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“Labor Anticommunism in the United States of America and the United Kingdom,
1920-1949”

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Why did domestic anticommunism convulse the United States during the early Cold War but barely cause a ripple in the United Kingdom? Contemporaries and historians have puzzled over the dramatic difference in domestic politics between the USA and the UK, given the two countries’ broad alignment on foreign policy toward Communism and the Soviet Union in that era. Making sense of British and American anticommunism requires an understanding of their pre-Cold War origins. One factor that has received little attention is the role that trade unions played in shaping the distinctive character of domestic anticommunism in each country. Decades before Winston Churchill warned of an Iron Curtain, trade union leaders in London and Washington contended with significant communist movements within their ranks and developed their own discourses of communist infiltration and subversion. “Unions are alive to the communist menace,” said the secretary of Britain’s Trades Union Congress in 1928, echoing the American Federation of Labor’s 1925 denunciations of “communist trickery” and attempts to “overthrow the bona fide labor movement.”¹

Mobilizing the working class was, after all, the overarching goal of communist parties everywhere, and union halls were the sites of sustained communist

¹ Walter M. Citrine, *Democracy or Disruption? An Examination of Communist Influences in the Trades Unions* (London 1928), 28, 4; *Proceedings of the Forty-fifth Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (1925), 91.

organizing. Thousands of union members and leaders debated communism, socialism, and democracy, and they produced uniquely laborist analyses and critiques of communism. But these debates played out very differently across the Atlantic. Comparing early British and American labor anticommunism reveals much about the trajectories that produced McCarthyism in the USA but not its analog in the UK. In Britain, socialist Trades Union Congress (TUC) leaders championed the Soviet Union from its inception and sought to sustain the “workers republic,” and while they spurned communism at home, the TUC largely tolerated its red members. In the USA, by contrast, conservative trade unionists in the American Federation of Labor (AFL) deplored both the Soviet Union and homegrown communist movements. AFL leaders evangelized about the evils of communism, not only to union members, but also to Congress and the American public, becoming a powerful anticommunist lobby and a leading authority on the CPUSA. In 1935, liberal unionists created the Committee for Industrial Organization, which formed a political counterweight to the AFL, but this bloc also contained strong anticommunist tendencies that only strengthened over time.²

The consequences of these differences became apparent after World War II. In both countries the labor movement had become increasingly embedded in the polity in the interwar years, via the New Deal in the USA and the growing strength of the Labour Party in the UK. The election of a Labour government in 1945 elevated TUC leaders to the Cabinet. The Labour government approached domestic communism much as interwar labor leaders had done: as a political movement to be opposed

² The CIO changed its name to the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1938.

rather than a conspiracy to be unmasked. The leadership of the TUC and the Labour Party periodically disagreed on policy matters, especially when Labour was in government, but relations between the unions and the party were always close, and on matters relating to communism, there was little light between them.³ Meanwhile American unionists remained on the political sidelines, more lobbyists than state actors. But the practices that anticommunist American trade unionists helped perfect—identifying clandestine communists, exposing them at dramatic Congressional hearings, and strategically red-baiting vulnerable enemies—became characteristic of the Cold War years. Comparison casts the unusual character of American labor anticommunists in sharp relief. In Britain, labor anticommunism operated within the mainstream of British politics, while in the USA, labor anticommunists played an outsized but underappreciated role in constructing the political culture and legal regime of postwar domestic anticommunism and McCarthyism.

In this essay, I sketch the broad outlines of Anglo-American labor anticommunism to show the evolution of anticommunist sentiment and practice within each labor movement from 1920 through the early years of the Cold War. I focus on the American Federation of Labor and the British Trades Union Congress, the national labor organizations that coordinated labor politics within their respective labor movements and in the broader polity. The study of unions as institutions has fallen out of fashion in recent years, but labor's institutions helped

³ On the relationship between the TUC and the Labour Party, see Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991); Hugh Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889*, vol. 2, 1911-1933 (Oxford, 1987); Ben Pimlott and Chris Cook, eds., *Trade Unions in British Politics* (London, 1991).

shape national political economy and culture. Both the AFL and the TUC were powerful political players, and they influenced not just internal union attitudes, but also state action—legislation, policing and prosecution, and foreign policy—and that influence continued in the early years of the Cold War. The AFL was always much larger than the CIO (more than double its membership by the mid-1940s) and the AFL's anticommunism had a correspondingly larger influence on the course of American politics.⁴

Comparing the USA and the UK has an obvious logic, given the ubiquity of the comparison during the McCarthy era and since (articulated early by Lord Vansittart in his remarks in 1950, when he told the House of Lords that British loyalty investigations had “nothing in common with the shy-making ballyhoo of Senator McCarthy—the very way not to handle matters of this kind.”)⁵ Historian David Caute threaded the comparison throughout *The Great Fear*, his study of McCarthyism: “we need only glance momentarily to notice,” he wrote, “that Britain also committed itself to a political and military alliance against the Soviet Union, *but without the corollary of domestic red-baiting and witch-hunting.*”⁶ The large literature on the

⁴ In 1938, three years after the founding of the CIO, the AFL had 3.5 million members, the CIO 1.9 million; by 1947, the AFL had 8.5 million members, the CIO 4.5 million. Leo Wolman, *Trade Union Membership, 1897-1962* (Washington, DC, 1965), 8.

⁵ *Hansard*, vol. 166, March 29, 1950, 609.

⁶ David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (London, 1978), 30 [emphasis in original.] Karen Potter makes a similar claim: “More spy scandals of the late 1940s and 1950s occurred in Britain than in the United States. Yet the United States reacted much more radically to the perceived Communist threat.” Potter, “British McCarthyism,” in Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones and Andrew Lownie, eds., *North American Spies: New Revisionist Essays* (Edinburgh, 1991), 143-157. For other comparative reflections, see Joan Mahoney, “Civil Liberties in Britain during the Cold War: The Role of the Central Government,”

Anglo-American 'special relationship' has explored exhaustively how "the idea of an aggressive communism hardened into an undeviating dogma" in Whitehall and Washington, explaining how an ostensibly socialist Labour government could compete with American policymakers in demonstrating their anticommunist credentials.⁷ But this special relationship took a much more attenuated form in domestic policy. Both states waged an aggressive campaign against the Soviet Union in the postwar years, while their approach to homegrown communists diverged. This divergence underscores the contingency of red-scare politics. McCarthyism didn't happen there, to borrow Seymour Martin Lipset's phrase, and it didn't have to happen in the USA either.⁸

The American Journal of Legal History, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Jan., 1989), pp. 53-100; Mahoney, "Constitutionalism, the Rule of Law, and the Cold War," in Tom Campbell, K.D. Ewing, and Adam Tomkins, eds., *The Legal Protection of Human Rights: Sceptical Essays* (Oxford, 2011), 127-147; Eleanor Bontecou, *The Federal Loyalty-Security Program* (Ithaca, 1953); Larry Ceplair, *Anticommunism in Twentieth-Century America: A Critical History* (Santa Barbara, 2011), 4-6; Reg Whitaker, "Cold War Alchemy: How America, Britain, and Canada Transformed Espionage into Subversion," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2000), 177-210. For a definitive study of McCarthyism, see Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston, 1998.)

