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THE OXFORD SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

by

Hugh Clegg

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

This paper was prepared by Hugh Clegg at the request of Silvana Sciarra, of the University of Siena, when she was at Warwick as the Unit's Leverhulme Visiting Professor in European Industrial Relations. It will be translated into Italian, but we also felt that it gave insights into both the practice and the academic study of industrial relations in Britain which would be of interest to an English-speaking audience. Its core is its discussion of the work of the 'Oxford School' during the 1960s, in particular its role in the celebrated Donovan report of 1968, but it begins by outlining the origins of industrial relations at Oxford and by considering the characteristics of the school. The Oxford School became the leading source of analysis of industrial relations, and combined this with a passionate belief in reform - a belief which was put into effect in the Donovan report. Donovan was, as is well-known, profoundly influenced by the evidence of Allan Flanders but what is perhaps less publicly recognised was Hugh Clegg's own role in writing the report.

For the reader unfamiliar with the significance of the Oxford School, it may be useful to indicate some of the debates around it. As Hugh Clegg notes, the identification of an 'Oxford group' originated in an essay in *New Society*, but other writers were also coming to recognise the central role of Oxford scholars. In his essay on the Donovan research papers in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (1968), H.A. Turner used the term 'Oxford line' to provide an unflattering characterisation of the analyses and prescriptions informing Donovan. During the 1970s a debate raged between 'pluralists' such as Hugh Clegg and 'radicals'. Alan Fox, formerly an exponent of pluralism, joined the radical camp in his *Beyond Contract* (1974). John Goldthorpe, who now happened to be at Oxford, published his critique of reformism in the journal *Politics and Society* in the same year. Hugh Clegg produced a reply in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* the following year. In 1978 the same journal carried an extended critique of pluralism by Richard Hyman, himself a former student of Clegg and then a colleague at Warwick. Clegg's parting shot came in his textbook *The Changing System of British Industrial Relations* (1979).

An associated debate considered how far the Donovan prescription was followed by managements, and whether it worked. As Clegg says in this paper, Donovan's true disciples were those managers who reformed their bargaining structures. Evidence of the extent of change - notably the growth of pay bargaining at plant and company level - came in the survey of manufacturing establishments conducted at Warwick in 1977-8 and published in 1981 as *The Changing Contours of British Industrial Relations* (edited by William Brown).

But there was also considerable doubt as to whether institutional reform was enough. As early as 1973 Bill McCarthy, together with Norman Ellis, had published *Management by Agreement*, a broadly pluralist statement which at the same time re-assessed the Donovan message and argued that insufficient attention had been given to the wider context in which industrial relations institutions operate. McCarthy, this time writing with Jim Durcan and G.P. Redman, returned to this theme ten years later. In their *Strikes in Post-war Britain* they analysed the report of the Devlin Committee - of which Hugh Clegg was also a member - on the docks. Devlin recommended institutional reform but, Durcan et al. argue, did not sufficiently allow for the rapid technical changes in the industry: reform of industrial relations may be overtaken by other events. In 1984 Eric Batstone, for many years at Warwick and now having made the 'reverse journey' to Oxford, published *Working Order*, which explored in depth the tensions and limitations of reformism.

As for Hugh Clegg's concluding remarks that the 'Warwick School' has been very different from the Oxford School, it is worth recording that some of the concerns of reformism did continue at Warwick. William Brown took a keen interest in incomes policy and in forms of pay bargaining compatible with it. Research interest has also followed the implications of the analyses of Clegg and Flanders. They put primary responsibility for change on management. Research at Warwick and elsewhere has explored how far British managers have been willing and able to institute thorough-going reform. A major theme, as laid out by Keith Sisson in his contribution to *Personnel Management in Britain* (1989) which he edited, has been the absence of coherent personnel management strategies. One implication is that, even if the Donovan analysis had been tried, structural constraints would have made its vision very hard to realise. Though there is no major reformist school, the analytical legacy of the Oxford School has been profound, as researchers have tried to understand British management and to place industrial relations in the wider context of business organisation.

