turn in Cole's work, which departure from the earlier syndicalist position the League had largely adopted in the early 1920s.

The Next Ten Years was extremely well received by the Labour Party and as a result, Cole became deeply integrated within the party structure. In 1930 he was selected to join the National Economic Council which was designed to consider new policies for the party. The following year Cole helped to found a new research group, the Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda, later renamed the Socialist League, which aimed to move the party in a more explicitly leftwing direction.[966] By 1933 this group claimed to have 2000 members and 100 branches nationally and featured many of the prominent figures of left of the party, including Aneurin Bevan, Ernest Bevin, and Harold Laski.[967] In addition, the group reunited many former guild socialists who had since joined the Labour Party, such as, Margaret Cole, Frank Horrabin, and Roland Tawney. Indeed as Margaret Cole recounted, "Douglas and I recruited personally its first list drawing upon comrades from all stages of our political lives."[968] The Socialist League adopted many of the same roles associated with the League which had been adopted from the Fabian Society, such as engaging in research, creating propaganda, conducting meetings, conferences, and summer schools.[969] In this way, the Socialist League appeared to represent a new potential location from which Guild Socialism could potentially be relaunched in order to take control of the Labour Party.

In 1932 Cole reunited with William Mellor, who had resigned from the CPGB in 1924 and subsequently joined the Labour Party and the Socialist League. Together they began to work towards reconstituting the demand for workers' control. Internal debates and constitutional commitments within both the Labour Party and the TUC indicated that despite the failure of the general strike there was still some appetite for workers' control.[970] Seizing this impetus on the 21st of January 1933 Cole and Mellor invited 20 trade unionists to a conference with the explicit aim of

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[964] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* pp.164-170

[965] G.D.H. Cole, *ibid* pp.50

[966] D. Resiman, "Introduction" in G.D.H. Cole, *Principles of Economic Planning* (Pickering & Chatto, 1996) p.xv

[967] B. Pimlott, *The Labour Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) p.57

[968] M. Cole, *Growing Up Into Revolution* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1949) p.148

[969] B. Pimlott, *The Labour Left in the 1930s* pp.41-58

[970] D. Blaazer, 'Guild Socialists after Guild Socialism: The Workers Control Group and The House of Industry League Twentieth Century British History', Vol. 11, No. 2, (2000) pp.138-143

defining a new concrete meaning for workers' control in preparation for debates within TUC and Labour Party in the coming year.

Alongside Cole and Mellor the composition of this group included many other former members of the League who had migrated to the Socialist League. Including the prolific left-wing journalist Henry Brailsford, who had written a pamphlet for the League as well as numerous articles in *The Guildsman*; and Ellen Wilkinson, who since leaving the League had become the Labour MP for Middlesbrough East in 1924 and was on her way towards becoming a minister when she served from 1929-31 in the Labour government as a parliamentary private secretary to the junior Health Minister.[971] Alongside these figures, the group consisted mainly of trade unionists and most notably three representatives from the postal workers' unions, which had been strong advocates for Guild Socialism.[972]

The proposals Cole and Mellor put forward at this conference give a sense of how important they both still considered the issue of workers' control. This was clearly expressed in the initial questions posed by Cole in his opening address at the conference which were accompanied by the strong caveat, "I am still an unrepentant Guild Socialist in objective."[973]

1. Should the working-class movement accept the general idea of Workers' Control in industry?

2. Should our main object be to institute Workers' Control first at the top or at the bottom, or to begin simultaneously at both ends?

3. To what extent should attempts to apply control... be confined to socialised industries, or how far should they be made in industries still under private ownership?

4. Should the Trade Union movement seek representation on the directing or managing boards of socialised industries or services?

5. To what extent is it possible or desirable to provide for the recognition of Shop Committees with power to interfere in management?

6. If Workers' Control is to be accepted as a Trade Union objective, what are likely to be its effects on the structure of Trade Unionism?

7. What experiments exist to guide the movement in formulating its policy on the above questions?[974]

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[971] H.N. Brailsford, *Parliaments or Soviets*, 18.12.1919, Speech, Guild Socialism Collection, Box 10, Nuffield College Library.

[972] D. Blaazer, *Guild Socialists after Guild Socialism* pp.143-144

[973] D. Blaazer, *ibid* p.144-145

[974] D. Blaazer, *ibid* p.145

Despite this effort, the Socialist League was broadly unsuccessful in its efforts to shift support within the Labour Party and the TUC back towards the promotion of workers' control. This was demonstrated later that year through the publication of *Socialisation and Transportation* (1933) written by the former Labour transport minister, Herbert Morrison, which laid out the party's position on nationalisation and firmly revoked the idea of democratic workers' control. Instead, Morrison proposed a model of top-down management whereby managers would be appointed by the state to run public monopolies.[975] These ideas heavily shaped the meaning of corporate socialism which took hold of the Labour Party during the 1930s until the 1950s and highlighted how the Labour Party could not, at least during this period, serve as a viable vehicle for the syndicalist meaning of Guild Socialism.[976]

Ultimately these activities fly in the face of subsequent accounts of Guild Socialism in this period. This view has been widely adopted by historians who have tended to view the failure of general strike as the catalyst which drove many guild socialists to join or rejoin the Labour Party and Fabian Society thereby accepting the centrality of the state and the necessity of parliamentary democracy.[977] Instead what was demonstrated through the creation of the Socialist League was an attempt to re-institutionalise the same idea of syndicalist Guild Socialism that had previously been dominant within the League. Specifically, by reiterating the same central argument for bottom-up democratic workers' control and appealing to the same audiences of trade unionists and socialists that the League had targeted before with its propaganda. Furthermore, Cole's clear refusal to drop the guild socialist label, highlights his belief in its continued salience and knowledge that this term could still be used to appeal at least to this particular audience.

At the same time as efforts were underway to re-institutionalise Guild Socialism within the Labour Party other former members of the League moved towards fascism. For example, Arthur Penty abandoned the idea of workers' control and returned to the idea of national protectionism. In the same year the general strike failed Penty published a collection of anti-free trade arguments under the title, *Protection and the Social Problem* (1926).[978] These built upon his earlier protectionist policies outlined in *The Restoration of the Gild System* and were subsequently developed in another

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[975] D. Kynaston, *A World to Build* (Bloomsbury, 2007) p.24

[976] R. Barker, 'Guild Socialism Revisited?' *The Political Quarterly* Vol. 46, No.3 (1975) p.250

[977] N. Riddell, *The Age of Cole* p.937

[978] A.J. Penty, *Protection and the Social Problem* (Methuen, 1926)

book, *Communism and the Alternative* (1933).[979] Here Penty invoked the British fascist theorist, James Strachey Barnes, whose political principles he claimed coincided with his own economic principles.[980] Together with another former member of the League, Montague Fordham, Penty helped to form the Rural Reconstruction Association (RRA) in 1925, which briefly sought to form a National Agricultural Guild comprised of locally affiliated land councils.[981] This group remained small and probably never rose above 120 members. However, it continued to promote a critique of the harmful effects of industrialisation which shared similarities to the medieval meaning of Guild Socialism. Additionally, the RRA possessed strong links with the British Union of Fascists, which sold RRA publications through its bookshops and included them on its reading lists. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that the two organisations worked together to develop a fascist agricultural policy in 1934.[982]

Before his death in 1937 Penty joined the British Union of Fascists, along with his wife and son. This was confirmed by Samuel Hobson, who recounted in his autobiography how he spontaneously telephoned Penty one day only to find that he had joined the fascist party.[983] In his final works, Penty maintained the same romanticised vision of the medieval past, which had been vital to historical narrative constructed around the League, but also shared clear parallels with fascist treatments of history. This was recognised internationally in particular by Karl Munkes in Germany who acknowledged Penty as a kindred spirit to German fascism. In his doctoral dissertation entitled, *Arthur Penty und der Nationalsozialimus* (Arthur Penty and National Socialism - 1937) Munkes even went so far as to equate Penty's work with the Führer's and claimed, "Penty and Hitler point the way to the future."[984] Although this association did not travel further it nevertheless represents another example of the way in which knowledge previously tied to Guild Socialism was now being subsumed within new institutional contexts and brought into service of more dominant ideas.