⁷ John Saville, *The Politics of Continuity: British Foreign Policy and the Labour Government, 1945-46* (London, 1993), 58; see also Marc J. Selverstone, *Constructing the Monolith: The United States, Great Britain, and International Communism, 1945-1950* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); Hugh Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left, and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?* (London, 2004); Terry H. Anderson, *The United States, Great Britain, and the Cold War, 1944-1947* (Columbia, Mo., 1981); Giora Goodman, "The British Government and the Challenge of McCarthyism in the Early Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 62-97; Phillip Deery, "A Very Present Menace': Attlee, Communism, and the Cold War," *Australian Journal of Politics and Society*, vol. 44, no. 1 (1998), 69-93

⁸ Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York, 2000).

Historians have written a great deal about British and American communist labor movements and leaders, and much less on labor anticommunism. When unions appear in the historiography of domestic anticommunism, it is most often as targets, rather than originators, of anticommunist politics and policy. American labor anticommunism has received more systematic attention than British, and both literatures concentrate on the post-1945 years. Historians have documented how American unions drummed both communist members and entire unions out of the AFL and its more liberal competitor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, aided by the 1947 Taft-Hartley law that required union leaders to repudiate communism. Scholarship on anticommunism in British unions is less developed. It is visible most often in studies of communist organizing that describe the suppression of red activists by union leaders.⁹ Both literatures tend to treat labor anticommunism primarily as a reactive defense against anti-union assaults by employers and the state.¹⁰ In recent years, historians seeking to understand the rise of American conservatism have produced a shelf of books on anticommunist movements of conservative women, California engineers, and Southern segregationists.¹¹ This

⁹ Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions, 1933-1945* (Aldershot, 1995); Matthew Worley, *Class Against Class: The communist Party in Britain Between the World Wars* (London, 2002.)

¹⁰ See, for example, Shelton Stromquist, ed., *Labor's Cold War: Local Politics in a Global Context* (Urbana, IL, 2008); Robert W. Cherny, William Issel, and Kieran Walsh Taylor, *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2004); Nina Fishman, "The Phoney Cold War in British Trade Unions," *Contemporary British History*, 15, 3(2001), 83-104;

¹¹ Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), and George

revisionist scholarship is bringing us closer to a new synthesis of the popular politics of the Cold War. Labor anticommunism deserves a prominent role in that story. Anticommunism was one of the widest planks in the platform of modern American conservatism, and it provided a common politics that united heterogeneous constituencies.¹²

In Britain, on the other hand, a surge of scholarship on the domestic Cold War has not produced a comparable literature on British anticommunism, labor or otherwise, and the historian seeking a survey of anticommunist attitudes, movements, or policies will instead be struck by its absence. Indeed, the phrase ‘British anticommunism’ (hyphenated or not) scarcely appears in contemporary or historical accounts. While American anticommunism and its later manifestation, McCarthyism, have been variously described as a syndrome, a style, and a “great fear,” British anticommunism is a historiographical nonentity.¹³ This difference

Lewis, *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004).

¹² Jennifer Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism: Labor and Civil Liberties Between the World Wars* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2012); Victor Silverman, *Imagining Internationalism in American and British Labor, 1939–1949* (Urbana and Chicago, 2000); Markku Ruotsila, *British and American Anti-communism Before the Cold War* (London, 2001); “Leftward Ramparts: Labor and Anticommunism between the World Wars,” in Robert Justin Goldstein, ed., *Little ‘Red Scares’: Anti-Communism and Political Repression in the United States, 1921-1946* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 165-94; Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism: The Conflict that Shaped American Unions* (Princeton, 1977); Harvey A. Levenstein, *Communism, Anti-Communism, and the CIO* (Westport, Conn., 1981); Luff, “New Men of Power: Ronald Reagan, Jack Tenney, and Postwar Labor Anticommunism,” in *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change*, edited by Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza. London and New York: Routledge, 2013, 99-122.

¹³ In British historiography, “antisocialism” rather than anticommunism is a more common subject, and by and large writings on antisocialism examine it as a specific politics targeting socialism per se, not as a catch-all category that also encompassed anticommunism. See, for example, Kenneth D. Brown, “The Anti-Socialist Union,

surely derives from postwar domestic politics and not from international affairs, a realm where a developing Anglo-American “special relationship” drew British and American foreign policy ever closer in the effort to “contain” communism. There was no British analogue to the House Un-American Activities Committee, Senator Joseph McCarthy’s lists of alleged communist spies, the Hollywood blacklist, or the atomic espionage trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. In Britain, “there is no complacency, no panic, no hysteria” over communism, Lord Chancellor Viscount Jowitt told the House of Lords in March 1950, as he argued against purging the civil service of communists. “You cannot cast out Satan by means of Beelzebub.” British traditions of tolerance and civil liberties forestalled the paroxysms of reaction and repression that convulsed the U.S.¹⁴

Or so the story goes. The prevalence of this interpretation of Britain as “a peaceable kingdom during the global age of extremes” goes far toward explaining the absence of a literature on British anticommunism, but it is overdue for reconsideration.¹⁵ The makings of a reinterpretation can be found in the growing scholarship on the British “secret state,” which relies on the partially-released

1908-1949,” in Kenneth D. Brown, ed., *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (Basingstoke, 1974), 234-261; Arthur McIvor, “‘A Crusade for Capitalism’: The Economic League, 1919-1939,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23 (1988), 631-655; Ross McKibbin, “Class and Conventional Wisdom: The Conservative Party and the ‘Public’ in Inter-war Britain,” in McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain 1880–1950* (Oxford, 1990), 259–93; and McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures* 202-204, 529-31; and Laura Beers, “Counter-Toryism: Labour’s Response to Anti-Socialist Propaganda, 1918-39,” in Matthew Worley, ed., *The Foundations of the British Labour Party: Identities, Cultures, and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Farnham, 2009), 231-54.

¹⁴ *House of Lords Debates*, vol. 166, 649-51, March 29, 1950.