Paul Edwards

BACKGROUND OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AT OXFORD

The study of industrial relations barely existed at Oxford before the 1939-45 war. The only teacher in the University who concerned himself with the subject was the socialist and polymath, G.D.H. Cole, and for him it was but one of many lines of interest. Industrial relations was not taught as part of any degree course. It was an optional subject in a `diploma' course in economics and politics, which was taken mainly by students from Ruskin College, which had been founded to allow working men and women to enjoy some of the benefits of the University, many of them supported by scholarships from their trade unions. It was also possible for some of them to proceed afterwards, if accepted by an established college and awarded a state scholarship, to take a degree. One example was George Woodcock, who subsequently went on to become the research officer of the Trades Union Congress, and later its general secretary.

Things began to change soon after the war. Kenneth Knowles was appointed to a post at the Oxford Institute of Statistics to make a study of strikes; and in 1949 Allan Flanders was appointed Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations in the University. After leaving school, Allan had gone to Germany to study at an adult school run by the International Socialist Kampfbund and founded by the socialist philosopher, Leonard Nelson. After Hitler came to power he came back to Britain to keep the organisation's ideas of ethical socialism alive, which he did through a group called Socialist Union. He became a draughtsman, joined the Draughtsmen's Association, and, during the war, was appointed to the staff of George Woodcock's department at the Trades Union Congress to help in the preparation of its *Report on Postwar Reconstruction*. After the war he returned to Germany as trade union adviser to the British Control Commission. It was also in 1949 that I was appointed, after war service, a degree and graduate research, to a fellowship at Nuffield College to undertake research in industrial relations.

The three of us joined forces to run a weekly class in industrial relations. It was attended mainly by Ruskin students, but also by a few undergraduates, and, after a while, also by graduate students. I believe it is still running, under the guidance of Bill (now Lord) McCarthy. In 1952 Allan's book on *Trade Unions* appeared along with Kenneth's on *Strikes*. I wrote two or three books on aspects of industrial relations. We all three contributed chapters to a textbook entitled *The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain*, published in 1954, which Allan and I edited.

In 1955 the Leverhulme Trustees awarded a substantial grant to Nuffield College for research in industrial relations. Several projects were undertaken. One was a history of British trade unions since 1889. Taking part in it was Alan Fox, a Ruskin student who had gone on to take a University degree, and proceeded to a graduate studentship at Nuffield. He was then appointed industrial relations tutor at Ruskin College, where he wrote the history of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives. He now moved back to Nuffield College as a fellow; and his place at Ruskin College was filled by John Hughes. Other projects undertaken under the Leverhulme grant were a study of trade union officers and shop stewards, and a study of the national shipbuilding and engineering strike of 1957.

Other Ruskin students followed Alan Fox's footsteps through a University degree to a research studentship at Nuffield College and then to a fellowship. Bill McCarthy chose as the title of his doctoral thesis, subsequently published, *The Closed Shop in Britain*. John Corina wrote his doctoral thesis on the wages policy operated by the postwar Labour Government in 1948-51. Students from Europe, North America and Australia were also attracted to Nuffield to write doctoral theses in industrial relations. One of them, George Bain from Canada, wrote his thesis on *The Growth of White Collar Unionism.*

The expansion of the study of industrial relations at Oxford was not confined to Nuffield College. Another former Ruskin student, Derek Robinson, went to a post at the Institute of Statistics to work with Kenneth Knowles on pay statistics; and Arthur Marsh was appointed by the Oxford Extra-Mural Delegacy to conduct research to provide material for industrial relations classes for trade unionists run by the Delegacy. By the early 1960s there was at Oxford a greater concentration of teachers, researchers and graduate students in industrial relations than at any other British university, although several others had begun to make appointments before the war.