While the efforts to integrate knowledge related to Guild Socialism within these new institutional settings was limited and largely failed they nevertheless serve to highlight the continued

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[979] R. Houlton, 'Two Aspects of Guild Socialism' *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, No.7, Autumn, (1963) p.25

[980] A. Penty, *Communism and the Alternative* (Student Christian Movement Press, 1933) p.110; P. Jackson, "James Strachey Barnes and the Fascist Revolution" in E. Tonning, M. Feldman and D. Addyman (eds), *Modernism, Christianity and Apocalypse* (Brill, 2015) pp.187-188; T. Linehan, *British Fascism 1918-39* (Manchester University Press, 2000) p.129

[981] P. Barberis, J. McHugh and M. Tyldesley, *Encyclopedia of British and Irish Political Organizations* (Cassell, 2000) p. 32

[982] P.M. Coupland, *Farming, Fascism and Ecology: A life of Jorian Jenks* (Routledge, 2017) pp.155-156

[983] R. Houlton, *Two Aspects of Guild Socialism* p.25

[984] K. Munkes, *Arthur Penty und der Nationalsozialimus,* PhD Dissertation, University of Bonn (1937) p.6

precariousness of the knowledge attached to Guild Socialism and its carriers. However, during the remainder of the interwar period, several new institutions came into existence that would serve as more stable hosts.

The New Europe Group (NEG) and the New Britain Movement (NBM) both emerged in Britain after the failure of the general strike and became locations for the regrowth of Guild Socialism. Both were the brainchildren of Dimitrije Mitrinović, a charismatic Bosnian Serb philosopher who emigrated to London before the First World War. Like many others, Mitrinović first came into contact with Guild Socialism through discussions in *The New Age* and his involvement with intellectual societies, such as the Bloomsbury Group and the Chandos Group.[985] In 1931 Mitrinović along with other middle-class intellectuals established the NEG with the expressed aim of promoting European federalism. This was followed in 1933 with the creation of the NBM, which shared the same federalist aims as the NEG and combined them with a program for a new model of political economy which would, "create a New Britain organised in Social Unity and for the economic freedom of every individual."[986] While the NEG was small and similar in scale and composition to the intellectual societies in which Mitrinović first came into contact with Guild Socialism. In contrast, the NBM was much larger and produced its own pamphlets and newspaper, *New Britain,* alongside conducting large public meetings that attracted hundreds and establishing 77 local branches in 47 urban centres and 30 separate groups in and around London by 1933.[987]

Relatively little scholarly research exists about either the NEG or the NBM. However, as Luisa Passerini points out both sat at the centre of a discourse amongst various European communities located in interwar Britain about the question of federalism.[988] While, David Page calls them the first manifestation of "genuine European federalism" in Britain.[989] This concept of transeuropean federalism is particularly interesting in relation to Guild Socialism because of its increasingly internationalist turn which the League had worked to promote. This coupled with the changing form of international support Guild Socialism began to receive as it became a subject increasingly discussed largely by academics. In this sense, it is easily conceivable that forms of knowledge related to Guild Socialism would continue further down these pathways.

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[985] A. Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative: An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrinović* (Boulder, 1984) p. 95

[986] D.G. Page, *Pioneers of European Federalism: The New Europe Group and New Britain Movement (1931–1935)* MA Thesis, University of Sheffield (2016) p.1

[987] M. Tyldesley, 'The House of Industry League: Guild Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s' *Labour History Review* Vol.61 (1996) p.310

[988] L. Passerini, *Europe in Love, Love in Europe: Imagination and Politics in Britain between the Wars* (London, 1999) pp. 105–48.

[989] D. Page, *Pioneers of European Federalism* p.4

Although it is difficult to identify individual members of the NEG and NBM numerous sources attest to the presence of guild socialists within them. For instance, both Edwin and Willa Muir, who were both former secretaries of the League, were close to Mitrinović and the group forming around him in the 1930s.[990] Furthermore, Arthur Peacock, who was the secretary of the National Trade Union Club recollected diverse character of the NBM which featured, "Extreme Marxists and Christian Socialists, Guild Socialists, and Liberals, die-hard Tories and enthusiastic Money Reformers".[991]

More convincing than these sources was the incorporation of knowledge relating to Guild Socialism into both the NEG and NBM. Guild Socialism was an important reference point in the propaganda materials produced in support of the NEG and the NBM. In particular, Guild Socialism was frequently discussed in *New Britain* which was also targeted towards the same mixed audience of trade unionists and socialist intellectuals that *The Guildsman* had previously addressed. For example, in January 1934 a lecture on "Industrial Guilds" was advertised in the paper indicating that a vestige of the political economy of Guild Socialism still retained some purchase among British audiences.[992] In August the same year, a document calling for the complete socialisation of industry via a system of National Guilds was passed by the annual conference of the NBM. Furthermore at the same conference a similar system to industrial maintenance called "unconditional citizens allowance" was also approved.[993] These references indicate the clear use of knowledge related to Guild Socialism as at least a means to mobilise support. However, the use of theoretical knowledge pertaining to Guild Socialism by the NEG and the NBM went much further.

Central to the NEG and the NBM was an argument against parliamentary democracy and the British state, which shared clear parallels with criticisms developed in relation to Guild Socialism. Specifically, both groups shared a critique of representative democracy which they used to attack the capacity of state to ensure civil liberties and govern effectively.[994] In addition, they proposed a new structure of society dubbed, "The Three Fold State", which proposed the division of state power into separate "houses" for politics, economics, and culture, that would be administered democratically. These houses would have a clear mandate only over their own respective spheres

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[990] W. Muir, *Belonging: A Memoir* (Hogarth Press, 1968) p.168
[991] A. Peacock, *Yours Fraternally* (Pendulum publications, 1945) p. 88.
[992] M. Tyldesley, *The House of Industry League* p.310
[993] D.G. Page, *Pioneers of European Federalism* p.106
[994] D.G. Page, *ibid* p.24

and be incorporated through a federal system.[995] According to Mike Tyldesley, this idea was derived from the urban planner Patrick Geddes and the social reformer Rudolf Steiner.[996] However, this idea also bore clear parallels with the partnership between the National Guilds and the state (and later cooperatives) which formed the political economy of Guild Socialism. Furthermore, given the prominence of theoretical knowledge relating to Guild Socialism as a reference point for NEG and NBM, it seems likely that this was also a source.

The collapse of both the NEG and the NBM by 1935 indicated another failed attempt to re-institutionalise Guild Socialism. This decline was visible in 1934 when weekly publications of *New Britain* ceased in August followed by a conference in December which divided the movement four ways: the House of Industry League, the League for the National Dividend, the League for the Threefold State, and the British League for European Federation.[997] This division marked the end of this attempt to re-institutionalise Guild Socialism but was not the final one in the interwar period. This mantel would be taken up by the House of Industry League.

The House of Industry League (HOIL) emerged from the breakup to the NBM and seemed to offer another host for Guild Socialism. Unlike the NEG and NBM it was mainly composed of trade unionists who were either personally committed to Guild Socialism, or part of trade unions that retained sympathies.[998] As such the HOIL was also explicitly orientated towards trade unionists whose numbers in terms of membership were beginning to rise again in Britain by the mid-1930s.[999] The HOIL existed prominently from 1936 until 1949 but was most active during the remainder of the interwar period when it organised educational functions and promoted propaganda aimed towards trade unions that promoted workers' control of industry.[1000] As a result, according to Tyldesley it was the, "last organisation in the classical tradition of British Guild Socialism."[1001] This description is apt for two reasons in particular, firstly the membership of HOIL contained many former members of the League, such as Samuel Hobson, who served as the president of the organisation.[1002] Secondly, the HOIL worked to advance theoretical knowledge related to Guild

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[995] M. Tyldesley, *The House of Industry League* p.311

[996] M. Tyldesley, *ibid* p.310

[997] D.G. Page, *Pioneers of European Federalism* p.108

[998] M. Tyldesley, *The House of Industry League* p.318

[999] N.C. Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976* p.104; M. Tyldesley, *The House of Industry League* p.311

[1000] P. Barberis, J. McHugh and M. Tyldesley, *Encyclopaedia of British and Irish Political Organisations* (Continuum 2000) p.353

[1001] M. Tyldesley, *The House of Industry League* p.309

[1002] M. Tyldesley, *ibid* p.317

Socialism and thereby provided some measure of stability that prevented the total erasure of Guild Socialism.