¹⁵ James Vernon, “The Local, the Imperial and the Global: Repositioning Twentieth-Century Britain and the Brief Life of its Social Democracy,” *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 21, 3 (2010), 407.

records of the British domestic intelligence agency, MI5, as well as Scotland Yard and the Metropolitan Police, to reconstruct the regimes of political policing that emerged during World War I. The full extent of police surveillance and repression of communists and other radicals, along with Irish nationalists and anticolonial activists, is only beginning to come into view.¹⁶ Likewise historians of British propaganda have uncovered the workings of the Foreign Office's Information Research Department, which operated as a sort of domestic Congress of Cultural Freedom beginning in 1947.¹⁷ Finally, scholars of civil liberties have taken square aim at the claim that the 'rule of law' protected political dissent in the twentieth century, an account that is, in the words of historians K.D. Ewing and C.A. Gearty, "at best complacent, and at worst wholly out of touch with reality."¹⁸ Historians of

¹⁶ Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford 2003); Peter Hennessy, *The Secret State: Preparing for the Worst, 1945-2010* (London: Allen Lane, 2002; rev. ed., 2010); Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London, 2009). Most scholarship on interwar civil liberties in Britain uses a framework of 'extremism' to describe state repression of both communists and Fascists. See, for instance, Gerald D. Anderson, *Fascists, Communists, and the National Government: Civil Liberties in Great Britain, 1931-1937* (Columbia, MO., 1983); K.D. Ewing and C.A. Gearty, *The Struggle for Civil Liberties: Political Freedom and the Rule of Law in Britain, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 2000); Janet Clark, *The National Council for Civil Liberties and the Policing of Interwar Politics*, Manchester, 2012.) Britain contended with a significant Fascist movement, the British Union of Fascists, led by Oswald Mosley, a former MP, and by the 1930s, fascism and Communism were linked in public discourse as 'extremist' movements. As numerous historians have noted, police disproportionately repressed communist-led movements, showing more solicitude for the political rights of Fascists; see, for example, Clark, *National Council for Civil Liberties*, 58.

¹⁷ Andrew Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda 1945-53: The Information Research Department* (London, 2004.)

¹⁸ Ewing and Gearty, *The Struggle for Civil Liberties*, v.

Britain have written widely on the cultural and social aspects of British cold war culture; the full extent of its repressive aspects has yet to be charted.¹⁹

In contrast to the relative dearth of scholarship on domestic labor anticommunism, we have a substantial literature on the postwar enlistment of trade unions in Cold War diplomacy. Even before the war ended, Anglo-American trade union leaders worked closely with their respective governments to sideline and stymie communist unions in Africa, Asia, and Europe, and particularly in the US, trade union leaders attained more authority in foreign policy than they ever exercised domestically.²⁰ The alacrity with which union officials embraced these roles is a clue to the depth of the hostility to communism they nurtured in the interwar years.

¹⁹ See, for example, the special issue on "Britain and the Cultural Cold War," *Contemporary British History*, vol. 19 (2005); Tony Shaw, "The Politics of Cold War Culture," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2001, pp. 59-76; Shaw, "The British Popular Press and the Early Cold War," *History*, vol. 83, no. 269 (January 1998), 66-85; Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War: The State, Propaganda and Consensus* (London, 2000).

²⁰ See, for example, Yvette Richards Jordan, "Race, Gender, and Anticommunism in the International Labor Movement: The Pan-African Connections of Maida Springer," *Journal of Women's History* 11, 2 (Summer 1999): 35-5; Geert Van Goethem and Robert Anthony Waters, Jr., eds., *American Labor's Global Ambassadors: The International History of the AFL-CIO during the Cold War* (New York, 2013); Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy* (New York, 1969); Edmund F. Wehrle, *Between a River and a Mountain: The AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2005); Geert Van Goethem, 'Labor's Second Front: The Foreign Policy of the American and British Trade Union Movements during the Second World War,' *Diplomatic History*, 34, 4 (2010), 663-680; Dennis MacShane, *International Labour and the Origins of the Cold War* (Oxford 1992); Peter Weiler, *British Labour and the Cold War* (Stanford, 1988); and Anthony Carew, "The Trades Union Congress in the International Labour Movement," in Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, and John McIlroy, eds., *British trade unions and industrial politics* (London 1999), 145-167 Richard Stevens, "Cold War Politics: Communism and Anti-Communism in the Trade Unions, *ibid*, 168-191.

Reconstructing the story of labor anticommunism begins with the formation of communist parties following the Bolshevik Revolution. Labor organizing always occupied a central place in communist thinking, as strikes and solidarity were believed to breed militancy and class consciousness. Early on, Lenin came to believe that it made more sense to radicalize existing unions than to try to start new ones. In 1920, he explained that this effort “must be waged ruthlessly, and it must unflinchingly be brought—as we brought it—to a point when all the incorrigible leaders of opportunism and social-chauvinism are completely discredited and driven out of the trade unions.”²¹ In Britain and the US, Communist Party strategy followed roughly the same lines: from 1921 to 1927, organize revolutionary blocs within existing trade unions; from 1927 to the early 1930s, organize independent communist unions; and from the early 1930s through the war, make a popular front against fascism. American and British communists, like their counterparts around the world, debated these strategies, often vociferously, but they generally respected Comintern decisions and faithfully tried to put them into action. Thus British and American trade unions experienced a similar approach from communist organizers and union members in the interwar years.²²

²¹ V.I. Lenin, *Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920), Marxist Internet Archive, (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/lwc/ch06.htm>), accessed 31 May 2014.

²² This quick summary of the CPUSA and CPGB relies on the very large body of scholarship on both parties that has been produced in the years since the Soviet Union opened its archives. Since then scholars have debated the extent of Comintern control over each party, a question that derives in large part from Cold War-era politics in which anticommunists criticized national CPs as tools of Moscow, and communists insisted on their independence and organic origins. Much research has demonstrated that at various times, individual communist activists pursued their own strategies and disregarded Comintern directives, but in general, the British and

The British and American communist parties were also roughly similar in this period. Both were very small and experienced rapid turnover of membership. The CPUSA's initial membership of about 20,000 fell below 10,000 in the 1920s; most members were working-class, and they were primarily foreign-born. The CPGB was likewise small, its membership hovering below 5,000 for most of the 1920s with a spike over 12,000 around the 1926 General Strike. In the Popular Front era, both parties boomed; the CPUSA's membership shot up to 75,000 in 1938, and the CPGB grew to nearly 20,000 members.²³ In both labor movements, communists built sizeable caucuses in the mining and textile unions in the 1920s, and in Britain among engineering workers as well. In the 1930s, communist activists were more dispersed across each labor movement, and especially in heavy manufacturing. While Germany, Italy, and other European countries had entire communist unions and federations, in the USA and the UK the CP mostly operated as a rump faction within existing unions.²⁴ Anglo-American communists displayed the Bolsheviks' characteristic pugnacity and flair for invective, regularly jeering the

American parties operated in accordance with international communist plans (demonstrated, most dramatically, in the parties' rapid switch of policy following the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939.) This debate seems to have run its course. In retrospect, surely the point of joining the communist Party was to affiliate local struggles with an international crusade that drew on the mighty resources of the Soviet Union, and party discipline was a logical corollary of this affiliation—not unlike the logic behind trade union affiliations to national and international bodies.

²³ Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York, 1984), 5, 367; Andrew Thorpe, *The British communist Party and Moscow, 1920-1943* (Manchester, 2001), 283-84.

²⁴ Cochran, *Labor and Communism*; Levenstein, *Communism, Anti-Communism, and the CIO*; Martin, *Communism and the British Trade Unions*; Nina Fishman, *The British communist Party and the Trade Unions, 1933-1945* (Aldershot, 1995).