Then, in 1964, Oxford gained its most distinguished recruit in the field of industrial relations. Otto Kahn-Freund, a labour court judge who had escaped from Hitler's Germany, mastered English law, and become a professor of labour law at the London School of Economics, was appointed to the chair of Comparative Law at

Oxford. He had long been a friend of Allan Flanders and of mine, and had contributed the chapter on `The Legal Framework' to our 1954 textbook.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OXFORD SCHOOL

A concentration of scholars, however, does not constitute a `school of thought'. To warrant that title, there must be a common set of ideas to inform their teaching and research. What had Oxford industrial relations to show in that respect?

I cannot set out a body of tenets which I can confidently assert were shared by everyone I have named. For one thing, I am sure that one or two of them would have dissented from some of the ideas generally held by the rest of us; and for another, I am not sure what one or two of them thought on some of the crucial issues. Kenneth Knowles, for example, was a reticent person in this respect. I would have been interested in his reply, if, when the term `Oxford school' came into use, I had asked him whether he regarded himself as a member; but it is too late to ask him now.

Generally speaking, however, we were pluralists, believing that a free society consists of a large number of overlapping groups, each with its own interests and objectives which its members are entitled to pursue so long as they do so with reasonable regard to the rights and interests of others. But that did not distinguish us from most other social and political theorists of that time, except Marxists, and today only from Marxists and Thatcherites. We were also egalitarians, wishing to see a shift in the distribution of wealth towards those with lower incomes, and a shift of power over the conduct of their working lives and environment towards working men and women; and, for both those reasons, emphasising the importance of trade unions in industry, in the economy, and in society. We therefore attached special importance to collective bargaining as the means whereby trade unions pursue their objectives.

However, the most important development in our ideas, which was to provide the main distinguishing feature in the thought of the `Oxford school', was provided by Allan Flanders in his book, *The Fawley Productivity Agreements*, published in 1964. During the fifties, Allan had given a good deal of his time to Socialist Union and the associated journal, *Socialist Commentary*, which he edited along with Rita Hinden. Academically, apart from his University lectures, which he rewrote continually, and some articles, he had been working on a theory of trade union growth. It was his contention that there existed no viable theory of trade unionism, and he thought that the study of union growth might provide the key to such a theory; but was not satisfied with what he had been able to achieve. Nothing was published, although what he had written provided a starting-point for the ideas developed by George Bain in *The Growth of White Collar Unionism*. It was therefore with some relief that Allan in 1960 accepted the suggestion made to him by Esso that he should study the negotiations then in progress at their refinery at Fawley. The task refreshed and stimulated him, diverting his mind from speculation which had grown stale towards practical issues, which in turn prompted more profitable speculation. His book, the full title of which was *The Fawley Productivity Agreements: A Case Study in Management and Collective Bargaining* (1964), established his reputation at home and abroad.

Esso's managers at Fawley believed they could refine oil at a good deal less than the current cost, provided that they could reduce the high levels of overtime working, which, they considered, were due not to production requirements, but to the desire of the men to boost their earnings to what they considered to be an acceptable level. The company was willing to raise basic rates so as to compensate the men for their lost overtime provided they could get rid of the overtime. However, there was a problem. Whereas the working practices in the refinery which created the need for overtime working had been developed in the refinery with the shop stewards as their guardians, rates of pay were negotiated with full-time trade union officials responsible to their executive committees in London. Eventually, after a great deal of effort and discussion, Esso's managers found a way to negotiate a new agreement which set acceptable rates of pay for revised working practices in a manner satisfactory to union executives, full-time officers and shop stewards. The most important lesson for students of industrial relations, however, was that the structure of collective bargaining had for years prevented management, the unions and the men from achieving a level of performance and a standard of pay which were in the interests of all three of them; and it was soon established that Fawley was not an isolated instance in this respect.

The general conclusions were that the structure of collective bargaining could have a powerful influence on the conduct of industrial relations in the plant, and on the behaviour of

trade unions and managers; and that the initiative in changing the structure of bargaining had to be taken by management. These, in my view, were the main contributions of Oxford to industrial relations theory, and of sufficient importance to justify the use of the word 'school' to describe those who accepted and upheld them.