The name and principles for the HOIL were largely set out in a new book written by Hobson, *The House of Industry* (1931), which restated the need to divide the political and economic power of state into separate institutions. Hobson reposed the idea of a partnership between economic and political actors from the partnership of National Guilds and the state to a new elected second chamber, which would replace the House of Lords. For Hobson, the House of Lords was originally intended to represent, agriculture, the primary economic interest in Britain, but was superseded by the industrial revolution and should therefore be abolished. In its place, a new body of elected representatives consisting of the largest industries should be formed, many of whom would necessarily be workers.[1003] Notably, this new version of a partnership continued the corporatist model of workers' control and democracy that Hobson and the League had worked to construct. In particular, by subsuming workers' control and industrial democracy within state power and continuing to reproduce a top-down model of democracy by focussing the locus of democratic power at the upper echelons of society.

In fact Hobson's idea of an industrial parliament was fairly widespread in Britain during the 1930s. For example, Winston Churchill made a similar argument in his 1930 Romanes lecture, while in 1933 the Industrial Reorganisation League under the leadership of the future Conservative prime-minister, Harold Macmillan, also campaigned for a form of self-government in industry provided by a "Central Economic Council" or "Industrial sub-Parliament".[1004] Furthermore, Hobson's vision appears to have altered after the arrival of the NBM which he came into contact with in 1932. As a result, Hobson reformulated his vision of political economy in a new book, *Functional Socialism* (1936) by adding a conspicuous third house, "a House of Culture" to his program thus mirroring the Three Fold State idea developed by the NBM. Additionally, a close personal connection also appears to have developed between Hobson and Mitrinovic who corresponded heavily about the possibility of a House of Culture before Hobson's death in 1940 and after which Mitrinovic paid for his funeral.[1005]

[1003] S. G. Hobson, *The House of Industry: A New Estate of the Realm* (London, 1931), pp.12-14.
[1004] D. Blaazer, *Guild Socialists after Guild Socialism* p.148
[1005] M. Tyldesley, *The House of Industry League* pp.137-138

According to Blaazer it is surprising that the HOIL appeared to have no connection with the Socialist League's efforts to institutionalise Guild Socialism within the Labour Party.[1006] This observation can also be extended to include Penty and his involvement with the RRA, which similarly had no connection with the other groups. Although the lack of connection between these groups is seemingly strange it can be easily explained by the understanding that they represented efforts to institutionalise different kinds of Guild Socialism that were based upon different forms of knowledge. While the Socialist League worked towards rebuilding directly democratic workers' control within the Labour Party thereby continuing to support a core aspect of syndicalist Guild Socialism. The NEG, NBM and HOIL continued to develop knowledge related to a new form of political economy based on a partnership between state institutions responsible for politics, economics, and later culture. In this sense, clearly continuing in the tradition corporatist Guild Socialism. Furthermore, the agrarian and national focus of the RRA was consistent with the medievalist position the League had worked to promote. Despite their differences, these separate continuations of Guild Socialism also shared commonalities, such as continuing to oppose Douglasism and Bolshevism. Nevertheless although all of these institutions provided some respite for what remained of Guild Socialism these were the last institutional forms that truly embraced this idea. This left the subject of Guild Socialism in mainly academic hands which characterised the last phase of its history.

After the end of Second World War the place of Guild Socialism amongst other rarified academic subjects was assured. In particular, Guild Socialism became heavily associated with the growth of the British New Left who vigorously attempted to revive the study workers' control.[1007] This was motivated by the context of the Cold War and in response to Stalinism and newly accessible English translations of Marx's early works, which were crucially guided by former members of the League. For instance, the sociologist Stewart Hall remembered cementing some of his earliest contacts and friendships with the New Left as part of the "Cole Group" which formed while he was at university at Oxford.[1008] This was a group organised by G.D.H. Cole, who at this stage had departed from politics and returned to academia. For Hall and other members future members of the New Left, Guild Socialism was important particularly during this period because of the overwhelming strength of the post-war British welfare state. Despite supporting the achievements of the welfare state the New Left remained skeptical of its bureaucratic tendencies and the same processes within the

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[1006] D. Blaazer, *Guild Socialists after Guild Socialism* p.136
[1007] D. Butt, 'Workers' Control' *New Left Review,* Vol.1 No.10 (1961) pp.24-32
[1008] S.Hall, 'The Life and Times of the First New Left' *New Left Review,* Vol 61, (2010) p.2

Fabian Society and the Labour Party.[1009] *The New Left Review*, which Hall helped to establish, became a particular venue for renewed discussions about Guild Socialism which led another important figure, Raymond Williams, to describe the subject as, "[a] creative and indispensable" element of British culture.[1010] Although the New Left highlighted the potential for a renewal of Guild Socialism it did little more than re-examine the earlier arguments made by the League in favour of workers' control. Ultimately, however, these efforts only served to highlight the complete transformation of Guild Socialism into an academic subject.

Conclusion

The decline of Guild Socialism during the 1920s is indicative of various threats which surfaced simultaneously. In particular, the collapse of the National Building Guild highlighted the danger of centralising knowledge in a singular location, while division within the National Guilds League in response to Douglasisms showed how vulnerable the institution was in response to managing its own internal knowledge system. Furthermore, the changing context of the British Left increasingly marginalised the League, which lead to a loss of members to other socialist institutions and the absorption of knowledge related to Guild Socialism that threatened the distinctiveness of the League. All of these factors were set against the backdrop of economic recession and austerity which placed pressure on the British trade union movement and produced rising levels of unemployment. As a result of this combination of factors Guild Socialism became increasingly devalued as its primary institutional carrier, the National Guilds League, occupied an increasingly precarious position eventually leading to its dissolution in 1923.

The brief resurgence of Guild Socialism between 1923 and 1926 served to highlight the possibility of preserving and re-institutionalising knowledge related to this subject. In particular, the creation of the National Guilds Council served as a new institution from which to expand that facilitated the resurrection of guilds across several industries in Britain. These new guilds were directly assisted by the institutional framework of the Council which facilitated material support via trade deals with the Soviet Union and intellectual ballast through the creation of new propaganda which promoted Guild Socialism. Additionally, the Council also interacted with a growing international academic interest in Guild Socialism during this period, which also served to preserve Guild Socialism as it became increasingly transformed into a mainly academic subject.

[1009] S.Hall, *ibid* p.7
[1010] R. Williams, *Culture and Society* (London, 1968) p.191

This resurgence was halted in 1926 following the consequences of the general strike and miners' strikes. As a result, the trade union movement was weakened and the demand for workers' control declined in Britain. This had serious consequences for Guild Socialism as its new institutional container, the National Guilds Council, attempted to support the strikes and was destroyed as a result of its financial and organisational involvement. Despite the disappearance of the Council knowledge about Guild Socialism persisted carried by its former members. During the remainder of the interwar period and even after the Second World War efforts to implant knowledge relating to Guild Socialism into new institutional settings were underway. These reflected the diversity of meanings that had been constructed initially within the League as corporatist, medievalist, and syndicalist versions of Guild Socialism were introduced into a range of new institutions and movements from the far left to the far right, thereby reflecting the ultimately flexible character of Guild Socialism and the forms of knowledge associated with it. In this sense, the decline of Guild Socialism during the 1920s can be understood as a transformation rather than an ultimate end. As the value of knowledge associated with this subject changed in relation to shifting wider conditions and became integrated within new knowledge systems both in Britain and internationally.