“treachery” of the TUC and the “reactionaries, incompetents and crooks” heading the AFL.²⁵

The TUC and the AFL also resembled each other in many respects. Both federations were unruly coalitions of diverse unions, managed by councils of union leaders and structured to mediate disputes between unions and promote trade unionism as an end in itself. Both had thrown their full backing behind World War I, and their memberships boomed under unprecedented state oversight of industrial production and collective bargaining. Both were disappointed in the postwar retrenchment by governments that sidelined unions and rolled back labor protections. AFL unions lost a quarter of their membership by 1923, and TUC ranks dropped by nearly a third in the same period. On the surface, the conditions in each country looked quite similar.²⁶

But the differences are more significant. American unions operated in a two-party political system in which neither party was particularly friendly to labor, and union members were as likely to be Republicans as Democrats. The AFL functioned less as a political machine than a political lobby, and in the 1920s, the AFL achieved few of its legislative goals. An abortive effort in 1924 to mobilize a third-party challenger, the Progressive Party, collapsed ignominiously. Industrial militancy fell

²⁵ A.J.P. Taylor remarked of this tendency, “It is curious how Communists used outrageous phrases publicly and were indignant when such phrases were turned against them.” Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1945), 143 n1. “The Principles and Program of the Trade Union Educational League,” *Labor Herald*, March 1922; Solomon Lozovsky, *British and Russian Workers* (London, 1926), 7.

²⁶ For general discussions of the early interwar labor movement, see Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (Boston, 1960); H.A. Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions, vol. II, 1911-1933* (Oxford, 1985.) An insightful account by a contemporary can be found in R. H. Tawney, *The American Labor Movement and Other Essays* (New York, 1979.)

off, and trade unionism was in crisis. British unionists, on the other hand, had the Labour party, in which they exercised a strong hand as unions controlled the majority of party bloc votes, and the Labour party had emerged from the war years on the upswing, regularly polling a third of votes in national elections throughout the 1920s. The British labor movement operated in a climate of political possibility, and the formation of a short-lived minority Labour government in 1924 and another from 1929 to 1931 showed that labor could exercise real political influence. Union activists often clashed with Labour party leaders who showed more moderation in office than in their speeches to TUC conferences, but in Britain it was possible to believe that socialism—or at least trade unionism—was on the march.²⁷

In Britain, socialism and trade unionism went hand in hand. Most labor leaders fell somewhere between a moderate reformist socialism and a more radical Marxism. To radicals who organized in the communist Party, the moderation of both the TUC and the Labour Party betrayed the socialist vision and sold short both party and workers, and many historians have emphasized the ideological blur of the “classic English pragmatism, empiricism, and dogma” that was characteristic of the TUC.²⁸ It is important not to exaggerate the socialist commitments of TUC leaders, but rather to emphasize that there was little antisocialism among them. When

²⁷ On American labor and party politics in the 1920s, see Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism*; Bernstein, *The Lean Years*; Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, *History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932* (New York: MacMillan, 1935.) On the relationship between the TUC and the Labour Party, see Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991); David Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford, 2002); Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars* (London, 2005).

²⁸ Daniel F. Calhoun, *The United Front: The TUC and the Russians, 1923-1928* (Cambridge, 1976), 39.

contemporaries and historians described them as “conservative” the comparison was to radicals rather than to actual Conservatives.²⁹

In the USA, by contrast, antisocialism had become a central principle of the AFL by World War I. Skepticism about state power and doubts about the prospects of third parties in the American system led AFL president Samuel Gompers to deliver his famous riposte to socialist organizers in 1903: “Economically, you are unsound; socially you are wrong; industrially you are an impossibility.” While socialist and radical movements always swirled through AFL unions, federation leaders became increasingly hostile to even mild redistributive measures such as national health insurance or a minimum wage, believing that such initiatives undermined the impetus for unionism. During the Great War, AFL leaders attacked socialist pacifists as “traitors who talk peace and anti-Americanism and say they are for the working man.”³⁰ The stalwart conservatism of American union leaders drew the attention of social scientists such as Selig Perlman and Werner Sombart, who ventured an array of explanations ranging from prosperity to universal white manhood suffrage.³¹ For diffuse reasons, many American trade unionists preferred

²⁹ There were certainly working-class and trade union Conservatives, a majority in some districts, but there was very little relationship between trades unions and the Conservative Party; see Martin Pugh, “The Rise of Labour and the Political Culture of Conservatism, 1890-1945,” *History*, 87/88 (2002), 514-37; Peter Dorey, *The Conservative Party and the Trade Unions* (London, 1996.) At the same time, it is important to note that unions enrolled only a small share of the workforce, and as the Labour party only polled a third of the vote at best, most workers voted Conservative. Ross McKibbin has argued that “for much of the interwar period, [the Conservatives] were the working-class party *par excellence*.” McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class : Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford, 1990), 95.

³⁰ *New York Times*, September 10, 1917.

³¹ Perlman, *Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York, 1928); Sombart, *Why is There No Socialism in the United States?* (New York, 1905). On the origins of American

voluntarist unionism to a strong redistributive state. They were predisposed to dislike Soviet Communism.

This political backdrop goes a long way toward explaining AFL and TUC reactions to the Russian revolution. Gompers lamented the Bolshevik takeover and withdrawal from the Entente: “Benedict Arnold’s history sounds glorious beside that of Lenine and Trotzky [sic], who licked the boots of his imperial majesty, Wilhelm II, for peace.”³² AFL leaders publicly supported the 1918 invasion of Russia at Archangel, and they exhorted British and European trade unionists to do the same. Gompers and the AFL consistently and energetically lobbied against diplomatic relations between the USA and the USSR, and churned out a steady stream of anti-Soviet exposes. “Lenine is as great an enemy of democracy as the Czar,” declared the *American Federationist* in 1919.³³ Soviet subordination of unions to party particularly rankled AFL leaders. Labor antisocialism evolved swiftly and smoothly into an acrimonious labor anticommunism.

In Britain, by contrast, the TUC was an early supporter of the Hands Off Russia movement, which demanded withdrawal of British and American troops from Russia and diplomatic recognition of Russia, and sent a special delegation to advise Lloyd George of its views.³⁴ In August 1920, the TUC, the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour threatened a general strike if the government followed

labor conservatism, see Victoria Hattam, *Labor Visions and State Power: The Origins of Business Unionism in the United States* (Princeton, 1993); Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917* (Cambridge, 1998); and Robin Archer, *Why is There No Labor Party in the United States?* (Princeton, 2007).

³² *Washington Post*, February 13, 1918.

³³ “This Thing Called Bolshevism,” *American Federationist*, March 1919, p. 232.