REFORMING BRITISH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Up to this point the study of industrial relations at Oxford had not attracted much public attention, if any. But things began to change after a Labour Government came to power under Harold Wilson in 1964, the year in which *The Fawley Productivity Agreements* was published. The government planned to intervene in industrial relations in two important ways. They proposed to introduce an incomes policy, which they believed was essential to achieve the rate of economic growth and investment which was needed to pay for the social reforms which they were committed to introduce. They hoped to persuade the employers and the trade unions to consent to this proposal. Secondly, it was their aim to establish a public inquiry into trade unions and (to give an impression of even-handedness) also into employers' associations. They believed that the trade unions had lost much of the public esteem in which they had been held twenty years earlier at the end of the war in which their efforts and co-operation had contributed so generously to victory; and that they stood in need of reform.

Accordingly, the new government established a National Board for Prices and Incomes, with as its chairman Aubrey Jones, a former Conservative Minister who was known to sympathise with this item in the Labour programme; and a Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, chaired by a judge, Lord Donovan, following the tradition that a Royal Commission which will have to deal with aspects of the law must have a judge as its chairman. Allan Flanders was appointed as industrial relations adviser to Aubrey Jones. Otto and I were appointed members of the Royal Commission; and I was later appointed a member of the Prices and Incomes Board. Apart from our professional qualifications, it may have been relevant to these appointments that Allan, like most of the industrial relations teachers and researchers at Oxford, was a member of the Labour Party. So, I believe, was Otto. I had shied away from committing myself to another political party after leaving the Communist Party a year or so after the war, but I was a Labour supporter and voter.

Most of my eleven colleagues on the Royal Commission were ready to agree that, in addition to taking evidence from trade unions, employers' associations and the Ministry of Labour, and from other bodies and individuals who considered that they had something to offer us, we should also draw on research which had been carried out into industrial relations, and even conduct a little research on our own account. Bill McCarthy was appointed as our Research Director. He organised a series of Research Papers which were published by the Commission. He himself wrote papers on *The Role of Shop Stewards in British Industrial Relations* and on *Compulsory Arbitration*, and (with Arthur Marsh) on *Disputes Procedures*; and conducted and wrote up a survey of *Employers' Association Officials*. John Hughes contributed a paper on *Trade Union Structure and Government*; George Bain wrote another on *Trade Union Growth and Recognition*; and Alan Fox on *Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations*. Ted Whybrew, another former Nuffield College doctoral student, summarised the findings of his thesis in *Overtime Working in British Industry*. The Commission's secretariat took responsibility for a paper on *Productivity Bargaining and Restrictive Practices*; and there were six other contributors to the series; but the preponderance of Oxford's share was unmistakeable.

Nor was this the end of Oxford's influence on the Commission. In 1965 Allan Flanders published an essay on *Industrial Relations: What is Wrong with the System?* in which he drew general conclusions from his study of Fawley, and posed questions which he evidently thought the Commission should try to answer. In November 1966 he submitted his evidence to the Commission, and revised it for publication in the following year under the title of *Collective Bargaining: Prescription for Change*. He indicated clearly where he thought reform must begin if the performance of British industrial relations was to be improved. In particular, he criticised (p. 61) `the chaotic state of relations between managements and shop stewards' which, he said, resulted

> in unofficial strikes and earnings drift; in under-utilisation of labour and resistance to change; in the growth of systematic overtime and the demoralisation of incentive pay schemes; in inequitable and unstable factory pay structures; in a general

> decline in industrial discipline; in an undermining of external regulation by industry-wide and other agreements; and in a weakening of control by trade unions and employers' associations over their members.

His main remedy for this state of affairs was that there must (p. 79) be a

> decided shift of emphasis in the conduct of industrial relations to the two levels where planning has progressively to evolve in interdependence and harmony, the nation and the firm. Trade unions and employers' associations can retain and even increase their importance as essential links between these two levels.

It was early in the following year (15 February 1968) that *New Society* published an article by Jeremy Bugler entitled `The New Oxford Group',[1] in which he claimed that Oxford had `emerged with as much hold over the positions which academics fill as industrial relations advisers to the government or official bodies as Eton had over a Macmillan cabinet'.