Conclusion

At the start of the twenty-first century, Guild Socialism continues to be actively invoked in British politics. For example, an ongoing crisis of political identity within the Labour Party has led to several attempts to cite historic ties with the subject. Most recently in 2018 the former shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, drew attention to Guild Socialism in relation to an ambitious plan to increase workers' control and industrial democracy in private companies.[1011] While McDonnell comes from the leftwing of the party similar efforts have also been undertaken by the rightwing. Notably, the Blue Labour group has since 2009 attempted to rehabilitate Guild Socialism in relation to their own agenda of flag-waving nationalism as a model of a nationally focused industrial strategy in order to counter the international flows of capital and labour which undermine the British nation-state.[1012] Outside of the Labour Party other sections of the British Left have also shown recent interest in Guild Socialism in relation to contemporary problems. A new housing crisis has begun to blossom in Britain which has led to renewed interest in the building guilds as a possible solution to this situation.[1013] Similarly, the emergence of the digital economy and platform capitalism has encouraged some to imagine a new model of "Guild Socialism for the Digital Economy" in order to overcome the anti-democratic monopolistic tendencies of large online corporations.[1014] These efforts highlight the continued relevance of Guild Socialism to different sections of the British Left today and help to draw attention to the significance of this thesis.

This survey of the history of Guild Socialism has led to three conclusions about this subject. Firstly, the existence of multiple meanings of Guild Socialism has been examined. These are revealed through the use of methodological tools derived from the History of Knowledge, such as the category of knowledge and knowledge systems. These tools have served to highlight the involvement of various historical actors who contributed to the multiple meanings this subject acquired. Secondly, by combining this approach with a more focussed examination of the global dimensions of Guild Socialism this thesis has highlighted how the development of these meanings involved multiple locations. This point helps to draw attention to the scale of influence of this

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[1011] J. McDonnell, *Economics for the Many* (Verso, 2018) pp.vii-xviii

[1012] M Stears, "Guild Socialism" in M. Bevir's (eds.), *Modern Pluralism: Anglo-American Debates since 1880*, p.58; *The Economist*, "A nation of shoppers", 19.05.2011, https://www.economist.com/bagehots-notebook/2011/05/19/a-nation-of-shoppers

[1013] J. Mathieson, 'When Socialists Built our Homes', *Tribune*, 08.01.2020, pp.84-87

[1014] J. Muldoon, *Platform Socialism: How to Reclaim our Digital Future from Big Tech* (Pluto Press, 2022) pp.80-100

subject that went beyond Britain and indicates the different values attached to it by historical actors. Furthermore, it also indicates the important connection between material systems and ideas that allowed the influence of Guild Socialism to develop internationally. Thirdly, the development of Guild Socialism reflects the wider circumstances of the British Left between 1880 and the interwar period. In particular, the use of knowledge and knowledge systems offers a new perspective on this context, which helps to highlight how Guild Socialism first emerged and then ultimately declined in relation to changes within the British Left.

6.1. Knowledge and Knowledge Systems

Throughout the course of this thesis close attention has been paid to knowledge and knowledge systems towards the construction of Guild Socialism. This analysis builds upon the work of various historians of knowledge. Using Peter Burke's understanding of different forms of practical and theoretical knowledge this thesis has constructed an understanding of the subject of Guild Socialism which was defined by these subcategories of knowledge.[1015] These included craftsmanship, forms of political economy, translation, illustration, financial organisation, and office management to name but a few. The centralisation of these knowledges within the National Guilds League constituted the creation of a knowledge system, which builds upon the work of Lorraine Daston, Simone Lässig and Martin Mulsow.[1016] This system was defined by a central modus operandi, the acquisition of knowledge, which became integral to the development of Guild Socialism. In addition, this system possessed a dynamic and hierarchical structure common to knowledge systems that served to define "raw" information from "cooked" knowledge and also allowed the League to define itself from other rival knowledge systems within the British Left.[1017] By adopting this approach this thesis contributes to expanding the remit of the History of Knowledge through the introduction of a new subject which goes beyond the narrow remit of scientific objects often associated with this field.

The development of this knowledge system through the creation of the National Guilds League in 1915 represented the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism. This drastically changed the subject in

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[1015] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* p.8

[1016] L. Daston, "Comment on M. Muslow's History of Knowledge" in M. Tamm and P. Burke's (eds.) *Debating New Approaches to History* p.176; L. Daston, *The History of Science* pp.141-142; S. Lässig, *The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda* pp.44-45, 52; M. Muslow, "History of Knowledge" in M. Tamm and P. Burke's (eds.) *Debating New Approaches to History* p.163

[1017] P. Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* pp.18-19

several ways that defined it from earlier efforts. In terms of scale, the League expanded the number of audiences Guild Socialism was targeted towards as it launched a propaganda campaign aimed at trade unionists, socialist intellectuals, and an imagined middle-class public. This effort marked a departure from earlier efforts to develop and popularise the subject within other institutions, such as *The New Age* and The Fabian Society, which predominantly only advanced the appeal of Guild Socialism amongst middle-class socialists. In order to raise support for Guild Socialism among these new audiences, the League reformulated knowledge about Guild Socialism in certain publications as a means to appeal to each audience independently. This indicates the dynamic nature of the knowledge system within the League. Furthermore, it also highlights how knowledge relating to Guild Socialism was produced and circulated by the League in a way distinct from the other institutions which had previously played host to discussions about the subject.

The propaganda campaign launched by the National Guilds League made it distinct and served to directly change the material expression of Guild Socialism. In particular, new kinds of printed publications were developed including books, leaflets, pamphlets, and newspapers, which described the subject. These publications expanded the range of material forms Guild Socialism was expressed within and in certain cases made the subject much more accessible in terms of price to working-class trade unionists. Thereby also contributing to widening the appeal of the subject. These new publications also represented a material reformulation of knowledge relating to Guild Socialism and therefore also constituted another example of the ways in which League was distinct from previous efforts to raise the appeal of the subject. Furthermore, they also introduced new forms of practical knowledge, such as illustration, as a means to win additional support from the different audiences targeted by the League which highlights another example of how knowledge about Guild Socialism was reformulated by the League. The production and circulation of these new publications was facilitated by the creation of a network of regional offices across Britain. These represented another way in which the institutionalisation of Guild Socialism changed the materiality of the subject. These offices created memos, reports, and letterheads that fed information pertinent to the League to its headquarters in London and between other regional centres across Britain. Thereby constituting new forms of material communication that aided the development of the knowledge system within the League that involved a network of individuals working as secretaries and correspondents.

The formation of the League also changed Guild Socialism in terms of the spaces where the subject was expressed. Previously discussions of the subject were primarily restricted to the pages of *The New Age* and within departments of the Fabian Society. In contrast, the League undertook a national campaign to popularise Guild Socialism through public lectures. These lectures represented a change in space where the subject was expressed that served to broaden the appeal of the subject as part of the League's broader propaganda campaign. Furthermore, they represented another instance of the reformation of knowledge to fit these new spaces. This spatial transformation of Guild Socialism was also represented and heavily facilitated by the creation of regional branches of the League, which often assisted in the organisation of local lectures alongside the creation and circulation of League publications.

Another characteristic of the knowledge system which developed within the National Guilds League was the inclusion and exclusion of different forms of knowledge. This feature defined the League from other institutions that had previously helped to develop Guild Socialism. For example, the exclusion by the League of certain forms of theoretical knowledge developed by individuals associated with *The New Age,* such as John Neville Figgis and Ramiro de Maeztu, indicated the refinement Guild Socialism. Furthermore, it also highlighted one dimension of the hierarchical nature of knowledge systems whereby boundaries of what is considered acceptable knowledge became defined. The voluntary exclusion of Alfred Orage's involvement with the League also serves as another example. Before the League was formed, Orage had held significant power over shaping the emerging meaning of Guild Socialism as a nationally defined phenomenon while working as the editor of *The New Age.* However, following the creation of the League Orage's influence diminished significantly and he eventually drifted away from Guild Socialism and later became affiliated with a similar idea, Douglasism, over which he could exert more control.