³⁴ Calhoun, *United Front*, 32-33.

through on threats of war with Russia over Poland. Meanwhile the TUC and the Labour party sent a joint delegation to Russia, where they were greeted with feasts and parades. To Soviet leaders, it looked as though Britain might be the next revolutionary front. As for the USA, Lenin allowed that “it may take a long time before help can come from you, comrades, American Workingmen.”³⁵

Thereafter, the AFL remained hostile, and the TUC friendly, toward the Soviet Union. Domestic communism raised a more immediate challenge, however, for both labor movements. William Z. Foster, a veteran labor organizer, turned his Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) into the industrial arm of the CPUSA. The TUEL deplored the “conservative trade union bureaucracy,” proposing to “replace them with militants, with men and women unionists who look upon the labor movement not as a means for making an easy living, but as an instrument for the achievement of working-class emancipation.”³⁶ Over the next several years, the TUEL organized factions in dozens of AFL unions around bread-and-butter issues like merging small unions into large ones and forming a labor party. Among miners and textile workers, and in cities like Seattle and Chicago, the TUEL made real headway.³⁷

But it didn’t take long for AFL leaders to beat back the challenge. Gompers and his allies cast the TUEL as a Soviet plot, and organized a systematic purge of TUEL activists and leaders, driving them out of the unions. “Our officers in the

³⁵ Nikolai Lenin, *A Letter to American Workingmen* (New York: Socialist Publication Society, 1918), 15. Philip Scheidemann was a pro-war German Socialist leader and member of the Reichstag in 1918.

³⁶ Foster, “Principles and Program of the Trade Union Educational League.”

³⁷ For the TUEL, see James R. Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism* (Chicago, 1999), and Edward Johanningsmeier, *Forging American Communism: The Life of William Z. Foster* (Princeton, 1994).

National unions and in the local unions are constantly watching for them, and where we find that they are avowed communists," a union official explained later, "they are found guilty and expelled."³⁸ These moves were often ratified by the AFL membership. In 1923, when a communist organizer managed to get a credential as a delegate to the AFL convention, the convention voted 27,837 to 108 in favor of his banishment. The AFL had established a definitive policy that Communism would not be tolerated in the federation.³⁹ Increasingly, AFL leaders framed their anticommunism in sweeping, jingoistic terms. "We stand for America, a democratic America, and we want the world to understand that fact," declared the Federation in 1925. The AFL would "use every honorable method to protect its own integrity against the corrupting, disintegrating, devastating preachings of communism."⁴⁰

Meanwhile in Britain, the TUC convened an Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Committee in 1924. In their opening declarations, the British aspired to "endeavour to promote international unity by using its mediatory influence," while Soviets hoped that the Anglo-Russian committee would enact the "fervent desire of the broadest mass of workers in every country" to erect a "barrier against capitalist reaction."⁴¹ Historian Daniel Calhoun has recorded the remarkable intensity of this effort; numerous leaders of the TUC, including the future general secretary Walter Citrine, met repeatedly with such Soviet officials as Solomon Lozovsky and Mikhail

³⁸ House Special Committee to Investigate communist Activities, *Investigation of communist Propaganda*, vol. 1, 75.

³⁹ Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism*, 105-107.

⁴⁰ *Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, DC, 1925), 334.

⁴¹ *Report of the Proceedings at the 57th Annual Trades Union Congress* (London, 1927), 299-300.

Tomsky, in Moscow and London, to hash out the relationship. It was an extraordinary example of transnational labor diplomacy.⁴² (In 1925, a TUC official traveled to the AFL convention in 1925 to enlist them in this cause. “I say that you, workers of America, have much to learn from Russia,” he told the convention. AFL leaders scoffed “it is almost impossible to understand how any thoughtful democratic national labor movement could be so deceived as to lend the color of its support to such a treacherous proposal.”⁴³)

But the CPGB made less progress in signing up communist members from the rank and file. The Comintern began preparing a “separate opposition trade union movement” within the TUC that could “convert the revolutionary minority within each industry into a revolutionary majority,” and to this end formed the National Minority Movement (NMM). This effort was viewed skeptically by TUC leadership, who were “disdainfully contemptuous of native communists, uncritically respectful of Russian communists, and loath to acknowledge any connections between them.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the TUC leadership reacted mildly to the NMM, and took few steps to hamper its initial efforts.⁴⁵ Far from expelling communist activists, the TUC responded to their proposals and took account of their ideas. Indeed, TUC president A.A. Purcell expressed his sympathy with their vision, stating, “Our aim is not merely

⁴² On the Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Committee, see Calhoun, *United Front*; Gabriel Gorodetsky, *The Precarious Truce: Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1924-27* (Cambridge, 1977).

⁴³ *Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor* (Washington, DC, 1925), 142, 333.

⁴⁴ Calhoun, *United Front*, 82.

⁴⁵ Martin, *National Minority Movement*, 55-66.

to build big unions,” but instead “changing the existing structure of capitalist society and bringing into being a Workers’ State.”⁴⁶

The close ties between the TUC and the Comintern stirred the national newspapers and the Conservative Party: the “General Council seems to be dominated now by pro-communists,” declared the *Times*.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Labour Party faced its own red scare. In late 1923, a snap election resulted in the surprise formation of a minority government led by the Labour Party. The short-lived government was dogged by red-baiting, fueled by Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald’s efforts to negotiate diplomatic and trade relations with the Soviet Union. When the government dropped a planned prosecution of a communist editor, MacDonald lost the support of Liberals in Parliament. Days before the election, newspapers published the “Zinoviev letter,” which purported to be an intercepted communication from the Comintern president urging communists to agitate among British soldiers. The letter also suggested that efforts like the Anglo-Russian committee’s “exchange of delegates and workers” would help “extend and develop the propaganda of ideas of Leninism in England and the colonies.”⁴⁸ “Civil War Plot

⁴⁶ *Report of the Proceedings at the 54th Annual Trades Union Congress* (London, 1924), 73.

⁴⁷ *Times*, May 8, 1925.

⁴⁸ Zinoviev letter, National Archives, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/coldwar/G1/cs2/cwar.pdf> (accessed 18 July 2014.) On the complex history of the Zinoviev letter, see Gill Bennett, *“A Most Extraordinary and Mysterious Business”: The Zinoviev Letter of 1924* (London, 1999).

by Socialist Masters,” read the *Daily Mail* headline, and the Conservatives swept the elections.⁴⁹ Labour’s support for the Soviet Union had helped drive it from power.

But the labor movement maintained its friendly stance through the Anglo-Soviet Committee, and with the NMM. It was the 1926 General Strike that soured the relationship. The story of the strike is well-known: the miners’ union was locked out by employers seeking wage concessions, and the TUC called a general strike in their support, which proved far more successful and popular than expected. Yet after nine days TUC leaders called off the strike without securing any concrete gains.

