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THE PLURAL SOCIETY:  
LABOUR AND THE COMMONWEALTH IDEA 1900–1964

*Abstract:*

The Labour Party founded in 1900 necessarily confronted the imperial nature of the British state, the empire as an economic and military entity, and the inequalities it contained. Yet Labour initially thought on the subject primarily in terms of the liberal objective of the advancement of self-government. It was only in the 1930s, in the writings of Lansbury and Attlee, that more systematic thinking about the empire in terms of global divisions of labour of which the British working class were among the beneficiaries, began to emerge. Tensions between the perceived interests of these beneficiaries and of the working classes of the empire as a whole remained in Attlee's postwar government. It did, however, begin to develop a reconceptualisation of the empire as a multi-racial Commonwealth. This facilitated a Labour patriotism around the Commonwealth that reached its apogee in Gaitskell's weaponising of it as a means of resisting European entry in 1962. Yet the economic and military relations he evoked were already out of date, leaving his successor, Harold Wilson, to adjust to a multi-racial partnership.

*Keywords:*

Labour, Socialism, Commonwealth, internationalism, preferential trade, international aid, decolonisation, human rights, race relations

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When the British Labour Party was founded in February 1900, it emerged in the metropole of an imperial state and in the midst of the first imperial war to be fought as an empire. Imperialism was thus one of the central political realities confronting the new party, whether in the form of the projection of power at the imperial frontier, the role of the empire in providing the raw materials for Britain's industries and foodstuffs, or in the politics of oppression across its vast extent. The latter - in the form of Chinese indentured labour in South Africa - was indeed a major issue in the 1906 election which saw Labour's breakthrough to 30 seats in parliament. The empire thus raised, in more extreme and racially varied forms, similar issues about exploitation, oppression and inequality to those the party had been created to confront in Britain. To this can be added the duty these newly elected Labour politicians had to hold to account those British ministers who were responsible for administering the empire, a responsibility that Labour ministers were themselves to exercise in 1924, 1929-31 and 1945-51.

The party thus emerged at a point when thinking about empire more generally within British society was arguably in transition. A year before Kipling had, in the context of American imperialism, identified and popularised the 'White Man's Burden'; the *Mission Civilisatrice* of imperial development. The contemporary Boer War was, however, also to raise in the mind of J. A. Hobson the idea of empire as economic exploitation and, in that of Joseph Chamberlain - faced with intimations of British imperial decline - the need for closer military and economic co-operation across the empire.<sup>1</sup> As C. Delisle Burns observed in an official Labour publication in 1925, without quite capturing these complex nuances, modern empires were thus economic rather than military: 'Imperialism was the faith of those who believed that this expansion of their nation was for the good of the peoples governed as well as for the development of the whole world'. It was thus also an idea, as Burns noted, actively promoted throughout the empire through the innovation of Empire Day from 1902, through school textbooks and indeed through the spread of tropes of Britishness and of British forms of Christianity across its length.

Empire, as Burns acknowledged, thus posed a number of challenges to the new party. There was the electoral problem of the conflation of imperialism with patriotism given that 'Imperialism is necessarily opposed to Socialism, not only because Socialism looks towards international peace, but also because Socialism is opposed to private advantages gained at the expense of the common good'. Empire at the same time raised the policy issue of responding to the needs of the 'common men of other lands'.<sup>2</sup>

This posed the challenge of thinking of the empire as an interconnected system in which the British working classes were among the beneficiaries. In the process it therefore raises the question of whether, when Labour writers waxed lyrical - as they were wont to do until the 1940s - on the Socialist Commonwealth that was to come, did they also include in that the Commonwealth that already existed as an

appellation for those parts of empire which had been given some form of self-governing autonomy, let alone the imperial whole? Often the answer appears to be no. Consider G. D. H. Cole, one of the leading left-wing thinkers and popularisers of the inter-war years. His 1918 tome, *Labour in the Commonwealth*, attempted to think through how Labour could achieve its place in a state - specifically the British one - rather than the wider issue of the place of labour across the vaster realms of the empire.<sup>3</sup> It has also been suggested that at the official level the new party's references to Commonwealth similarly tended to be concerned with the Socialist, rather than the imperial, variety.<sup>4</sup> Take, for instance, the statement of *The Aims of Labour*, published the year before Cole's work by Arthur Henderson, the Labour Party's general secretary, as part of the re-launch of the party he and Sidney Webb masterminded to prepare it for the world emerging after the Great War.<sup>5</sup> The empire may have been heavily involved in supporting Britain's war efforts militarily, commercially and financially (for instance, George Lansbury claimed in 1935 that India contributed £100m to the British war effort, spent £207.5m on its own military campaigns and contributed greatly to saving the Channel ports in 1914-15),<sup>6</sup> and it was to reach its greatest extent in its immediate aftermath. It was, however, passed over in silence by Henderson.

The limited attention Labour paid to imperial matters before 1914 was understandable given that it remained a small party which could influence the governing Liberals but not yet aspire to replace them. For instance, in 1906 it joined the Liberals in condemning 'Chinese Slavery'. In general, however, the essence of Labour's thinking about the empire in the Edwardian era was expressed in the aspiration contained in party's first election manifesto in 1900 for 'Legislative Independence for all parts of the Empire'.<sup>7</sup> This would thus extend throughout the dependent empire the legislative autonomy already achieved by then in the 'White' Dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Newfoundland, to be shortly joined by the Union of South Africa in 1910.

The problems with such an approach became apparent to the party when, in April 1914, the Labour MP Frank Goldstone initiated a debate in the Commons on the applicability of Magna Carta, *Habeas Corpus* and the Petition of Right across the empire, calling for their inviolability to be assured in every self-governing Dominion.<sup>8</sup> This is an early example of thinking about the empire systematically, rather than imperial wrongs in particular territories, notably India, Ireland, and South Africa. In calling this debate in light of the alarming handling and aftermath of the mines dispute in South Africa in 1913, Labour clearly were expressing a sense of responsibility for the empire as a whole. This was even more apparent when Henderson (notwithstanding his silence on such issues three years later) in seconding the motion noted: 'It seems to me that if we were indifferent to this situation, especially we on the Labour benches, we would be false to the trust that has been reposed in us, not only by our constituents, but by crowds of organised workers, whom, to some extent, we represent in this House.'<sup>9</sup>

South Africa's legislative independence, however, meant that Labour's attempt to invoke a standard of liberty across the empire proved to be a dispiriting experience. Disconsolately, the Labour MP Stephen Walsh observed:

I have been under the impression that there were certain fundamental principles of British law upon which all these self-governing institutions were to be based....In the ignorance under which we labour upon these benches we really thought that that fundamental condition would exist just as much in the South African Dominions as in our own country, that there should be no person outlawed or exiled, that justice should not be sold and should not be deferred, that no man should be deprived of his fundamental liberties, except through trial by his peers.<sup>10</sup>

Such difficulties seem to have been largely overlooked when Labour for the first time included a substantial passage (albeit only two pages long) on empire and Commonwealth policy in an official party publication. This was *Labour and the New Social Order*, a statement of post-war aims largely drafted by Henderson and Webb and revised at the party conference in June 1918. The aspirations of Joseph Chamberlain and his later acolytes such as Lionel Curtis for some kind of imperial federation were roundly condemned as implying a dangerous subjection to a common imperial legislature coercing tax and military services, invading the autonomy of the Dominions and - by the imposition of imperial duties - undermining the democratic freedom of choice in the United Kingdom itself. Labour, the publication proclaimed, did not want parliament to become an imperial senate representing the plutocracies of the empire. Instead:

With regard to that great Commonwealth of all races, all colours, all religions and all degrees of civilisation, that we call the British Empire, the Labour Party stands for its maintenance and its progressive development on the lines of Local Autonomy and 'Home Rule All Round'; the fullest respect for the rights of each people, whatever its colour, to all the Democratic Self-Government of which it is capable, and to the proceeds of its own toil upon the resources of its own territorial home, and the closest possible co-operation among all the various members of what has become essentially not an Empire in the old sense, but a Britannic Alliance.