This focus on knowledge and a knowledge system within the National Guilds League defines this thesis from earlier scholarship on Guild Socialism. This is because the overwhelming majority of historiography devoted to this subject from its earliest examples by Niles Carpenter and André Philip to more recent accounts by Gareth Dale and Paul Jackson have chiefly focussed on individual

intellectuals associated with Guild Socialism.[1018] In particular, Arthur Penty, Samuel Hobson and G.D.H. Cole. This focus highlights the strong current of Intellectual History which has defined scholarly assessments of this subject, which have been largely concerned with the individual intellectual contributions and their social context. In response to this situation, this thesis expands the focus from solely considering individuals to also including institutions mostly prominently the National Guilds League. This shift in focus allows for the interplay between both practical and theoretical knowledge which contributed to the development of Guild Socialism to be evaluated. As such the subject becomes not only the sole product of intellectuals concerned questions of political economy in response to Fabianism, industrial unionism, Marxism, syndicalism in the context of Edwardian Britain. Instead, these features are combined with the recognition of the role played by practical knowledge about architecture, illustration, financial organisation, and office management which also contributed to the development of this subject. As such this thesis not only breaks new ground by adopting a new methodological approach to this subject which reveals this interplay of different knowledges. It also contributes to the History of Knowledge directly by highlighting the important role played by practical knowledge in the development of Guild Socialism.

As a result of this approach, this thesis defines three meanings associated with Guild Socialism: corporatist, medievalist and syndicalist. These different meanings were constructed out of different forms of knowledge the National Guilds League incorporated and vied for dominance reflecting the changing hierarchical structure of the knowledge system. As such medievalist Guild Socialism was based around the promotion of craftsmanship and a particular understanding of British national history. In contrast, corporatist Guild Socialism revolved around the idea of forming a partnership between National Guilds and state and the top-down organisation of society; while syndicalist Guild Socialism was concerned with the bottom-up organisation of society based on a particular understanding of workers' control and industrial democracy.

[1018] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism: A Historical and Critical Analysis* (D. Appleton Company, 1922); A. Philip, *Guild Socialisme et Trade-Unionisme* (Paris, Les Presses universitaires de France, 1923); . Dale, 'Karl Polanyi in Vienna: Guild Socialism, Austro-Marxism and Duczynska's Alternative', *Historical Materialism,* Vol.22, No.1 (2014) pp.34-66; P. Jackson, *Great War Modernisms and the New Age Magazine* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); A.L. Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)

This approach departs from the majority of studies which have tended to view this subject in monolithic terms as a singular ideology, or political movement.[1019] Instead what is revealed by this thesis is a multiplicity of Guild Socialisms that cohered within the National Guilds League. This was apparent when the League first formed and these different meanings began to emerge in relation to the knowledge system within the institution. Initially, the corporatist meaning was dominant while the medievalist and syndicalist meanings were both subordinate. This was due to the importance attached to the principle of a partnership between National Guilds and the state, which reflected theoretical knowledge that informed this particular vision of political economy. This was clearly expressed in early publications produced by the League as well as the Storrington Document, which laid the groundwork for the organisation and placed particular emphasis on this understanding. In contrast, knowledge relating to the medievalist and syndicalist meanings although present within the League publications was less prevalent, but still remained a feature within guild socialist propaganda. For instance, frequent references to the craftsmanship of the artisans in the Middle Ages peppered the League's newspaper *The Guildsman,* alongside calls to develop industrial democracy further and reject the idea of a partnership with the state. Using a knowledge-based approach, therefore, serves as a useful means to highlight the diversity of meanings attached to the subject within the knowledge system contained within the National Guilds League.

The relationship between these meanings changed over time indicating the changeable nature of the knowledge system within the League. In particular, post-war reconstruction produced a realignment of the knowledge system as the League struggled with an internal debate over the meaning of the state, capitalism and the Bolshevik revolution in relation to Guild Socialism. As a consequence, the different meanings of Guild Socialism became increasingly polarised and two groups emerged within the League: The Left and The Right. The internal struggle between these groups reflected the changing position of knowledge within the League. As a result, syndicalist Guild Socialism emerged from the conflict as the dominant meaning of the subject within the League. Additional pressure was placed on the knowledge system after 1921 when various factors combined to weaken the National Guilds League, including Douglasism, the collapse of the National Building Guild, and other constituents in the British Left, in particular the Communist Party of Great Britain. These factors led to the collapse of the National Guilds League in 1923 and the growth of the National

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[1019] S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialists* (Longmans, 1966); J. Vowles, *From Corporatism to Worker's Control: The Formation of British Guild Socialism*, PhD Thesis, The University of British Columbia (1980); M. Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought 1914-1939* (Clarendon Press, 1986) pp.66-68

Guilds Council which now became the primary container of the knowledge system. This resulted in a brief resurgence between 1923 and 1926 when knowledge relating to Guild Socialism appeared to be consolidating as it was re-institutionalised in the Council.

The collapse of the National Guilds League in 1923 and the National Guilds Council in 1926 signified the precarious nature of these knowledge carriers.[1020] However, their failure rather than resulting in the total destruction of knowledge relating to Guild Socialism instead produced a scattering of knowledge. Former members sought new institutional settings within which to embed themselves and knowledge related to Guild Socialism. This resulted in a myriad of divergent attempts to revive Guild Socialism and integrate it into new institutions, particularly during the 1930s but also into the 1950s. The heterogeneity of these efforts which spanned the political spectrum from the far left to the far right emphasises the diverse nature of the knowledge system formerly contained within the League.

Focussing on the diversity of meanings attached to the subject of Guild Socialism by the knowledge system within the National Guilds League also serves to highlight the involvement of a wide cast of historical actors who contributed to this subject. These include a great number of working-class trade unionists like John Paton, Arthur McCarthy, and Malcolm Sparkes who all worked closely with the League to advance its objectives and contributed forms of practical and theoretical knowledge to the institution. The involvement of these actors serves to highlight the differentiated class composition of the National Guilds League, which previously has been considered as a purely middle-class intellectual institution.[1021] In addition, this thesis also serves to highlight the involvement of a significant minority of women who worked with the League. Including prominent examples, such as Margaret Cole (nee Postgate), Rose Cohen, Jessie Hughan, Emily Townshend, and Eva Schumann. Furthermore, the international circulation and reception of Guild Socialism highlights the involvement of large numbers of women who also took up the subject and integrated it into their own local knowledge systems. These included working-class trade unionists who were members of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union and the International Congress of Working Women. Alongside middle-class academics, such as Amy Hewes, Charlotte Leubuscher, Irma Peratoner and Hertha Lehmann-Jottkowitz. The involvement of these women serves to expand the traditional focus which has largely been given to men involved with the development of Guild

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[1020] M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen: Eine andere Ideengeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit* pp.11-37
[1021] A.W. Wright, *Guild Socialism Revisited* p.166

Socialism. Furthermore, their involvement again serves to highlight the diverse array of practical and theoretical knowledge which contributed to the development of this subject.

Knowledge and knowledge systems, therefore, present this thesis with a novel means to reassess Guild Socialism which goes beyond previous scholarship in a number of ways. Firstly, it has shifted focus away from individual intellectuals in order to incorporate a wide cast of historical actors who were involved in the development of Guild Socialism by contributing various forms of practical or theoretical knowledge. Furthermore, it draws focus towards those institutions responsible for the production and circulation of knowledge which this wider cast of characters were involved with. Secondly, applying the category of knowledge to Guild Socialism allows this subject to be considered in non-monolithic terms. As a consequence, the diversity of forms of practical and theoretical knowledge that contributed to this subject can be assessed without reducing them to a singular meaning. This approach, therefore, differs from other approaches to this subject that have used other analytical categories and allows the variety of meanings that came to be attached to Guild Socialism to be presented.