His list of names included almost everyone I have mentioned, except Kahn-Freund; and the three characteristics to which he directed his readers' attention were: firstly, `a rabid, and thorough-going, concern to get the facts about plant organisation right'; secondly, `their ideology is tempered with a thorough knowledge of the possible'; and, thirdly, `their discipline has extended from being motivated by a sympathy with trade unions to being motivated also by an understanding of management's problems and above all by the realisation that it is on the quality of the managers that rests the quality of life on the shop floor'.

During the summer of 1967 the Royal Commission emerged from reading mountains of written evidence, and listening to many, many hours of oral evidence, to consider what we should say in our report. Two or three descriptive chapters had been prepared by the secretariat, but they had scrupulously avoided pointing to conclusions. No agreed theme emerged from discussions at meetings of the Commission. I had now left Oxford for the chair of industrial relations at the new University of Warwick, where I returned to my desk to draft what I thought should be our theme. With revisions and additions, it now constitutes much of Chapters 3-5 of the report, beginning (Chapter 3, para 46):

> Britain has two systems of industrial relations. The one is the formal system embodied in the official institutions. The other is the informal system created by the actual behaviour of trade unions and employers' associations, of managers, shop stewards and workers.

It went on to argue that the two systems were often in conflict, and that most of the problems and the strife in British industrial relations derived from this conflict.

Copies were sent to all my colleagues on the Commission. We met to consider it. It was, said some of them, very readable, but not suitable for a Royal Commission report. Another pointed out that the report was in need of an analysis of all the material which we had accumulated, and here was at least an attempt at an analysis. George Woodcock, now general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, who had insisted that he must be a member of the Commission, said that he rather liked my draft. It had, he said, `a certain ring about it'. He asked for an adjournment to speak with me. He wanted to know whether I thought that I could `marry up' what I had written with the existing draft chapters, and with the chapters yet to be written. My reply was: `If I have to, I can.' The meeting resumed, and the upshot was a drafting committee of the secretary and assistant secretary of the Commission, Bill McCarthy, Otto and myself. We laboured for some months. There was a mass of material at our disposal. The argument that we should deal with every issue that had been raised, especially with every proposal for a change in the law, if only to put the case against it, was persuasive. I had been too optimistic in my reply to George Woodcock, who whispered to me when we gathered for the ceremony of signing the report on 24 May 1968: `You did not use your blue pencil enough.' I could not deny it. But at least nearly all the points that Otto, Bill and I wanted to see in the report were there; and Allan was reasonably satisfied with it. It must also be said that there were some startling omissions. For example, the report said almost nothing about industrial relations in the public sector which at that time employed about a quarter of Britain's labour force, and about a third of its trade unionists.

The aim of the report was to improve the standard of collective agreements and the performance of collective bargainers, particularly

at the level of the plant, and the Commissioners were agreed on the means of applying pressure to achieve these objectives. There should be an obligation on companies, initially those with over five thousand employees, to register their collective agreements, if any, with the Department of Employment and Productivity (as the Ministry of Labour was called at that time). This obligation should, we thought, prompt companies to review their agreements against the criteria set out in the report. In addition there should be a new independent body, the Commission on Industrial Relations, which should be responsible for the reform of collective bargaining - dealing with any problems emerging from the registration of agreements (and a considerable number of them might be expected); publishing information about the state and development of collective bargaining; conducting such investigations into industrial relations and industrial disputes in particular industries and companies as had previously been carried out by *ad hoc* courts of inquiry or committees of investigation; and dealing with disputes over trade union recognition.