There are certain omissions and contradictions here. The prime omission relates to what was arguably the most obvious manifestation of the empire as a political entity, particularly at the end of a war in which its resources had been massively deployed to the waging of it: the core military functions. On this Labour had seemingly nothing to say.

*Labour and the New Social Order* had a little more to say on the economics of empire. Its disavowal of all claims for territorial or economic gain is clear. Yet there is no attempt to think through the challenges of the power disparities raised by the

mention of plutocracy. Pre-war thinking about cross-national class alliances against economic or other forms of oppression, as exemplified by the Second International's failed pledge to hold a general strike in the event of war, is conspicuously absent. That Labour might have a responsibility, even if only a paternalistic one, to assist the development of labour movements in the Dominions and colonies and unite with them in common witness against economic exploitation is also missing.

Furthermore, there is a potential contradiction between the stated objection to all protective tariffs and the principle that nonetheless 'we hold that each nation must be left free to do what it thinks best for its own economic development, without thought of injuring others'.<sup>11</sup> If all parts of empire could autonomously pursue what was locally in their perceived economic interests, including the UK, then avoiding competitive economic nationalism would likely prove challenging. A consequence was the regrettable effect of Indian tariffs on the Lancashire cotton industry noted and accepted by Burns.<sup>12</sup> Oddly, and notwithstanding Goldstone's initiative in 1914, Labour does not in 1918 even seem to think about this in terms of minimal labour regulation. There is plenty on this subject in the rest of the document, but nothing in the section on empire, despite Labour's contemporary role in the creation of the International Labour Office [ILO] as a key organ of the League of Nations.

The other dimensions of empire that emerge in *Labour and the New Social Order* are as a social and constitutional entity. In terms of the former there is a clear appreciation of social and cultural variety and a commitment to inclusive respect for rights. There is, however, a vagueness about what this entails, particularly given the problem of how this respect for rights can be imposed on autonomous Dominions like South Africa. This reflects the fundamental contradictions within Labour's approach to the empire as a constitutional entity. The aspiration is for local autonomy, which clearly should include India, where Labour favoured a democratic transition far in advance of the contemporary Montagu-Chelmsford plans being formulated by the Lloyd George Coalition. The document is, however, ambiguous about how far this might extend to the dependent parts of empire more generally.

How this local autonomy is consistent with at the same time seeking 'the closest possible co-operation' among the members of empire is studiously unclear. In these circumstances how could such co-operation be secured? Labour's suggestion herein is to transform the imperial conferences which had developed among the Dominions since the 1880s into annual Imperial Councils, which would consult on matters of common interest and make recommendations for simultaneous consideration across the legislatures of what would be constituted as an 'Alliance of Free Nations'.<sup>13</sup> Its understanding of how this Alliance might work as a system thus seems to rest on a weak confederalism, united only by unmentioned

ties of sentiment and the equally unmentioned symbol of the Crown. In this a liberal parliamentarianism appears to have trumped a wider commitment to socialistic raising of the well-being of the workers as a class spread across the empire. Indeed, this parliamentarianism was apparently dominant over the aspiration even for minimal liberal standards of equality before the law across the empire that Labour had voiced in the Goldstone debate. The Socialist Commonwealth Labour dreamt of seemingly then did not extend across the seas.

This liberal parliamentarianism is marked in the first reference to the term 'Commonwealth' in connection with empire in a Labour manifesto in 1918, when the party promised to 'extend to all subject peoples the right of self-determination within the British Commonwealth of Free Nations'.<sup>14</sup> How far party figures really thought that this aspiration could actually be achieved remains, however, a matter of conjecture. Sidney Webb, who went on to serve as the party's first Dominions Secretary in 1929-30, certainly seems to have been dubious. In 1913 he noted that in many parts of the empire 'it would be idle to pretend that anything like effective self-government, even as regards strictly local affairs, can be introduced for many generations to come - in some cases conceivably never'.<sup>15</sup> Thus although there was certainly a desire in Labour to transform the empire into a commonwealth of free nations (not peoples, given the tendency to overlook the oppression of indigenous populations in White Dominions other than South Africa) this was not necessarily considered practical politics.

The other facet of the development of Labour's thinking about the empire that might be remarked upon is the way that it was then compartmentalised. Unlike the Tories, Labour did not overtly recognise empire as a central characteristic of the British state and its economic and political order.<sup>16</sup> It also tended to compartmentalise empire in a racialised hierarchy.<sup>17</sup> Burns commented in 1925: 'The Labour Movement had always a vague affection for all members of the British race beyond the seas, but was hardly aware of the problems of the tropics before the Labour Party came into existence'.<sup>18</sup> In many ways the same prism of Britishness seems still very much present in his thinking in the 1920s. Consider Burns' comment about South Africa: 'No one, of course, wants the white civilisation to be swamped by barbarism, but a real native civilisation can be developed side by side with the European'.<sup>19</sup> In 1928 a memorandum to the second Commonwealth Labour conference divided the empire along similar civilisational lines into European (including the West Indies), Oriental and primitive.<sup>20</sup> This mindset derived from nineteenth century racial hierarchies ensured that the empire thus remained external and paternal.

Nor was the empire integrated into Labour thinking on Britain's international role. Empire played no part, either as a military or a geopolitical entity, in the discussion of Labour's foreign policy set out by Ramsay MacDonald in 1923, shortly before he became simultaneously the party's first Prime Minister and

Foreign Secretary the following January, except as a repository for British foreign direct investments.<sup>21</sup> MacDonald was more concerned about opposing the factors which he felt had prompted a war he opposed breaking out in 1914, and spent his first ten months in government concentrating on promoting better relations across Europe and in Russia, rather than giving much thought to either the Commonwealth or the empire.<sup>22</sup> There was, nonetheless, reference in the 1924 election manifesto to MacDonald's administration's alleged success in strengthening 'the ties of sentiment with the Dominions upon which, rather than upon either force or any Imperialism, the very existence of the British Commonwealth of Nations depends'.<sup>23</sup> As a sign of this, the first conference of Commonwealth Labour parties was held the following year, though only India was represented alongside the 'White' Dominions.<sup>24</sup> Followed by similar conferences in 1928 and 1930, this marked Labour starting to think systematically about empire. By the time of the statement of party policy, *Labour and the Nation* in 1927, co-operation across the 'Dominions and Dependencies....to take common action for the promotion of a higher standard of social and economic life for the working population of the respective countries' had become one of the aims of the party.<sup>25</sup>

The Communist Party, following Lenin's adaptation of Hobson's ideas, may have in contrast seen empire as economic exploitation and therefore as a constant threat to peace.<sup>26</sup> In the 1920s, however, the efforts of Chamberlain's acolyte, Leo Amery, as Dominions Secretary in the Tory government of 1924-29 to promote economic co-operation and colonial development across the empire was probably a more important context for the development of Labour thinking on imperial matters. It was against this backdrop that the backbench MP, Leslie Haden-Guest, established a Commonwealth Labour Group of MPs. About 20-30 MPs seem to have regularly attended its weekly meetings. Its core, however, was a small group of figures like James Thomas - who had served as Labour's first Colonial Secretary in 1924 - now moving away from free trade towards Chamberlainite ideas of imperial preference and common external tariffs. For them such devices, and the tied loans Thomas also advocated, were a way of tackling domestic unemployment. This line of thinking culminated in the proposal for 'schemes of development with Crown Colonies involving considerable expenditure on equipment manufactured....in Britain' put forward in the report resulting from the trades union talks with industry initiated after the 1926 General Strike and issued in March 1929.<sup>27</sup> Such ideas also featured in Labour's 1929 manifesto and led to the passage of the colonial development legislation largely developed by Amery under MacDonald's incoming second government.