6.2. Multiple Locations

A more focused examination of the global dimensions of Guild Socialism helps to develop a better understanding of the knowledge system within the National Guilds League. This consideration reveals how multiple locations were involved in the construction of Guild Socialism as a subject. This focus has been central to this thesis and builds upon previous scholarship in two ways. Firstly it expands the conventional focus scholars, such as Niles Carpenter, Stephen Glass and Marc Stears have taken that Guild Socialism was a phenomenon constructed within the national context of Britain.[1022] Building upon this work this thesis accepts the centrality of Britain as a location for the development of Guild Socialism and adds to it the consideration that various other locations were also essential to the production, circulation, and interpretation of the subject. Secondly, this thesis draws upon the more recent transnational and discursive turns in scholarship exemplified by Judith Smart, Gareth Dale, Kevin Morgen, Tom Villis, and Jack Vowles, which have expanded the spatial

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[1022] N. Carpenter, *Guild Socialism: A Historical and Critical Analysis* (D. Appleton Company, 1922); S.T. Glass, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialists* (Longmans, 1966); M Stears, 'Guild Socialism and Ideological Diversity on the British left, 1914–1926', *Journal of Political Ideologies* Vol. 3, No. 3 (1998) pp.289-306

parameters around the subject through individual case studies.[1023] This second branch of scholarship has been particularly useful to this thesis which brings together these disparate case studies into a systematic framework in order to highlight the multiplicity of locations that were involved in the development of Guild Socialism.

The primary means this thesis uses to consider the influence of multiple locations in relation to Guild Socialism is through the development of a communication network that emerged around the National Guilds League. This was composed of hundreds of individuals who interacted with the League exchanging letters, books, pamphlets, and sometimes traveling between different regions in order to share information about Guild Socialism. As such, this network helps to underscore the broader point about the large number of men and women from a mixture of middle-class and working-class backgrounds involved in the development of Guild Socialism. Initially, this network came into existence through the creation of regional branches of the League which appeared across Britain. These allowed for the circulation of information and publications related to Guild Socialism nationally. In tandem with this development international communications also rapidly formed between the League and an array of historical actors located across the British empire as well as parts of Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America.

The location of the National Guilds League in Britain provided a number of advantages for the development of this communication network. Firstly, by virtue of being located at the heart of the British empire, English became the default language used to discuss Guild Socialism. This allowed connections to form between the League and historical actors in other English-speaking regions, which were either part of, or formerly part of, the British empire. As a consequence, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States all exhibited relatively strong connections with the League. Secondly, this location meant that the League sat at the centre of a vast existing imperial communication network. This provided an important set of material infrastructures that allowed the League to exploit rapid and reliable communications in the form of postal services, trains, and

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[1023] J. Smart, "Respect not Relief: Feminism, Guild Socialism and the Guild Hall Commune in Melbourne, 1917" *Labour History*, No. 94 (May, 2008) pp.113-132; G. Dale, 'Karl Polanyi in Vienna: Guild Socialism, Austro-Marxism and Duczynska's Alternative', *Historical Materialism,* Vol.22, No.1 (2014) pp.34-66; K. Morgan, 'British Guild Socialists and the exemplar of the Panama Canal' *History of Political Thought,* Vol 28, No.1 (2007) pp.129-157; T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy In Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Tauris, 2006); J. Vowles, "A Guild Socialist Programme of Action", *Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin,* No.43 (1981) pp.16-21; J. Vowles, 'Ideology and the Formation of the New Zealand Labour Party' *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 16, No.1 (1982) pp.39-55; J. Vowles, "From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism: Some Neglected Aspects of the Ideology of the Labour Movement', 1914-1923", in J.E. Martin and K. Taylor (eds), *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History* (Dunmore Press, 1991) pp.283-303

steamships, which could transport physical objects including, books, letters, newspapers, and pamphlets across great distances to and from the imperial metropole. This allowed for the rapid circulation of information related to Guild Socialism between the League headquarters in London and correspondents around the world. In addition, this infrastructure also aided communications between the League and historical actors located outside of the British empire in other imperial settings, such as Japan, therefore assisting in the development of inter-imperial connections with the League.

In addition to these factors, other examples of material infrastructure also aided the development of the communication network allowing Guild Socialism to develop between multiple locations. In particular, local press networks were important and facilitated the wider circulation of discussions around Guild Socialism through newspapers. In this way, journalists and trade unionists, such as Jessie Hughan, Arthur McCarthy, Murobuse Takanobu, and Martin Wagner, were instrumental in the wider circulation of Guild Socialism in locations such as Germany, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. The efforts of these individuals also brought the League into contact with larger institutions which also aided in the wider circulation and discussion of Guild Socialism through their own newspapers. Including, *The Intercollegiate Socialist*, *The Maoriland Worker, Hihyo,* and the *Internationale Gildenkorrespondenz*.

Knowledge was central to the functioning of this communication network. Translation knowledge contributed by actors like Eva Schumann and Ödön Pór allowed Guild Socialism to circulate widely amongst non-English speaking audiences. This helped to produce examples of intellectual synchronicity whereby these historical actors connected local ideas to Guild Socialism as a means to expand the circulation of the subject. As a result, these ideas formed pathways for Guild Socialism to become connected to a variety of national contexts, such as the development of the postwar building industries in Austria, Germany, Japan, and South Africa, or the proposals to nationalise railway systems in the United States. While internationally, Guild Socialism became associated by socialists and trade unionists with efforts to rebuild international connections through organisations, such as the Internationalen Baugildenverband, the International Labour Office, and the International Association for Labour Legislation. Likewise, examples of practical knowledge relating to office management and clerical work, such as responding to letters from correspondents, typing reports, and sending out League publications were also vital to sustaining the communication network. This was provided by an array of clerical secretaries who worked for the National Guilds League such as Miss Herz, F.E. Thomas, and Rose Cohen. In addition, this was supported by

knowledge relating to financial organisation provided by figures, such as Emily Townshend, which insured that these institutional functions persisted despite the League's meagre budget. As such different forms of knowledge were key to sustaining and expanding the communication network around the National Guilds League.

Considering both material infrastructures and knowledge in relation to the communication network serves as means to emphasise the material basis for the transmission of ideas like Guild Socialism. This point has often been overlooked in the broader Global History of Ideas, therefore, emphasising the need to redress this situation by reasserting the material basis for knowledge.[1024] It is important to stress the point that material factors supported the communication network around the League and provided a basis for the creation of intellectual synchronicities between local ideas and Guild Socialism. This point is particularly clearly made in relation to the communication network which emerged around the League and involved a combination of both knowledge and material infrastructure in order to produce and circulate Guild Socialism. However, it has also been highlighted in relation to other parts of this thesis, such as in relation to the accumulation of knowledge in particular physical centres like Oxford University due to their position within the imperial metropole of the British empire.

The uneven reception of Guild Socialism globally was also tied to the interplay between knowledge and material infrastructures. For example, in Germany and Italy local correspondents working with the National Guilds League were compelled to overcome significant obstacles in order to communicate. The predominance of English as the main language used to express the subject necessitated the need for translation knowledge, while the beginning of the First World War and its aftermath restricted physical communications with Britain. In contrast, other locations such as New Zealand and the United States benefited from much stronger connections with the League. This was due to the fact that both countries shared English as a common language thereby meaning that translation knowledge was not necessary to communications. Furthermore, both locations benefited from the strong imperial communications systems connected to Britain which were not disrupted to the same extent as Italy and Germany.

The uneven reception of Guild Socialism around the world was also mediated by the different value attached to knowledge relating to the subject by different local actors who appropriated it to suit

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[1024] S. Conrad, *What is Global History?* p.66; C.L. Hill, *Conceptual Universalization* pp.134-158

their needs. For some like Ödön Pór Guild Socialism served as a means to make money through the acquisition of publishing contracts in order to overcome the economic consequences of the First World War. For others, like Teijiro Fukunaga knowledge relating to house building and the building guilds was particularly attractive due to the destruction caused by the Great Kanto earthquake and an existing narrative of social reconstruction. While for yet more, including Eva Schumann, Martin Wagner and Jessie Hughan political commitments to the international advancement of socialism and trade unionism lay behind the appropriation of the subject. These diverse motivations indicate a range of different receptions of Guild Socialism and serve to indicate how the subject was altered in response to this contact.