So much was agreed by all twelve Commissioners. For the rest, there were a number of differences of opinion, with several `supplementary notes' and one `note of reservation' appended to the report, which was nevertheless signed by all twelve. The majority proposed that there should initially be no penalties upon companies, trade unions or trade unionists for failure to carry out the Commission's recommendations, but this should be reviewed in the light of experience. The majority was also opposed to the introduction of a legal penalty for breach of a collective agreement, for example by striking without having given the required period of notice - often advocated as a remedy for unofficial strikes. We argued that such a penalty would be unjust in the current state of industrial relations, and also ineffective. This issue should also be reviewed once there had been sufficient time to judge how effective the efforts of the Commission to reform collective bargaining had been.

The case against introducing these and other new penalties into British labour law was put by Otto in his beautifully-written restatement of the case for the `abstention of the law' from British industrial relations in the text of the report. By contrast, Andrew Shonfield, a financial journalist, wrote a powerful `note of reservation' in favour of a wider use of legal penalties in British industrial relations. He argued that `the deliberate abstention of the law from the activities of mighty subjects tends to diminish the liberties of the ordinary citizen and to place his welfare at risk'; and went on to propose several ways in which the law should be extended to exercise control in the conduct of industrial relations, but falling far short of Heath's Industrial Relations Act and Thatcher's labour legislation.

It was now for the government to decide what should be done with these proposals. The responsible Minister was Barbara Castle, who had recently been appointed Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity, with responsibility for incomes policy. By this time the incomes policy was limping badly, for which the government blamed the unions. Allan and I had severed our connections with the administration of the policy some time earlier, convinced that reform of collective bargaining was an essential preliminary to an effective incomes policy. The number of strikes, most of them unofficial, was rising fast towards an all-time peak, reached in 1970, for which the government also blamed the unions. Barbara Castle was convinced that the unions were becoming increasingly unpopular with the public, and that a majority of the electorate would welcome statutory limitation of trade union activities. She was also influenced by her two senior civil servants, who had come to the conclusion that the number of strikes could be reduced only by imposing legal penalties. Harold Wilson agreed with her, and in January 1969 a White Paper set out the government's proposals.

The need for a Commission on Industrial Relations was accepted, and the members were appointed in March. George Woodcock was chairman, and Allan Flanders was one of the members. However, other proposals were that the Secretary of State should be empowered to order a union to comply with the Commission's recommendations in an inter-union dispute; that she should have discretionary powers to require a ballot before an official strike which `would involve a serious threat to the economy and the public interest'; and that she should also be empowered to impose a `conciliation pause' of up to four weeks in strikes in breach of agreement (which were almost always also unofficial strikes) to allow discussions to take place.

Afterwards both Barbara Castle and her permanent under-secretary claimed that George Woodcock had indicated that there was nothing in the White Paper to upset the unions. He had certainly not even hinted at any time in the deliberations of the Royal Commission that he would be prepared to accept such proposals. They caused an uproar in the unions, which was not

abated by the announcement in April that the government were going to proceed with a short bill including their proposals for legislation on inter-union disputes, strike ballots and the `conciliation pause'.

Not only had Harold Wilson and Barbara Castle miscalculated the trade union response; they could not even rely on the support of their own Labour Party back-benchers in the House of Commons, many of whom had been elected with the `sponsorship' of their trade unions. The government was forced into a humiliating retreat. It was arranged that the General Council of the Trades Union Congress should call a special meeting of Congress to consider two proposals for changes in its rules; the first to forbid strikes in inter-union disputes until the issue had been investigated by the disputes committee of the General Council, and the second to empower the General Council to intervene in unauthorised strikes and to discipline unions which refused the Council's `assistance and advice' in these circumstances. The special meeting of Congress agreed to recommend that the annual meeting in September - which alone could alter the rules - should ratify these proposals, provided that the government dropped their legislative proposals for `statutory sanctions' against trade unions and trade unionists. The government complied, claiming that their `solemn and binding' agreement with the Trades Union Congress was an enormous advance in industrial relations.

Nothing more was heard of an Industrial Relations Bill of any kind. The Commission on Industrial Relations was left to do the best it could without any registration of collective agreements; and, so far as they were able, the government left the whole subject of industrial relations alone until the election of 1970, which they lost, making way for Heath's Conservative Government.