This growing focus on imperial economic development was marked in other ways as well in the 1920s. One example was the endorsement of bulk purchase agreements for colonial products at the 1925 party conference. This could be seen as beneficially offering guaranteed markets for these products. That such arrangements might lock colonies into economic subservience and discourage



diversification, while the prime beneficiary would be a metropolitan power dependent on imports for some 60 per cent of its foodstuffs, does not seem to have been noticed, even by the left-winger George Lansbury (who succeeded Haden-Guest as head of the Labour Commonwealth Group in 1927), for whom they were merely the first step towards international co-operation.<sup>28</sup>

Another scheme for the economic development of the empire emerged at the 1927 party conference. This was idea of the surveying the vast land resources of the empire 'with a view to subordinating the private use of land to the general interest of a scientific redistribution of the population'.<sup>29</sup> Imperial emigration was also to be encouraged, despite the lack of enthusiasm of Dominion labour parties.<sup>30</sup> As *Labour and the Nation* (1927) made clear, even the primacy of native welfare invoked therein was structured around protecting them from policies that would be injurious to them but also, by preventing wage competition, to the working classes of Europe.<sup>31</sup>

Labour thinking on the military dimension of empire did not really develop in the 1920s, beyond considering the Committee of Imperial Defence too powerful.<sup>32</sup> To this there was later in 1935 also added a concern raised by the left-wing backbencher, Aneurin Bevan, about how far the Dominions were represented on this important body, and whether they had been consulted on the recent rearmament White Paper.<sup>33</sup> On the constitution of the empire there was meanwhile some movement through the application of the concept of trusteeship developed under the League of Nations to the empire in general. The revised edition of *Labour and the Nation* in 1928 thus spoke of extending the oversight of the League's Mandates Commission to the dependent empire and therein extending political rights already granted to Europeans as part of the preparations for self-government.<sup>34</sup> The important developments in imperial constitutional practice presaged by the 1926 Balfour Declaration, however, went unmentioned in these documents.

The ensuing Labour government of 1929-31 and its immediate aftermath seems to have marked a transition point in a number of ways. It began with the Colonial Development Act 1929, into S.1(2) of which safeguards for fair wages and conditions, proscription on forced labour and the participation of the colonial territory in any increases in value resulting from the investment were all written in. Such concerns had not hitherto been conspicuous in party pronouncements on empire, but they were to become increasingly noticeable in the 1930s. Secondly, the Labour government was faced with taking forward the long-voiced commitment to Dominion status for India following the Irwin Declaration of October 1929,<sup>35</sup> a process complicated by the Viceroy imprisoning Gandhi the following May. Thirdly, while progress towards self-government in India stalled, the formal co-equal independence of the Dominions was recognised by the December 1931 Statute of Westminster. This welcome development from the Balfour Declaration fulfilled a long-standing Labour goal, but by then the government had

fallen from power and been reduced to a parliamentary rump by the National Government landslide of October 1931. Fourthly, that National Government in 1932 negotiated a system of imperial preference commonly known as the Ottawa tariffs. During the 1930s they were also to preside over the consolidation of the empire financially through the development of the Sterling Area.

Labour thinking on empire and Commonwealth thus did not operate in a vacuum but necessarily reflected the actions of their political opponents. Another important contextual factor was Labour's interpretation of the circumstances of the fall of their government and subsequent heavy defeat in 1931. The idea that this was the result of a 'Bankers' Ramp' gave substance to the hitherto shadowy idea of some kind of international plutocracy. This resulted in a more critical appraisal of capitalist exploitation across the empire, as well as in Britain. With Lansbury as party leader from 1932-35, there was accordingly a shift away from the liberal parliamentarianism which had characterised party thinking in the 1920s. Lansbury's *Labour's Way with the Commonwealth* in 1935 instead voiced for the first time a recognition of informal power structures, including constitutional facades of sham democracy in Southern Rhodesia and the West Indies, and the informal empire exercised by the British through their Portuguese satellite.<sup>36</sup>

An economic critique of empire, which had hitherto only been vaguely expressed, also began to emerge. Lansbury thus pointed to the way in which monopolistic trading companies exploited West African colonies, while in East Africa land seizures had been combined with the iniquitous hut tax to supply European settlers with a cheap supply of landless African labourers.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, a language of economic development was mere empty piety with the high land rents, cartelized labour markets and weak trade unions, and the enormous fiscal burden of 62.5% of taxes going on defence in India. Lansbury also, almost uniquely among the literature consulted for this paper, also drew attention to (some of) the particular disabilities experienced by women in India.<sup>38</sup> None of this would be resolved, he argued, by the Government of India Act 1935, which dropped the aspiration to Dominion status and, by preserving the sclerotic system of dyarchy, militated against responsible government.<sup>39</sup>

Such iniquities were intrinsically related to the 'colour bar'. 'With the possible exception of the Maoris', Lansbury complained, no 'native race has been admitted to full equality with the white inhabitants'.<sup>40</sup> The complicity of Dominion labour movements in this failing and the possible consequences for British Labour was bitterly acknowledged, particularly when 'South Africa may be laying the foundation of a racial war in which we shall be involved'.<sup>41</sup> Across the empire as a whole, the result of this 'colour bar' was the forcing of indigenous peoples into the global market 'under terribly low standards, to compete white people out of the markets'.<sup>42</sup> In the final chapter of the book, by Charles Roden Buxton with the

somewhat unfortunate title 'Policy in Backward Colonies', there was therefore emphasis on the need to apply the ILO's 1930 Forced Labour Convention. Ultimately the hope was that the ILO would 'draw up a general code of regulations applicable to all tropical colonies'. This, the development of trade unions and more widespread education, were all seen as necessary to protect against exploitation both by settlers and by native elites. This need to protect against 'irresponsible buccaneers' thus became an additional rationale for the continuance of British trusteeship.<sup>43</sup>

It was not, however, grounds for the economic integration of the empire through the Ottawa system. Indeed, that system was seen as enforcing the existing racial divisions of labour within the empire and of hardening imbalances of trade and debt. Lansbury did not envisage some prototype of Schumacher and Keynes' Bancor scheme as a way of addressing this.<sup>44</sup> His critique did, however, lead him to emphasise the ideals of Commonwealth reciprocity 'as a means for leading the world along the way to an international federation'.<sup>45</sup>