Opprobrium rained down on the heads of TUC leaders, and much of it came from the CPGB and the Comintern, which sought repeatedly to donate \$1 million to the TUC General Council in aid of the strike. The General Council declined the funds, but could not escape the many critiques of their conduct by Communists. Stalin himself explained, in a speech to Russian railway workers, that “the leaders of the General Council proved to be either direct traitors to the coal miners and the working class of England in general,” or worse, “weak-willed fellow-travelers of these traitors who dreaded the struggle and, still more, a victory of the working class.”⁵⁰ Such remarks began to get under the skin of the leaders of the TUC. “We have exhibited patience and submitted to abuse which would have made some of us refuse to sit in

⁴⁹ For a recent discussion of the fall of MacDonald’s government that emphasizes the centrality of Soviet-British relations, see Keith Laybourn, “The Fall of the First MacDonald Government, 1924,” in Timothy Heppell and Kevin Theakston, eds., *How Labour Governments Fall: From Ramsay MacDonald to Gordon Brown* (London, 2013), 14-37.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Morton H. Cowden, “Soviet and Comintern Policies toward the British General Strike of 1926,” *World Politics*, 5 (July 1953), 524.

conference with members of our own movement,” Citrine told the TUC convention in 1927.⁵¹

Consequently, the TUC began to edge away from the communists. In 1926 the Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee ceased meeting, and the General Council announced that it would no longer recognize local trades councils that were affiliated with the NMM. Walter Citrine, TUC general secretary, published a series of articles decrying the “influence of communists in trade unions,” describing the web of organizations and front groups through which the CPGB operated. The TUC had been naïve, he wrote: “we were optimistic enough to believe that the steadying influence and shrewd practical commonsense” of the British would prevent “communist influence within our unions,” but instead the TUC had been “distracted and confused by savage criticism.”⁵²

At the same time, the Labour Party moved more strongly against the CPGB. In 1925, the party’s conference voted against the CPGB’s application to affiliate to the Labour Party. The following year, Labour general secretary Arthur Henderson reiterated the decision in a party circular that quoted Comintern directives that communist “party allegiances must supersede all other responsibilities.” Thus CPGB members could not be fully loyal Labourites. Henderson indicated the growing distance between party policy and TUC policy: “There has never been any doubt at the Head Office,” he wrote, “as to the tactics that have been constantly pursued by the communist Party to disrupt our movement, but the position has not been so

⁵¹ *Report of the Proceedings at the 59th Annual Trades Union Congress* (London, 1927), 359-60.

⁵² Walter Citrine, *Democracy and Disruption* (London, 1928), 5.

clear to many supporters of the Party in our affiliated Trade Unions and Local Labour Parties.”⁵³ The TUC’s shift had emboldened Labour Party leaders, who had held their fire until “confident that their trade union counterparts were prepared to comply.”⁵⁴

The stakes were high for the CPGB, which had gained some protection under the shelter of labor’s support. In October 1925, twelve CPGB leaders were arrested on charges of sedition, and party offices raided. Harry Pollitt, a Party leader, also blamed the labor movement: “we were expelled from the Labour movement, and [the government] thought that, seeing we were isolated, seeing we were unpopular, seeing that the official movement had in its own way disowned us, then was the time to attack, so that the official Labour Movement would not come to our assistance.” The jury voted to convict all twelve defendants and sentenced them to prison terms.⁵⁵

By the late 1920s, the TUC seemed to be heading toward the same policy of the AFL: anticommunist invective and expulsions. In both federations, communist critiques and challenges of union leaders and authority provoked a violent anticommunist reaction. Labour’s anticommunist reaction gathered steam. In 1928, the TUC voted to launch an inquiry into the “Dangers of Disruption” within its ranks, with special attention to “sinister, scurrilous, and unfair” criticism and opposition by outside groups, “the chief of which are the communist Party and the National

⁵³ Labour Party Circular, July 2, 1926, in Trades Union Congress archives, MSS.292/770/1.

⁵⁴ Howell, *MacDonald’s Party*, 404.

⁵⁵ “Communist Party on Trial: Harry Pollitt’s Defense,” TUC Papers, Mss. 292/770/2; Ewing and Gearty, *Struggle for Civil Liberties*, 136-44; *The Economist*, November 28, 1925, 886.

Minority Movement.” The AFL praised the TUC’s turnabout: “American labor is in absolute accord with this clear-cut declaration of policy from Great Britain,” announced the federation.⁵⁶

In practice, however, the TUC crackdown turned out to be quite mild. The TUC kicked the communists out, but they didn’t leave. Few unions actually expelled any communists, and the TUC did not order any such expulsions. On the contrary, the TUC permitted unions to send communist delegates to its congresses, as Citrine patiently explained to confused unions inquiring about the TUC’s policy.⁵⁷ By and large communists continued to operate in the TUC as they had before, albeit with somewhat more discretion. This was made easier by the Comintern’s new policy, announced in 1927, that communists should organize independent unions rather than “bore from within.” The CPGB dawdled and resisted doing so, organizing only two separate unions, before the Comintern’s policy changed again. Given the party’s relatively safe berth within the TUC, it made no sense to try to break away.

One reason for the TUC’s restraint was the disinterest in its affiliated unions in taking strong action. In response to its internal investigation on the “dangers of disruption,” the TUC received reports from 124 affiliated unions. Of those replies, 92 indicated that there had been no communist disruption at all, and 32 reported some. The TUC general council considered this response to indicate “some reluctance” on

⁵⁶ *American Federationist*, October 1928, 1172.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, TUC Assistant Secretary to Mr Owen A. Rattenbury, January 29, 1929: “I may tell you, however, that there is nothing in the Trade Union Congress Standing Orders making a communist ineligible as a delegate to Congress. All that is necessary is that he should be an accredited delegate of his Trade Union, and either actually working at his trade or a permanent paid working official of the Union.” There are numerous such letters in the collection. TUC Papers, MSS 292.770.1.

the part of unions to “give advertisement to communist and minority movements.”⁵⁸ Numerous unions had taken their own action in 1927 and 1928: the Amalgamated Engineering Union voted to condemn the NMM and the CP by a vote of 41 to 11; and the Miners Federation passed a similar resolution by a vote of 620,000 to 8,000. A few unions took more severe steps, such as the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, which expelled 18 members and dissolved branches with communist ties.⁵⁹ The Shop Assistants Union prepared a declaration for its elected officials requiring them to declare: “I am not a member of the communist Party or the National Minority Movement.”⁶⁰ But the TUC’s investigation found these actions to be outliers rather than widespread, and there was little internal pressure to move against the CP.⁶¹ The TUC practiced tolerance.⁶²

This tolerance extended beyond its membership, as the TUC regularly protested the arrest and prosecution of Communists. For example, during the 1925

⁵⁸ Trades Union Congress General Council, “Memorandum for the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Disruption,” TUC archives, MSS.292/773/9/2.

⁵⁹ Thorpe, *British Communist Party and Moscow*, 107. Numerous unions had taken their own action in 1927 and 1928: the Amalgamated Engineering Union voted to condemn the NMM and the CP by a vote of 41 to 11; and the Miners Federation passed a similar resolution by a vote of 620,000 to 8,000. A few unions took more severe steps, such as the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, which expelled 18 members and dissolved branches with communist ties; “Recent Trade Union Decisions Re Communist and Minority Movements,” in Trades Union Congress archives, MSS.292/773/9/2.

⁶⁰ J.R. Leslie to Walter Citrine, August 2 1928, in Trades Union Congress archives, MSS.292/770/1.