As a consequence, an array of different national and international concerns became attached to Guild Socialism. These were recirculated to the League through the communication network and were clearly represented in its publications. In particular, the regular column 'Guilds at Home and Abroad' which was featured in *The Guildsman* became a particularly conspicuous example. Here the development of Guild Socialism in Britain was set side-by-side with other locations producing a singular international narrative. Characteristic of this column was information about the formation of various national and local guilds, especially in the building industry in different locations around the world. The prospects of different national and international programs for reconstruction, such as the Plumb Plan and the Internationalen Baugildenverband, and their connection to Guild Socialism. As well as the creation of a myriad of local adjuncts to the League, such as the National Guilds League of Japan, the Commonwealth Guilds League, and the National Guilds League of South Africa. This marked a significant development in the history of Guild Socialism which indicated a clear change in focus for the League away from a purely national orientation towards Britain and a pivot towards a broader international context. This development is important to consider because until now the history of Guild Socialism has largely been treated as an internal phenomenon within Britain, which only in relation to specific individuals traveled outside of these national confines. Indeed what this thesis serves to show is that the development of Guild Socialism was in fact tied to multiple regions. As a result, the orientation of the subject changed significantly within the League, while elsewhere other individuals and institutions adapted the subject to fit their own needs.

6.3. The British Left

The development of Guild Socialism also serves to highlight the broader circumstances of the British Left between the 1880s up until the interwar period. As such this thesis provides a means to consider the broader series of knowledge systems that defined the British Left and interacted with Guild Socialism. This reveals the flexibility of the British Left and highlighted how even relatively small constituents within it, such as the League, had an impact both nationally and internationally. This serves to change the image of Guild Socialism which has been previously depicted as a minor and ineffective constituent alongside larger actors like the Labour Party and the Fabian Society.[1025] As a result, it constitutes a novel approach to this broader context, which conventionally is assessed either in terms of the ideological composition of political parties, or social movements that helped to define it.[1026] Building upon these approaches this thesis uses the category of knowledge and knowledge systems to reassess the British Left in relation to Guild Socialism. As a consequence, it contributes to expanding the remit of Global History of Socialisms by presenting a new research methodology with which to analyse socialist subjects.

The conditions that gave rise to Guild Socialism highlight a tense situation within the British Left at the end of the nineteenth century. The rise of New Unionism in the 1880s dramatically strengthened the labour movement leading many trade unionists towards a form of state socialism known as collectivism. Collectivism was characterised by a program for state ownership and control of the means of production in opposition to capitalism, which would be delivered through parliamentary elections. In Britain, this vision of socialism became dominant and was most clearly identifiable in the Fabian Society and subsequently the Labour Party. The Fabian Society in particular worked towards the production and circulation of knowledge relating to collectivism, which aimed to guide trade unionists towards parliamentary support for the Labour Party. Against this dominant current, the demand for workers' control constituted a rival version of socialism supported by different parts of the British Left. These included relatively small groups such as the British Advocates for Industrial Unionism, Industrial Syndicalist Education League and the Industrial Workers of Great Britain. These groups responded to the new conditions for workers set by the Second Industrial Revolution by drawing upon French syndicalism and American industrial unionism in order to

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[1025] D. Blaazer, "Guild Socialism and the Historians" *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* Vol 44, No. 1 (1998) p.1

[1026] M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton University Press, 2017); E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin, 1991)

synthesise the demand that industries should be brought under the direct control of workers without the need for parliamentary democracy or state control. The tension between these two poles of the British Left was increased at the beginning of the twentieth century by an economic depression. This led to a period of increased labour militancy known as the Great Unrest that developed in response and challenged the collectivist policies of the fledging British welfare state on the eve of the First World War.

The forms of knowledge that first came to define Guild Socialism were produced in this context out of the dialectical tension between collectivism and the demand for workers' control. In particular, early forerunners of the subject, including Arthur Penty, Samuel Hobson, Alfred Orage, and G.D.H. Cole were influenced by these conditions. In response, they marshalled forms of practical and theoretical knowledge that came to define Guild Socialism.

For Penty his training as an architect imbued him with practical knowledge about house building, while his unstable financial position drew him towards socialism and theoretical knowledge associated with the Fabian Society and the Arts and Craft Movement during the 1890s. Penty broke with the Fabians over their commitments to efficiency and the centralisation of industry in the early 1900s. This break led him to begin to refine a new model of political economy associated with the demand for workers' control based on a revival of medieval guilds inspired by John Ruskin and William Morris. This was expressed in the short polemic text *The Restoration of the Gild System* (1906) which championed trade unionism as a vehicle for the re-emergence of a guild system to defy both capitalism and collectivism.

Under the influence of Alfred Orage, *The New Age* became an incubator for Penty's work. This forum began to champion workers' control in response to collectivism in the context of the Great Unrest and framed the creation of guilds as a British alternative to syndicalism. Additionally, the paper also drew in other figures such as Samuel Hobson who then began to systematically develop the guild idea further. In particular, Hobson's theoretical knowledge of Marxism and practical knowledge of journalism and industrial unionism allowed him to build upon Penty's early work. This led him with the help of Orage to publish, *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System* (1914), which proposed a modern version of the guild system based around the creation of National Guilds and the abolition of the wage system. These proposals were extended by G.D.H. Cole and other young researchers working for the Fabian Society who just before the start of the First World War began to break with the institution's collectivist orthodoxy. They supported the demand for workers' control and encouraged trade unions to develop additional democratic structures in

industries. This group threatened to take control of the Fabian Society under the banner of Guild Socialism and repurpose the knowledge system within the institution towards the production of knowledge in favour of workers' control. Alongside this failed effort the beginning of the First World War spurred the now self-identified guild socialists towards systematising their position leading to the creation of the Storrington Document that paved the way for the making of the National Guilds League in 1915.

In addition to being a product of broader tensions within the British Left the National Guilds League also represented its diverse makeup. In particular, the diversity of its members and forms of knowledge contained within its institutional confines highlight these points. In terms of its membership, the League was composed of a mixture of working-class trade unionists and middle-class socialist intellectuals. These groups reflected the wider composition of the British Left and contributed an array of skills they obtained from previous affiliations with other sections of the labour movement. These included research practices, conferences, lectures, research committees, summer schools, writing special reports, and the creation of regional branches and newspapers. These skills constituted the transfer of forms of practical knowledge to the League from other knowledge systems within the British Left, such as trade unions and the Fabian Society. In addition theoretical knowledge relating to corporatism, industrial unionism, Marxism and syndicalism was also integrated which also reflected the broad traditions of the British Left at this point. The ability of the League to contain these diverse influences reflected the institution's own flexibility as well as the broader diversity of the British Left.

Postwar reconstruction represented changes within the British Left that influenced the National Guild League. In particular, a new understanding of nationalisation that integrated workers' control came to the forefront of many trade unions due to the wartime influence of the Shop Steward Movement. Similarly, the Bolshevik Revolution led the British government with the support of some trade unions and the Labour Party to propose the Whitley Councils scheme as a means to ensure peaceful labour relations alongside new welfare measures to alleviate unemployment and a deepening housing crisis. These changes in policy highlighted how rival knowledge systems around the League were changing in relation to reconstruction. The National Guilds League responded to these conditions and attempted to refine the meaning of reconstruction. However, quickly found itself internally divided over how to respond to this context. This reflected the broader situation of the British Left which was also torn between support for the governments' proposals and fully endorsing the Bolshevik revolution.