This overarching internationalism was to be even more apparent in the writings of Lansbury's successor as party leader, Clement Attlee. Attlee had been general editor of the series in which Lansbury book appeared, and two years later he followed it up with his own statement on imperial and Commonwealth matters. Not least, he took further Lansbury's earlier critique of the economic and racial nature of the empire. For instance, he emphasised that the Commonwealth was 'essentially a money-lenders' empire' and that British Labour were the beneficiaries of an exploitative race. This meant that the simple nostrums offered by the party earlier of moves towards self-government had to be resisted when demands for this came from settler minorities.<sup>46</sup> This, however, might also apply when these same demands came from unaccountable native elites:

There is no particular gain in handing over the peasants and workers of India to be exploited by their own capitalists and landlords. Nationalism is a creed that may be sustained with great self-sacrifice and idealism, but may also shelter class domination, and intolerance of minorities as well as economic exploitation.<sup>47</sup>

The challenge for Attlee was how to apply Socialism to the actual existence of the Commonwealth and empire. 'Simple surrender of all ill-gotten gains was undesirable and unpractical [sic].' Instead, Attlee saw the way forward through advancing economic co-operation. An earlier support for Guild Socialism can be detected in his enthusiasm for the experiments of New Zealand's first Labour government with nationalisation of imports and exports, cutting out wasteful and exploitative middle-men and thereby maximising returns to producers and minimising costs to consumers.<sup>48</sup> This was also a development of the import boards proposed by his fellow former Guild Socialist, G. D. H. Cole, during the 1931 crash.<sup>49</sup> Such egalitarian efficiencies, by ending self-interested distortions of

markets would, Attlee assumed, prove a better mechanism for economic co-operation than the Ottawa system. By promoting this co-operation across those Dominions 'of European stock' Labour might 'show an example of how such a relationship can be extended to cover all those countries which are ready to share in collective security and the pooling of economic resources'. For Attlee, as for Lansbury, the British Commonwealth was thus simply a stepping point towards a world Commonwealth of nations.<sup>50</sup>

Attlee's book was re-issued twelve years later, by which time he was Prime Minister, having served as Dominions Secretary in Churchill's wartime coalition from 1942-43. In his preface to this new edition the journalist Francis Williams, who served Attlee as his press advisor from 1945-47, claimed that the 1937 text had been faithfully carried out by its author in government after Labour's landslide victory in 1945. Although Labour were arguably even more conscious of the military and economic significance of empire in light of wartime experience, Williams thus represents imperial developments following 1945 as matters of degree rather than paradigm shifts. In particular, he emphasised the rapid decolonisation in India, Burma and Ceylon.<sup>51</sup> Yet none of these developments had been explicitly foreshadowed in what Attlee wrote in 1937.

In *The Labour Party in Perspective* Attlee had flagged up his concern about bankrupt Newfoundland, but this had not exactly prefigured the only imperial experience from his wartime service as Dominions Secretary Attlee actually mentions in his memoirs: his visit there in 1942 and subsequent support for its inclusion in Canada in 1949.<sup>52</sup> He passed over in silence the Colonial Development and Welfare Act 1940, introduced to deal with wartime financial disruption in the dependent empire. This breach in the principle that the colonies should be self-supporting was the first significant foray into fiscal transfers from the metropole to the colonies. It was to be greatly extended by Attlee in 1945, leading to the creation of the Colonial Development Corporation [CDC], though this again had not been foreshadowed in his 1937 book. Indeed, he explicitly pointed therein to the difficulties of coming up with a formula to address the problems of advancement towards self-government over such varied territories at differing stages of political and economic development. This was, understandably, not so much a template for how to deal with events such as the Accra riots in 1948 as an indication of the direction of travel. It was also flexible to the international exigencies of postwar Britain's strategic or economic needs, as indicated by the 1946 Kenya White Paper.<sup>53</sup>

The only points on which Attlee was specific were on development of education, safeguarding of native land and reduction of onerous taxes, nationalised marketing of native products and the internationalisation of these products under the League of Nations.<sup>54</sup> These last objectives were not exactly mutually compatible. In practice Attlee's government, faced with the massive British dollar

shortage of the postwar years and the important role colonial raw materials played in a reviving world economy for precious dollar earnings, focused on investment in and marketing of these products, not least through the Overseas Food Corporation (1948). Attlee had been impressed with the relative wealth of West Africa in 1937, but the attempt to recreate those circumstances in East Africa through the groundnuts scheme was foredoomed to failure.<sup>55</sup>

It has been argued that the Fabian Colonial Research Bureau founded in 1940 was more influential on Labour's postwar policies than any pre-war thinking.<sup>56</sup> One of its moving spirits was Arthur Creech Jones, who was also chair of the party's advisory committee on imperial issues. Creech Jones went on to serve Attlee as Colonial Secretary 1946-50. In his introduction to *Fabian Colonial Essays* in 1945 he argued that wartime changes for the colonies had been vast. Yet there are echoes of Labour thinking in the 1920s in his observation that

Their development is necessary for the larger security of the world; their products and resources are wanted in the outside world; their low standards depress our higher levels; their disease threatens our health; their poverty, prejudices our prosperity - in short, these distressed areas must be developed and integrated as progressing regions into the commonwealth of free nations.<sup>57</sup>

One way of doing this was through raising the economic return to the colonies, though the technique for this remained the bulk purchase agreements first envisaged in the 1920s.<sup>58</sup> *Fabian Colonial Essays* also, however, developed Labour thinking by for the first time sketching out ideas of how to industrialise the colonies using loan capital at fixed interest rates, an innovation which the veteran Socialist journalist H. N. Brailsford argued would also help to create markets for British manufacturing exports.<sup>59</sup>

Attlee himself in retrospect focused more on political developments under his government. In his memoirs he contrasted the alleged timeliness of grants of self-government in India and Burma with the consequences of delay in the Dutch East Indies and French Indo-China.<sup>60</sup> Subsequently he was to celebrate the unique success of the British in voluntarily surrendering hegemony over subject peoples.<sup>61</sup> Although this was certainly an overstatement his government, in particular by incorporating India, had undoubtedly changed the Commonwealth into something like a multiracial association of free nations. This was a considerable and by no means certain achievement given the commitment Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress had to establishing an Indian republic, thereby undermining the central position in the Commonwealth occupied by the Crown.<sup>62</sup> The future Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, who was tangentially involved in these events as President of the Board of Trade, may have later described Nehru as 'in every sense a good Commonwealth man', but it was the willingness of the Attlee

government to depart from monarchical arrangements that enabled this eventuality.<sup>63</sup>

This outcome of India remaining in the Commonwealth after it became the first republic to do so 1950 was aided by the decision in 1948, at Attlee's prompting, that the term 'Dominion' and the prefix 'British' should be dropped, given the concerns Nehru had expressed about such terms since at least 1936.<sup>64</sup> This could thus be seen as fulfilment of the aspirations to use the Commonwealth as a stepping stone to internationalisation first sketched out by Lansbury. This would certainly appeal to Attlee, who shared Lansbury's views in this respect and went on to be a leading light of the Parliamentary group for World Government after his retirement from the party leadership in 1955.<sup>65</sup> These aspirations were also evoked in Labour's first statement of foreign policy after losing office in 1951, which emphasised:

The Commonwealth in its present form is the supreme example of an international organisation which positively helps towards the development of a world society, since it imposes no limitations on co-operation between its members and other states outside....The Labour Party, therefore, believes that Britain must put the Commonwealth before all other regional groupings.