⁶¹ “Recent Trade Union Decisions Re Communist and Minority Movements,” in Trades Union Congress archives, MSS.292/773/9/2.

⁶² Historian Roderick Martin suggests that this tolerance grew out of “a genuine reluctance to apply political tests for union membership, paralleling an earlier reluctance to apply religious tests, and partly because communist policies in the international and industrial field were often merely an extension of their own.” Martin, *Communism and the British Trade Unions*, 54.

communist trial, the TUC registered “its emphatic protest” against a proceedings “animated by the political prejudice of the present Government.”⁶³ When MI5 raided Arcos, the Soviet trading agency, in 1927, TUC leaders formally protested to the Prime Minister, despite the developing rancor toward the Soviet Union among the General Council.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most striking example of TUC’s defenses of the civil liberties of communists came in the case of Percy Glading, who was an grinder at the Royal Navy’s Woolwich Arsenal, and a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU). Glading was fired in October 1928 on the grounds that he was an avowed communist and would not renounce his views. Glading appealed to his union for help. The AEU brought the matter to the TUC General Council, which spent the next four months in dogged pursuit of the case. In a formal meeting on February 4, a TUC delegation met with Labour Party officials at the House of Commons to discuss the matter. TUC delegates demanded to know “in what way as a workman Mr Glading had transgressed the conditions of employment at the Arsenal, and further, it ought to be made clear as to whether the Government would adopt this policy of dismissal to, say, a Socialist.” The Labour MPs hemmed and hawed, reluctant to bring the matter up on the floor of Parliament as “political capital might be made out of the question.” The TUC barraged Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin with inquiries and demands for further information. Percy Glading did not get his job back, and the Admiralty did not change its policy, but the TUC had made clear its view that

⁶³ *Report of the Proceedings at the 56th Annual Trades Union Congress* (London, 1926), 274.

⁶⁴ Gabriel Gorodetsky, *The Precarious Truce: Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1924-27* (Cambridge, 1977), 247; Saville, *The Politics of Continuity*, 218.

“employees of any government department should be entitled to freedom of thought in so far as political matters were concerned.”⁶⁵ TUC leaders had defended the civil liberties of a communist member, even as the TUC was speaking against communist organizers within its ranks.⁶⁶

The AFL, on the other hand, collaborated in crackdowns on Communists. AFL leaders used their confidential contacts with the early federal Bureau of Investigation during and after WWI to pass along intelligence about communist organizers (including the one expelled from the AFL’s 1923 convention.) Federation leaders consulted with Justice Department lawyers preparing to try William Z. Foster on sedition charges in 1923. At one point in the early 1920s, an AFL staffer, Ellis Searles, had his own desk set up in the BI headquarters for consulting its files

⁶⁵ “Report of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and Representatives of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Held in the Whips Room, House of Commons, on Monday 29 February at 4pm,”; “Subject: Freedom of Thought, Dismissed communist, 1928; and “Draft: AEU Dismissal of Member at Woolwich Arsenal,” October 25, 1928, in Trades Union Congress Papers, MSS. 292/771/21/2.

⁶⁶ Ten years later, Percy Glading was arrested by MI5 for violating the Official Secrets Act. Glading had organized an espionage ring among his former colleagues at Woolwich Arsenal to smuggle photographs of weapons under development. Glading and two others were convicted in May 1938 and Glading was sentenced to six years hard labor. The Woolwich Arsenal case was one of the few spy rings that MI5 managed to discover in the 1930s. Although the newspapers had reported on the TUC campaign on Glading’s behalf in 1928, there was no mention of it in the press in 1938. The TUC must have been relieved.

As it turned out, the AEU had stumbled upon a secret governmental policy barring Communists from the British civil service, of which Glading was one of the earliest victims. The AEU subsequently wrote to Prime Minister Baldwin to inquire further about this policy and to request that it be publicly disclosed; the government subsequently denied the very existence of the policy itself. Yet an unknown number of civil servants were subsequently dismissed over the next decade under this ban on Communists in the civil service. On this ban, see Jennifer Luff, “Covert and Overt Operations: Interwar Political Policing in the United States and the United Kingdom,” forthcoming.

on communists. But this relationship ended with J. Edgar Hoover's takeover of the BI in 1924. The legal authority for surveilling communists and other political radicals had expired with the wartime Sedition Act in 1920. Although the Federation regretted the loss of BI intelligence, AFL leaders opposed the enactment of a peacetime sedition law that would criminalize Communism and subversion. Such a law, they feared, could be easily wielded against strikes and labor boycotts. A better approach, they argued, was exposure: identify and publicize Communists and their activities, and Americans would shun them. AFL leaders earned a reputation as reliable leaders in the fight against communism. "I believe your organization is entitled to the gratitude of the Congress of the United States and of the American people," Republican Congressman Hamilton Fish remarked in 1930; "the American Federation of Labor has been a bulwark and has consistently exposed and combatted communistic and revolutionary activities."⁶⁷

Through the 1920s, the TUC grew more averse to communists within its ranks, but its leaders rarely questioned the legitimacy of the CPGB and did not endorse broader crackdowns on the party. In interwar Britain, anticommunist politics was not the province of Labour, but belonged to Conservatives like Winston Churchill and William Joynson Hicks, who regularly redbaited both Labour politicians and trade unionists. In the US, neither the Republican nor Democratic parties troubled much over Communism after the first red scare.⁶⁸ Denouncing reds

⁶⁷ U.S. House, Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States, *Investigation of Communist Propaganda: Hearings on H. Res. 220*, 71st Congress, 2nd Sess, Part 1, vol. 1, 47.

⁶⁸ As Alex Goodall remarks, "both Republicans and Democrats developed deep internal splits that sharply reduced the value of countersubversion as a political

became the cause of a fringe movement of antiradicals. But for the AFL in these years, anticommunism became a philosophical tenet, figuring much more centrally for the labor movement than it did in mainstream politics.

By the early 1930s, two distinctive styles of labor anticommunism had taken shape in the AFL and the TUC. The upheavals of the 1930s disrupted both. The Comintern's declaration of a Popular Front sent communist organizers back into the ranks of the unions, while mounting popular admiration for the Soviet Union and its strong economic performance during the Depression produced a new upsurge of membership outside the unions. In Britain, TUC leaders who had just disentangled themselves from the Party were reluctant to link arms again so soon. TUC leaders resisted calls to form a Popular Front, increasingly vehemently. In October 1934, the TUC issued Circular 16, termed the "Black Circular" by the CPGB, which formally barred communists from admission to trades councils. In this case, the impetus came largely from the Labour Party leadership, which had formally rejected a united front in the same month. But as before, the Black Circulars had little practical effect, and communist organizers continued to circulate with little interference.⁶⁹

tool, moved the government away from activist positions, and sidelined countersubversive celebrities....federal countersubversive politics was more or less stopped in its tracks." Goodall, *Loyalty and Liberty: American Countersubversion from World War I to the McCarthy Era* (Urbana, IL, 2013), 88.