It is impossible to say for sure what would have happened if the Labour Government had accepted the report of the Royal Commission as it stood, but they would at least have avoided a head-on collision with the trade unions and the Parliamentary Labour Party. They would probably have been able to carry an Industrial Relations Bill modelled on the proposals of the report without difficulty. They would have avoided the derision of the media and the public at their attempt to present the undertaking which they had obtained from the Trades Union Congress - which was personified as `Solomon Binding' - as a famous victory. Whether all that would have been sufficient to enable them to avoid electoral defeat cannot be divined.

As it turned out, reform of industrial relations on the lines proposed by the Royal Commission has not been attempted by any government since then. Heath modelled his Industrial Relations Act on United States labour law; and it was smashed by trade union refusal to comply with the law. The subsequent Labour Government under, first Wilson, and then Callaghan, was far too concerned with finding new statutory rights to give to trade unions and their members in return for trade union support for their voluntary incomes policy, under what was known as the `Social Contract', to consider reviving the Commission's proposals. Their incomes policy was, in its turn, destroyed by industrial unrest in the `Winter of Discontent' of 1978-9, and Mrs. Thatcher won the subsequent election. Since then her policy of step-by-step legislative constraints to curb trade unions has so far defeated union challenges, and, until 1989, appeared to be delivering many of the results that it was intended to achieve.

Meanwhile the true disciples of the Royal Commission have been those managers of British companies who have carried through a reconstruction of their industrial relations at workplace level along much the same lines as the Commission's report had recommended, with considerable increases in productivity and a substantial decline in the incidence of strikes.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS: THE AFTERMATH

What has become of the Oxford School of Industrial Relations since the sixties? There is some truth in the quip that: `The Oxford School of Industrial Relations has moved to Warwick.' After the Commission's report was published I gave my time to building up a graduate school of industrial relations at Warwick, based mainly on a one-year master's course which seems to me the best vehicle for teaching the subject - to students who have already acquired a grasp of one or more of the social sciences in a first degree; and to developing the (then) Social Science Research Council's Industrial Relations Research Unit which was established at Warwick in 1970. I was joined by George Bain, and later by Allan Flanders, who left the Commission on Industrial Relations after Heath came to power, and took up a post at Warwick two years before his untimely death in 1973. Other Oxford graduates joined us along with graduates from other universities, followed later by some of our own graduates, until today the number of teachers and researchers in industrial relations at Warwick far exceeds that at any other British university. It might, therefore, appear that the Oxford School of Industrial Relations has been succeeded by the Warwick School of Industrial Relations. But there are considerable differences between the two. Industrial relations at Warwick has been concerned mainly with relatively detailed topics: problems of trade union organisation and government, company employment policies, payment structures, the operation of particular pieces of labour legislation, and with developing research techniques appropriate to the study of these topics. Much less attention has been given to the philosophy of industrial relations reform which occupied such a major position among the Oxford School's interests. It is my impression that most of the members of the current industrial relations group at Warwick regard the central theme of the Royal Commission's report with a fair degree of scepticism; and some of them would definitely repudiate it.

Industrial relations has continued to be a subject of study and research at Oxford. Otto Kahn-Freund continued to teach there until his retirement. Bill McCarthy succeeded to Allan Flanders' Senior Lectureship in Industrial Relations there. Alan Fox, Arthur Marsh and John Hughes continued there. The foundation of Templeton College, specialising in management studies, has brought other industrial relations teachers and researchers to Oxford. So that there was an Oxford School of Industrial Relations at Oxford, and still is. But its concerns and focus of interest have also changed.

However, if the term `Oxford School of Industrial Relations' is taken to denote a group of scholars who thought that they had diagnosed the major defects of the British system of industrial relations and that they could design a programme of action to correct them, there is today no such school. There once was such a school, and there was a moment when it appeared that there would be an opportunity for its ideas to be proved right or wrong. But the opportunity was snatched away; and since then the world has moved on.

NOTES

[1] The original `Oxford Group' was a religious organisation which attracted some attention between the wars.