The Attlee government, it proclaimed, had transformed the Commonwealth into 'a bridge between the peoples of European stock and the peoples of Asia and Africa'. As such, it had indicated how the party might finally accomplish its long-held ambition to achieve 'as rapidly as possible this peaceful transition from Empire to Commonwealth'. *Labour's Foreign Policy* also claimed that the lead given by the Attlee government had 'resulted in the great experiment of the Colombo Plan' of 1950.<sup>66</sup> The latter emerged from the Commonwealth Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Colombo in January 1950 with the twin aims of promoting economic co-operation and development in South-East Asia and thereby discouraging the spread of Communism.

This 1952 statement thus set out two aims for Labour's imperial policy: to further the transition to the Commonwealth and to promote what was starting to be called overseas aid. On the first of these the early 1950s were marked by interest in the idea of federations of colonies as a means to achieve the transition to independence. The party supported this in the West Indies in the 1954 draft policy document 'From Colonies to Commonwealth'. On economic grounds they had also helped to initiate such a scheme in Central Africa in the late 1940s, though they emphasised the need for African consent in a situation complicated by a large settler presence. It was therefore felt that Britain needed to retain sovereignty there and in East Africa for as long as was necessary 'to prevent domination by a racial minority, in order to ensure the achievement of democracy'.<sup>67</sup>

These were not the only areas where the transfer of power remained problematic. Creech Jones, in a critical letter to the party's recently appointed Commonwealth officer, John Hatch, complained both that there was an insufficient emphasis on Socialism in 'From Colonies to Commonwealth' and that the transfer of power should only happen to democratic governments.<sup>68</sup> It is not clear what Creech Jones had in mind, but the next iteration of the policy draft in March 1955 made clear party disapproval of what were seen as Communist attempts 'to use their constitution for the destruction of democracy' in British Guiana.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, the aid agenda emerging in Colombo had already been amplified in *Labour and the New Society* in 1950. This marked an advancement from the inter-war language of trusteeship to the inculcation of development. Insofar as there had been thinking on this subject in the 1930s it had been around land and settlement and addressed through the prism of the high unemployment Britain suffered in that decade. The interests of the metropole in terms of global defence and preventing the spread of Communism to the less-developed world as a new sphere of the burgeoning Cold War remained apparent in the 1950 publication. This is perhaps unsurprising in the year that Attlee's Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, called for Commonwealth co-operation with the Americans against Communism, of which the most tangible result was the British Commonwealth Forces Korea deployment from 1951 to 1957. This was thus the fullest example of Labour finally taking on the military aspects of the Commonwealth, albeit in a form which very much reflected the old rather than the new Commonwealth as BCFK was dominated by British, Canadian and Australian contributions.<sup>70</sup>

Meanwhile, *Labour and the New Society* largely concentrated on how to promote sustainable development. In pointing to the conflict between subsistence agriculture and export crops it foreshadowed the subsequent paper on 'Aid to Under-Developed Countries' by the St Lucian economist W. Arthur Lewis in May 1952. Pointing out that most of Britain's capital movement to the less developed world of around £500m per year then went to South America and the Middle East, Lewis noted that under-developed countries could only absorb more capital if education and training were expanded. This would facilitate the switching of labour from subsistence to marketised sectors of the economy that he was to develop two years later in his seminal Nobel Prize-winning paper.<sup>71</sup>

After going through various internal drafts, these two policy agendas came together in the published version of 'From Colonies to Commonwealth'. More prosaically entitled *Labour's Colonial Policy*, this appeared in three volumes in 1956. The first of these, *The Plural Society*, was Labour's most thorough attempt yet to think through how to achieve sustained self-government in the often deeply racially mixed societies of the colonies. It emphasised that Labour's aim 'is to encourage the peoples concerned, in their political life, to forget race and colour, and to think and act as human beings'. Otherwise how could Creech Jones'

aspiration that handover occurred to democratic governments be attained? In societies where access to political power had long been structured around race this was, however, easier said than done. Indeed, the fear was expressed that attempts to remove racial considerations could prove so disruptive to existing social and political norms as to exacerbate racial tensions. Accordingly, it warned that it might 'be necessary to invest Governors with reserve powers for a period to protect legitimate minority interests against excessive nationalist ardour'. In contrast to the constitution-making of the previous decade, it also advised that 'for the protection of minorities....the principles of the [UN] Declaration of Human Rights' might be included in these constitutions.<sup>72</sup> This could be seen as either cautious or prescient: at this stage, for instance, the Labour-supporting constitutional scholar, Sir Ivor Jennings, had not yet come to regret his optimistic omission of such provisions from the 1948 constitution of Ceylon.<sup>73</sup>

*The Plural Society* also stressed the need for safeguards for labour, including fair wages clauses which, in an earlier iteration, had been seen as essential pre-conditions for colonial investment.<sup>74</sup> Most of the discussion of economic policy towards the colonies, however, came in the aptly named second volume on *Economic Aid*, drawn up by a working party chaired by Barbara Castle. A restoration of the bulk purchase agreements run down by the Tories since 1951 was promised. It also welcomed the increase in funds available to the CDC to £20-30m a year in 1955, while arguing for increased pump-priming grants and direct grants to cover social investment. After all, these would thereby compensate for the net imports of capital from the colonies to the UK through the operation of the Sterling Area: 'While we have been lending money long-term to the colonies to build dams, railways, roads and factories, they have been lending money short-term to us through the accumulation of sterling balances'. Labour would therefore now sign up, having - as Lewis pointed out - rejected it when they were in government, for the UN's proposed Special Fund for Economic Development and commit to grants of 1% of GNP per annum towards it.<sup>75</sup> This would not only reverse the negative investment flows but address the lack of finance available for infrastructure development identified in earlier policy documents.<sup>76</sup>

The final volume of *Labour's Colonial Policy* addressed those *Smaller Territories* deemed unready for independence. Gone was the view, still being reiterated by Brailsford in 1945, that sudden independence 'would be to betray the peoples and our trust....[to] the penetration of the predatory and callous influences which socialists deplore'.<sup>77</sup> Now only those colonies which 'are too small or possess insufficient resources of wealth or manpower to become full sovereign nations of the Commonwealth' were excluded. It was still a developmental test, but it had been subtly rephrased. The door was also left open for circumstances to 'so alter as to enable them to attain such a status'. One way this might happen was through the federation route. More novel was the idea, following the proposals of Malta's Labour Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff in 1955, for which Hatch was a great



enthusiast, that 'we should be prepared in suitable cases....to consider representation at Westminster'.<sup>78</sup> Lack of enthusiasm for the perceived welfare costs from the Conservative government helped to ensure that this scheme to nothing.<sup>79</sup> Other proposals, such as that Cyprus - a territory deemed too small for independence that was then wracked with guerrilla warfare - might be resolved through *enosis* with Greece were arguably just naive.<sup>80</sup>

As a statement of *Labour's Colonial Policy* these documents did not prove enduring. With decolonisation gathering pace under the Macmillan government it was decided as early as 1960 not to reprint them as they were already out of date.<sup>81</sup> George Cunningham, who became the party's Commonwealth officer in 1963, subsequently commented: 'Clearly the standards thought necessary for complete independence have been lowered over the years'.<sup>82</sup>