The responses by the National Guilds League to reconstruction in Britain also reflected a broader international context of similar questions raised by reconstruction. The League was connected to these responses via its world-spanning communication network. As a result, the League exemplified a bridge between the British Left and various other locations that informed its own proposals for alternatives to reconstruction. In particular, the emergence of functioning local and National Guilds in Britain during this period, particularly in the building industry, highlighted the impact of Guild Socialism in Britain. While internationally the building guilds proved to be an influential model leading to a number of efforts to replicate them and a wide array of interest from correspondents with the League.

The decline of Guild Socialism during the early 1920s also reflected the changing condition of the British Left during this period. In particular, the collapse of the National Guilds League in 1923 demonstrated several important factors. The failure of the National Building Guild which contributed to this event highlighted the impact of a new economic depression and austerity policies introduced by the British government that reverse the earlier period of post-war public investment. Rising unemployment and cuts to welfare had a devastating effect on British trade unions, which the building guilds were dependent on for labour, triggering a long period of stagnation for unions that continued until the late 1930s. In addition, the rise of Douglasism which also weakened the League internally highlighted the popularity in Britain of theoretical knowledge aimed toward economic solutions that supported the capitalist economy. Furthermore, the responses by other sections of the British Left to Guild Socialism during this period highlighted how rival knowledge systems were beginning to subsume knowledge associated with the subject and produce their own alternatives. In particular, the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Independent Labour Party, Fabian Society, and the Labour Party all threatened to assimilate the potency of knowledge linked to Guild Socialism. In response support for Guild Socialism dwindled despite efforts to prevent this decline during the first half of the 1920s. These efforts culminated in 1926 when the failure of the British general strike and miners' strikes appeared to mark the end of the demand for workers' control in Britain. However, as has been examined in the final part of this thesis neither Guild Socialism nor the demand for workers' control did in fact disappear entirely from the horizons of the British Left at this moment. Indeed what began soon after were various disparate efforts during the 1930s to recuperate knowledge related to Guild Socialism. This indicates the flexibility of the British Left and the important role played by Guild Socialism.

6.4. Coda

The culmination of these arguments presents a revaluation of Guild Socialism which advances the subject beyond the framework in which the subject has previously been examined. It includes new historical actors, locations, sources, and methods of historical analysis to deliver a reassessment of Guild Socialism. It also suggests several new vistas of research. In particular, it highlights how the History of Knowledge and the category of knowledge can be used to reinvigorate the study of isms like Guild Socialism and move analysis beyond older frameworks provided by fields such as Intellectual History. Furthermore, this thesis has demonstrated how an approach informed by Global History can still serve as an effective means to reassess historical subjects by re-situating them in relation to new connections, contexts, and comparisons. In this case, these considerations have helped to bring to life a new history of Guild Socialism by placing the subject through innovative means in relation to Britain and the world.

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Abstract

This dissertation assesses the historical development of Guild Socialism during the early twentieth century. It follows the initial emergence of this idea in Britain during the final decade before the start of the First World War and traces its growth both nationally and internationally followed by its decline during the interwar period. This study reassesses this subject through the application of new methodological tools derived from the fields of Global History and the History of Knowledge in order to reveal novel conclusions. As such it highlights how a range of practical and theoretical forms of knowledge contributed to the development of different meanings of Guild Socialism. These knowledges included craftsmanship, financial organisation, office management and various conceptions of political economy influenced by corporatism, industrial unionism, Marxism and syndicalism, to name but a few. These were organised within a knowledge system that developed with the National Guilds League (1915-23) which became the primary institution for the advancement of Guild Socialism. These forms of knowledge were supplied by an array of historical actors who worked with the League. They included both male and female working-class trade unionists and middle-class socialist intellectuals, who have largely not been featured in historical research into this subject. Similarly, this study focuses on the role played by the National Guilds League as an institution that worked to produce and circulate Guild Socialism, which has also been overlooked by previous scholarship. In addition, this study draws attention to the global dimensions of Guild Socialism which were also crucial to its development. This is significant because previous historians have mainly understood this subject within the context of the British nation-state. However, as this research reveals a much larger array of locations beyond Britain were also important. Including large parts of the British empire and areas under the control of other empires. In particular, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States all became important sites for the development of Guild Socialism. As a result, multiple locations centred around Britain were crucial to the history of this subject. Finally, this dissertation also reveals the position of Guild Socialism in relation to the broader context of the history of the British Left. This is significant because although Guild Socialism occupied a relatively small position within this wider constellation. Its development is reflective of the wider conditions which influenced the British Left. As such the emergence and decline of Guild Socialism can therefore be recast within this context in order to highlight changing fortunes and tensions within the British Left during the early twentieth century.

Zusammenfassung

In dieser Dissertation wird die historische Entwicklung des Gildensozialismus im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert untersucht. Sie verfolgt die Entstehung dieser Idee in Großbritannien im letzten Jahrzehnt vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg und zeichnet ihr Wachstum auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene nach, gefolgt von ihrem Niedergang in der Zwischenkriegszeit. Die Studie nimmt eine Neubewertung dieses Themas vor, indem sie neue methodische Instrumente aus den Bereichen Globalgeschichte und Wissensgeschichte anwendet, um zu neuen Schlussfolgerungen zu gelangen. So wird aufgezeigt, wie eine Reihe praktischer und theoretischer Wissensformen zur Entwicklung unterschiedlicher Bedeutungen des Gildensozialismus beitrugen. Zu diesen Kenntnissen gehörten handwerkliche Fertigkeiten, Finanzorganisation, Büromanagement und verschiedene Auffassungen von politischer Ökonomie, die von Korporatismus, Industriegewerkschaft, Marxismus und Syndikalismus beeinflusst waren, um nur einige zu nennen. Diese wurden im Rahmen eines Wissenssystems organisiert, das sich mit der National Guilds League (1915-23) entwickelte, die zur wichtigsten Institution für die Förderung des Gildensozialismus wurde. Diese Formen des Wissens wurden von einer Reihe von historischen Akteuren geliefert, die mit der Liga zusammenarbeiteten. Zu ihnen gehörten sowohl männliche als auch weibliche Gewerkschafter aus der Arbeiterklasse und sozialistische Intellektuelle aus der Mittelschicht, die in der historischen Forschung zu diesem Thema weitgehend unberücksichtigt geblieben sind. In ähnlicher Weise konzentriert sich diese Studie auf die Rolle, die die National Guilds League als Institution spielte, die den Gildensozialismus produzierte und verbreitete, was in der bisherigen Forschung ebenfalls übersehen wurde. Darüber hinaus lenkt diese Studie die Aufmerksamkeit auf die globalen Dimensionen des Gildensozialismus, die ebenfalls entscheidend für seine Entwicklung waren. Dies ist insofern von Bedeutung, als frühere Historiker dieses Thema hauptsächlich im Kontext des britischen Nationalstaates verstanden haben. Diese Untersuchung zeigt jedoch, dass eine viel größere Anzahl von Orten außerhalb Großbritanniens ebenfalls wichtig war. Dazu gehören große Teile des britischen Empire und Gebiete, die unter der Kontrolle anderer Reiche standen. Insbesondere Deutschland, Japan, Neuseeland, Südafrika und die Vereinigten Staaten wurden zu wichtigen Standorten für die Entwicklung des Gildensozialismus. Infolgedessen waren mehrere Orte rund um Großbritannien von entscheidender Bedeutung für die Geschichte dieses Themas. Schließlich wird in dieser Dissertation auch die Stellung des Gildensozialismus im breiteren Kontext der Geschichte der britischen Linken beleuchtet. Dies ist insofern von Bedeutung, als der Gildensozialismus in dieser breiteren Konstellation zwar eine relativ kleine Position

einnahm. Seine Entwicklung ist ein Spiegelbild der breiteren Bedingungen, die die britische Linke beeinflussten. Das Aufkommen und der Niedergang des Gildensozialismus kann daher in diesem Kontext neu betrachtet werden, um die wechselnden Geschicke und Spannungen innerhalb der britischen Linken im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert aufzuzeigen.