Labour's thinking about the transition to independence had been rapidly overtaken by external developments. This was not the only problem with these policy documents. Pointing out the contradictions between the aim of rapid self-determination for most territories and the commitment to end racial discrimination first, Richard Crossman commented: 'If we have to wait until all forms of racial discrimination have been outlawed, we shall run the colonies for the next 200 years'.<sup>83</sup> So far only left-wingers like Fenner Brockway had, however, raised the irony that Britain itself had yet to pass any legislation on the subject of racial discrimination;<sup>84</sup> James Griffiths concluding just after succeeding Creech Jones as Colonial Secretary in 1950 that 'there is no reason to believe that either legislation or administrative action can profitably be undertaken' to correct what was claimed to be a rare issue.<sup>85</sup>

This had certainly not been seen as a major problem before 1939. Buxton indeed blithely stated in 1935 that 'it is generally agreed that no class is so free from race or colour prejudice as the working class'.<sup>86</sup> With postwar immigration resulting in far more Commonwealth citizens in Britain, this issue however became increasingly a matter of concern for the party. The racial hierarchies of empire were no longer external, but now had to be confronted at home. A draft statement by the party's governing National Executive Committee [NEC] in 1958 estimated that between a quarter and a third of the British population were racially prejudiced - on what basis is unclear - with resulting tensions of the kind Labour had warned of in the colonial setting. Initially, however, Griffiths' view in 1950 that prejudice cannot be abolished by legislation was reiterated.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, by the time the final draft of this policy emerged in September 1958 it had been decided that it should still be severely discouraged by the passage of legislation to make racial discrimination a criminal offence.<sup>88</sup> With such decisions, Labour finally incorporated the metropole into its thinking about the plural society that the Commonwealth, not least through its own efforts, had become.

For some, not least with the revival of what were now multi-racial conferences of the various Labour parties across the Commonwealth in 1957 and 1962, this transformation sparked - if anything - a deepening of their attachment to the Commonwealth. Hugh Gaitskell, who had succeeded Attlee as party leader in 1955, accordingly celebrated the great multi-racial bridge of the Commonwealth linking rich and poor countries that 'owes its creation fundamentally to those vital historical decisions of the Labour Government' of 1945-51. He did so in his 1962 party conference speech in which he made clear his dislike of the attempts Macmillan's Tory government had launched the previous year to join the European Economic Community.<sup>89</sup> Almost all the reasons Gaitskell cited for this dislike related to the Commonwealth. This was also true of the more balanced NEC statement on the subject. 'Unlike the Six', it proclaimed, 'Britain is the centre and founder member of a much larger and still more important group, the Commonwealth worldwide multi-racial association of 700 million'. If 'our membership were to weaken the Commonwealth and the trade of the underdeveloped nations, lessen the chances of East-West agreement and reduce the influence that Britain could exert in world affairs, then the case against entry would be decisive'.<sup>90</sup> It was the multi-racial Commonwealth that was praised, but Gaitskell's reasons for doing so harked back to Amery and beyond. Labour had not usually highlighted the Commonwealth's economic or geopolitical significance, but that was very much what Gaitskell was doing here in order to turn round the similarly framed arguments being deployed by his deputy leader, George Brown, and others in favour of European entry.

Gaitskell was, however, adding these traditionally Tory ways of thinking about the Commonwealth to the Labour lexicon just at the point where they were losing their potency. He may have done so armed with the critical views heard from Commonwealth Labour leaders at their recent conference, which ended with a communiqué stating that 'if Britain were to enter the Common Market on the basis of what has so far been agreed great damage would inevitably be done to many countries in the Commonwealth'.<sup>91</sup> New Commonwealth states like Nigeria were particularly critical of what was termed the neo-colonialism of Associated Overseas Territory [AOT] status, with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana comparing the 1957 Treaty of Rome to the 1884 Treaty of Berlin that divided up Africa.<sup>92</sup> In a paper to the Shadow Cabinet in April 1962 Denis Healey acknowledged that AOT status was felt to involve competition with the privileged position of former French colonies, discrimination against tropical foodstuffs and subordination to Europe. Only the West Indies were prepared to accept it.<sup>93</sup> Yet Ghana was already trading more with the Six than Britain. The amendments to AOT status under the Yaoundé Convention signed in July 1963, meanwhile, did much to mollify the Nigerians. That year Nigeria opened negotiations for AOT status.<sup>94</sup>

Harold Wilson, who was to succeed Gaitskell as leader after the latter's sudden death in January 1963 and in many ways shared the latter's position on Europe,

had already pointed out in 1960 that many in the Commonwealth were supportive of consolidation of European markets, hoping that it would facilitate access for their goods.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, a Fabian pamphlet in 1962 pointed out that this was already happening.<sup>96</sup> The party's leading pro-European, Roy Jenkins, may have been exaggerating when in June 1961 he argued that most of the Commonwealth objections to European entry came from New Zealand,<sup>97</sup> but Gaitskell was certainly also exaggerating the objections from elsewhere.

Inter-Commonwealth trade was just not as important either for Britain or the other territories as it had been even under the Attlee government. Nonetheless Attlee's former President of the Board of Trade, Harold Wilson, still clearly hankered over the old bulk purchase agreement arrangements. These formed the centrepiece of his ten point plan for Commonwealth development of May 1963 in the aftermath of the failure of Macmillan's European negotiations.<sup>98</sup> It did not seem to occur to him that countries that objected to AOT status would be no more willing to sign up for this form of neo-colonialism either. They indeed still featured among many more references to the Commonwealth than ever before in a Labour manifesto during the 1964 election.

This enthusiasm was despite a number of changes which had undermined the traditional military and economic functions of the Commonwealth. For instance, in a paper shortly before that election Cunningham complained that in the thirteen years of Tory rule British trade with the Commonwealth had declined from 44 to 30 per cent of the total.<sup>99</sup> Yet this was hardly surprising since most British colonies had removed their preferences in favour of British goods by 1952.<sup>100</sup> Even in Australia and New Zealand James Callaghan, the shadow colonial secretary, was struck by the diminishing importance of imperial preference. Following his 1958 Commonwealth tour he reported that these two Old Commonwealth states were 'almost resigned to Britain entering' the Common Market. New Zealand, he also noted, were already negotiating directly with Commonwealth countries over trade deals.

Callaghan was no more sanguine about the military dimension of the Commonwealth.<sup>101</sup> Gaitskell may have played this up in 1962. Four years earlier Callaghan was instead reporting his doubts about the utility of the Singapore base, if not yet of the East of Suez role. A year earlier he had also suggested reorganising the machinery of government handling Commonwealth and colonial affairs at the 1957 Commonwealth Labour conference.<sup>102</sup> The idea of amalgamating the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Colonial Office was subsequently considered by Hatch in 1960, only to be rejected on the grounds that Commonwealth countries would object.<sup>103</sup> With the Tories having combined the two offices under one minister from July 1962 onwards, however, such objections increasingly had less weight. Indeed, a paper from the former diplomat, Geoffrey McDermott, in 1963 advocated going further through creating a Foreign and

Commonwealth Office. McDermott's rationale was that with Labour already committed to ministry of overseas aid and of disarmament then some consolidation was required.<sup>104</sup>

In responding to McDermott's paper, Cunningham reflected that the Commonwealth's 'physical institutions are few and growing fewer and weaker'. Hatch in 1960 had suggested replacing British ministries with a Commonwealth Secretariat as a means of tackling this deficiency. Cunningham in 1964 was more pessimistic: 'I believe the Commonwealth relationship is bound to weaken and eventually disappear between Britain and the Asian-African countries, leaving only its hard rock foundation, Canada, Australia and New Zealand'.<sup>105</sup> Yet it was the old Commonwealth, and its old functions, that were most conspicuously disappearing. Internal racial tensions removed South Africa and Southern Rhodesia in 1961 and 1965 respectively. Trade ties were weaker. The questioning of the East of Suez role, which was steadily growing on the backbenches in the run-up to Labour's return to power in the 1964 election,<sup>106</sup> was also to undermine the military dimension of the Commonwealth.

Ironically it was arguably Callaghan, who had spotted these developments relatively early, who was among those most fiercely resisting their consequences as the incoming Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1964. Yet his rationale for doing so reflected the ways in which the Commonwealth had changed. Callaghan, for instance, proved very reluctant to devalue sterling despite enormous pressures to do so in large measure because of a sense of obligation to maintain the value of former colonies' sterling balances and protect them from the resulting impact on their dollar trade.<sup>107</sup> It was the new Commonwealth that had emerged during the Attlee government that he was thus defending, and not the old Commonwealth of economic and military ties for which Gaitskell had belatedly become the most committed of Labour standard-bearers.

Part of Gaitskell's rationale for doing so was, of course, political. The Tories' European turn gave Labour an opportunity to seize the imperial, patriotic card. This opportunism clearly informed the accusations thrown at the Conservatives in Labour's 1964 manifesto that Macmillan's entry terms 'would have forced us to treat [the Commonwealth] as third class nations'.<sup>108</sup> The Commonwealth was commandeered as a trope to serve a Labour patriotic cause. This was also apparent in Labour's attempts to revive the Commonwealth as a geopolitical entity in a new setting. As George Thomson later put it: 'We appointed a minister to the United Nations, and we were going to form a great Commonwealth group at the United Nations, and we were all going to be a force in world affairs'. This was for Thomson 'a deeply disillusioning experience',<sup>109</sup> but it was also one which built on a tradition of Labour thinking about the Commonwealth. This was not simply the British-led military arrangement that the Commonwealth had been in two world wars, but an attempt to use it as an example of multi-racial global partnership.

This included the 1964 idea of a Commonwealth consultative assembly which had echoes of the thinking in *Labour and the New Social Order*.

The manifesto proudly affirmed Labour's role in the transition of empire into Commonwealth, claiming 'No nobler transformation is recorded in the story of the human race'. The incorporation of Britain into that transformed, multi-racial entity was hinted at in the promise to legislate against racial discrimination, though tempered by the commitment to control immigration.<sup>110</sup> This suggests that, beneath the fine words, there remained a certain instrumentality. Nonetheless, a substantial, and lasting, change in the conception of the Commonwealth had been effected. In 1964 Cunningham argued that 'The Commonwealth is all in the mind'.<sup>111</sup> It certainly developed as a concept over time in the minds of Labour figures. However, it was the multi-racial Commonwealth of free (and varied) nations that Labour thinkers from Lansbury onwards had spoken of, rather than the backward-looking White core which Cunningham himself evoked, that increasingly sprang to mind.

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Nisbet, 1902); Aaron L. Friedburg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the experience of relative decline 1895-1905* (London: Princeton University Press, 1988); Denis Judd, *Radical Joe: A Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (London: Hamilton, 1977), chaps.10 & 11.

<sup>2</sup> C. Delisle Burns, 'The British Commonwealth of Nations' in Herbert Tracey (ed) *The Book of the Labour Party: Its History, Growth, Policy and Leaders* vol.3 (London: Caxton, 1925), pp.70-2.

<sup>3</sup> G. D. H Cole, *Labour in the Commonwealth: A Book for the Younger Generation* (London: Headley, 1918), chap. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.188.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Henderson, *The Aims of Labour* (London: Headley, 1917).

<sup>6</sup> George Lansbury, *Labour's Way with the Commonwealth* (London: Methuen, 1935), p.51.

<sup>7</sup> <http://labourmanifesto.com/1900/1900-labour-manifesto.shtml> [accessed 12 May 2018].

<sup>8</sup> *House of Commons Debates*, 5th series, vol.60, c.1270, 1 April 1914.

<sup>9</sup> *House of Commons Debates*, 5th series, vol.60, c.1277, 1 April 1914.

<sup>10</sup> *House of Commons Debates*, 5th series, vol.60, cc.1303-7, 1 April 1914.

<sup>11</sup> *Labour and the New Social Order* (London: Labour Party, 1918), pp.21-2.

<sup>12</sup> Burns, p75.

<sup>13</sup> *Labour and the New Social Order*, pp.21-2.

<sup>14</sup> *Labour's Call to the People* (London: Labour Party, 1918), <http://labourmanifesto.com/1918/1918-labour-manifesto.shtml> [accessed 12 May 2018].

<sup>15</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *New Statesman*, 2 August 1913; see also J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire* (London: Allen, 1907), p.50.

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- <sup>16</sup> In contrast, empire and imperial preference was the prime issue in the 1924 statement of Conservative policy: Stanley Baldwin, *Looking Ahead: A restatement of Unionist Principles and Aims* (London: National Unionist Association, 1924), pp.1-5.
- <sup>17</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p.29.
- <sup>18</sup> Burns, p.71.
- <sup>19</sup> Burns, p.79.
- <sup>20</sup> Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914-1964* (New Delhi: Sage, 2002 [1975]), p.129.
- <sup>21</sup> J. Ramsay MacDonald, *The Foreign Policy of the Labour Party* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1923), p.37.
- <sup>22</sup> David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London: Cape, 1977), chaps.15 and 16.
- <sup>23</sup> <http://labourmanifesto.com/1924/1924-labour-manifesto.shtml> [accessed 12 May 2018].
- <sup>24</sup> Gupta, p.118.
- <sup>25</sup> *Labour and the Nation* (London: Labour Party, 1927), p.4.
- <sup>26</sup> Howe, chaps.1 and 2.
- <sup>27</sup> Gupta, pp.63-4, 83.
- <sup>28</sup> Gupta, pp.66-7; *Labour and the Nation*, p.44.
- <sup>29</sup> *Labour and the Nation*, p.43.
- <sup>30</sup> Gupta, p.85; *Labour and the Nation*, p.43.
- <sup>31</sup> *Labour and the Nation*, p.44.
- <sup>32</sup> The National Archives, Kew [TNA]: CAB 21/469, Trades Unions Congress/Labour Party 'Note on the Committee of Imperial Defence' (February 1926)..
- <sup>33</sup> *House of Commons Debates* 5th ser., vol.299, cc.554-5, 14 March 1935.
- <sup>34</sup> Burns, p.84; *Labour and the Nation* revised ed. (London: Labour Party, 1928), p.49.
- <sup>35</sup> For instance, MacDonald in April 1924 emphasised 'Dominion status for India is the idea and the ideal of the Labour government': cited in Lansbury, p.61.
- <sup>36</sup> Lansbury, pp.18, 29, 32.
- <sup>37</sup> Lansbury, pp.34-5, 99-101.
- <sup>38</sup> Lansbury, pp.40-7, 72.
- <sup>39</sup> Lansbury, pp.59-60, 68-9, 73-6.
- <sup>40</sup> Lansbury, p.19
- <sup>41</sup> Lansbury, pp.9, 26-8.
- <sup>42</sup> Lansbury, p.85.
- <sup>43</sup> Charles Roden Buxton, 'Policy in the Backward Colonies' in George Lansbury, *Labour's Way with the Commonwealth* (London: Methuen, 1935), pp.97, 102-16.
- <sup>44</sup> See E. F. Schumacher, 'Multilateral Clearing' *Economica* n.s. 10/38 (1943), 150-65.
- <sup>45</sup> Lansbury, pp.10-14, 91.
- <sup>46</sup> C. R. Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective* (London: Gollancz, 1937), pp.228, 232, 241.
- <sup>47</sup> Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.246.
- <sup>48</sup> Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.229, 236; C. R. Attlee, 'Guild v. Municipal Socialism' *Socialist Review*, 21 (1923), 213-18.
- <sup>49</sup> Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis: The second Labour government 1929-31* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.194.
- <sup>50</sup> Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp. 234, 244. After retirement as party leader he was a prominent member of the 160 strong Parliamentary Group on World Government in the early 1960s.
- <sup>51</sup> Francis Williams, 'Preface' in C. R. Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective - And Twelve Years Later* (London: Gollancz, 1949), pp.9-12; Morgan, pp.190-2.
- <sup>52</sup> Attlee, *Twelve Years Later*, p.169; C. R. Attlee, *As It Happened* (London: Heinemann, 1954), pp.126-7.
- <sup>53</sup> Morgan, p.203.
- <sup>54</sup> Attlee, *Twelve Years Later*, pp.172-3.
- <sup>55</sup> J. S. Hogendorn and K. M. Scott, 'The East African Groundnuts Scheme: Lessons of a Large-Scale Agricultural Failure' *African Economic History* 10 (1981), 81-115.
- <sup>56</sup> Morgan, pp.189-90.
- <sup>57</sup> Arthur Creech Jones, 'Introduction' in Rita Hinden (ed), *Fabian Colonial Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1945), pp.10-11.
- <sup>58</sup> See *Labour Believes in Britain*, National Executive Committee for the 1949 Conference, April 1949, p.29.

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- <sup>59</sup> Creech Jones, p.16; H. N. Brailsford, 'Socialists and the Empire' in Rita Hinden (ed), *Fabian Colonial Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1945), pp.29-30.
- <sup>60</sup> Attlee, *As It Happened*, pp.189-91.
- <sup>61</sup> C. R. Attlee, *Empire into Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.1.
- <sup>62</sup> Harshan Kumarasingham, 'A new monarchy for a new Commonwealth? Monarchy and the consequences of republican India' in Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (eds) *Crowns and Colonies: European Monarchies and Overseas Empires* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp.283-308.
- <sup>63</sup> R. J. Moore, *The Making of the New Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Harold Wilson, 'Nehru and the New Commonwealth', 8th Nehru Memorial Lecture, 2 November 1978 [https://www.cambridgetrust.org/assets/documents/Lecture\\_8.pdf](https://www.cambridgetrust.org/assets/documents/Lecture_8.pdf) [accessed 24 June 2018].
- <sup>64</sup> TNA: CAB 129/30, CP(48)244, C. R. Attlee, 'The Commonwealth Partnership' (26 October 1948); Harshan Kumarasingham, 'The "Tropical Dominions": The Appeal of Dominion Status in the Decolonisation of India, Pakistan and Ceylon' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (2013), p.228.
- <sup>65</sup> Peter Catterall, 'Foreign and Commonwealth Policy in Opposition: The Labour Party' in Wolfram Kaiser and Gillian Staerck (eds) *British Foreign Policy 1955-64: Contracting Options* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp.89-109.
- <sup>66</sup> *Labour's Foreign Policy* (London: Labour Party, 1952), pp.2-3.
- <sup>67</sup> People's History Museum, Manchester: Labour Party Archives [LPA]: Labour International Committee minutes and papers [LIC], Statement of Policy on Colonial Affairs 'From Colonies to Commonwealth' (July 1954), pp.2, 5; Catterall, 'Foreign and Commonwealth Policy in Opposition' p.91.
- <sup>68</sup> LPA: Labour Commonwealth minutes and papers [LCC], Creech Jones to Hatch, 11 September 1954.
- <sup>69</sup> LPA: LCC, Draft 'Colonies to Commonwealth', 3 March 1955, p.8.
- <sup>70</sup> *Labour and the New Society* (London: Labour Party, 1950); Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951* (London: Heinemann, 1983); C. N. Barclay, *The First Commonwealth Division: The Story of the British Commonwealth Land Forces in Korea 1950-1953* (Solihull: Helion, 2010).
- <sup>71</sup> LPA: LCC, W. Arthur Lewis, 'Aid to Under-Developed Countries' (May 1952); W. Arthur Lewis, 'Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour' *Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies* 22 (1954), 139-91.
- <sup>72</sup> *Labour's Colonial Policy: I The Plural Society* (London: Labour Party, 1956), pp.20-38.
- <sup>73</sup> Harshan Kumarasingham (ed), *Constitution-Maker: Selected Writings of Sir Ivor Jennings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.259.
- <sup>74</sup> LPA: LCC, 'From Colonies to Commonwealth' (July 1954), p.3; *The Plural Society*, p.43.
- <sup>75</sup> Lewis, 'Aid', p.20; *Labour's Colonial Policy II: Economic Aid* (London: Labour Party, 1957), pp.13-21.
- <sup>76</sup> See, for instance, *Towards World Plenty* (London: Labour Party, 1952).
- <sup>77</sup> Brailsford, p.13.
- <sup>78</sup> *Labour's Colonial Policy III: Smaller Territories* (London: Labour Party, 1957), pp.18-21.
- <sup>79</sup> LPA: LCC, Secretary's Report (June 1956), p.3; Secretary's Report (April 1957), p.2.
- <sup>80</sup> *Smaller Territories*, p.24.
- <sup>81</sup> LPA: LCC minutes, 10 May 1960.
- <sup>82</sup> LPA: LCC, George Cunningham, 'The Smaller Colonial Territories' (4 September 1964). Of the territories he still felt were too small to realistically be candidates for independence only St Helena remains a dependency.
- <sup>83</sup> LPA: LCC, comments by Richard Crossman on *The Plural Society* (May 1956), p.3.
- <sup>84</sup> For instance, TNA: CAB 134/994, Legislation Committee minutes, 22 April 1952.
- <sup>85</sup> TNA: CAB 21/1734, 'Coloured People from British Colonial Territories' (29 March 1950), p.4.
- <sup>86</sup> Buxton, p.96. In contrast, Chuka Umunna decided not to run for the party leadership in 2015 having been advised by PLP colleagues that 'we don't think our white working class constituents would ever vote for a black man', *The New European* 19 July 2018, p.13.
- <sup>87</sup> LPA: LCC, resolution by NEC working party on racial discrimination (July 1958), pp.4-7.
- <sup>88</sup> LPA: LCC, resolution by NEC working party on racial discrimination (September 1958), p.3.
- <sup>89</sup> *Britain and the Common Market* (London: Labour Party, 1962), pp.3-32.
- <sup>90</sup> *Britain and the Common Market* (London: Labour Party, 1962), p.33.
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