⁶⁹ On the vitality of communist organizing after the bans, see Fishman, *British Communist Party and the Trade Unions* (e.g., "The most prominent union leader in the 1930s, TGWU General Secretary Ernest Bevin, publicly fulminated against the subversive activities of the Communist Party. But Bevin also worked with Party members daily and relied on their efforts on the shopfloor to recruit more members." Fishman, 4). An important exception, however, emerged during the 1936 London busmen's strike, when Bevin suspected communist influence behind a

In the USA, the ripples from the Popular Front helped crack the labor movement in two. The New Deal's promotion of unionization fractured the AFL when liberal union leaders bolted the federation and launched a competing one, the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO.) Although many CIO leaders were veteran anticommunists, they needed organizers, fast. The CPUSA, newly flush with members and eager to implement the Popular Front policy, offered its troops. Thus while the TUC continued to hold the CP at arms-length, a sizeable wing of the American labor movement pulled party activists in. Several hundred CPUSA organizers joined the CIO payroll, and they were admired by union leaders for their "sophistication, some education, some training" in organizing tactics. As in Britain, American communist organizers were discreet about their allegiances, hoping to prove the merits of Communism by demonstrating their loyalty and diligence.⁷⁰

When AFL leaders discovered this new alliance, they were astonished—and outraged. Their long experience in tracking communists had given them good intelligence sources and a thick dossier on the Party. They approached Martin Dies, a Texas Democrat heading a Congressional committee to investigate Communism and Fascism, and offered to share their files. When the Dies Committee began its

rank-and-file movement. The Transport and General Workers suspended several strike leaders and expelled two avowed communists. They were reinstated in 1938, and one of the expelled communists was elected to the TUC General Council in 1944. H. Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889, vol. III: 1934-1951* (Oxford, 1994, 150-54, 308.

⁷⁰ "The Reminiscences of John Edelman," Columbia Oral History Program, 176-177. On the CPUSA and the CIO, see Robert Zieger, *The CIO* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1995), 253-293, and Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York, 1984); on the conflict between AFL and CIO, see Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935-1941* (Cambridge, MA, 1960).

hearings in August 1938, AFL official John P. Frey was the third witness.

Communists had invaded the labor movement, Frey announced, and they dominated the CIO, following “Moscow’s instructions to ‘bore from within’ the American labor movement.” He named names: union organizers, the members of the CPUSA national leadership, and even some union officers. Frey’s intelligence was solid, and the news exploded like a bombshell. The Dies Committee became a great engine of a new red scare.⁷¹ In the aftermath of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, a flood of new legislation proposed limits on the political organizing of communists and fascists. While the AFL had stood with other civil libertarians in the 1920s and 1930s to oppose such laws, now the situation had changed. The AFL endorsed the Hatch Act, which banned communists from serving in the federal civil service, in 1939. In 1940, the Federation lobbied for the Smith Act, which effectively criminalized membership in the Communist Party. In the late 1930s, labor anticommunists moved beyond union bans and expulsions to helping to erect the legal architecture of anticommunism and McCarthyism.⁷²

In these years, AFL officials also began to redbait Roosevelt administration officials. In contrast to liberal CIO unionists who championed the New Deal, conservative AFL officials were on the sidelines, and had little say in labor policymaking. They were particularly frustrated by labor-policy officials who seemed to favor the CIO’s mass unions. Beginning in 1937, AFL officials charged that Communist sympathies motivated National Labor Relations Board officers. As Green

⁷¹ Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism*, 156-68.

⁷² Luff, *Commonsense Anticommunism*, 187-213.

put it, “many employees of the Board are radical-minded, if not communistic.”⁷³ This tendency to paint the New Deal red was not unique to the AFL, of course; conservative bankers and industrialists had done so since the early 1930s. What stood out was the AFL’s targeted redbaiting of specific officials, based on careful research, with the intent of rolling back particular policies. What also became clear in these years was how far the AFL had drifted from mainstream liberal labor politics. Its conservatism put AFL leaders outside the New Deal, but at the forefront of anticommunist politics.

In the 1930s, both the AFL and the TUC had become more hostile to communism. During the war, their trajectories diverged. While the Soviet entry into the Allied coalition froze in place American labor anticommunism, British trade unionists became markedly more friendly to the CPGB. At war’s end, Labour Party leaders assumed the levers of state power, and Ernest Bevin, head of the Transport Workers and avowed anticommunist, became Foreign Secretary. A strong left wing checked the anticommunism of the interwar years. “Bevin and the other Labour leaders frequently had to temper what they said in public if they wanted to avoid criticism. The same was true for the leaders of the TUC,” according to Weiler,” who found their own diplomacy restricted by the pro-Soviet sentiments of the rank and

⁷³ *Fortune*, February 1939, 97. In fact, there was a significant Communist presence among NLRB staff and leaders; as usual, the AFL’s information was correct. Yet historians have found little evidence that Communists in the NLRB exerted any special influence. The NLRB enacted Administration policy, which sought mass unionization as a means to inflate the economy. What AFL officials perceived as a pro-CIO bias derived from Keynesian economics, not Communist ideology.

file.”⁷⁴ While Bevin and Attlee angled against the Soviet Union for influence in Europe and developed a foreign policy that was increasingly hostile to the Soviets, the Labour government made little effort to propagate anticommunist sentiment at home in 1946 and 1947. As Weiler shows, although the Cabinet’s interdepartmental Russia Committee prepared a plan for a domestic propaganda campaign, Bevin and Labour Party officials refused to use it, as “the Soviet Union’s popularity within the labour movement remained much too strong.”⁷⁵ One measure of this strength was the reception given by TUC delegates to AFL leader George Meany, who visited the TUC convention in September 1945. When he denounced the Soviet Union and its “system of worker blacklists and deportation to labour camps,” delegates shouted “Shame!” and “That is entirely wrong.”⁷⁶

Meanwhile, armistice gave AFL anticommunists license to resume their anticommunist attacks. In July 1945, AFL president William Green urged a group of textile workers to vote against joining the CIO, “a communist-dominated organization taking orders from Soviet Russia” which had sought to “cripple America’s national defense program” before the war.⁷⁷ Throughout 1946 and early 1947 AFL leaders continued to redbait the CIO, claiming its leaders “openly followed the Communist line,” despite the fact that a number of CIO unions had also begun to sideline and expel Communists. Walter Reuther, elected president of the United Auto Workers in March 1946, was the most prominent of these CIO

⁷⁴ Weiler, *British Labour and the Cold War*, 190.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁷⁶ Trades Union Congress, *General Council’s Report to the 77th Annual Congress* (London, 1945), 355.

⁷⁷ *New York Times*, 23 July 1945.

anticommunists.⁷⁸ Their tireless efforts cemented an image of the AFL as antiradical. FBI head J. Edgar Hoover told Congress in 1947: “The Communists have long viewed with envy the A.F. of L,” where “they admit they play a very small role,” in contrast to the CIO, whose members had been “outwitted, outmaneuvered, and outwaited by Communists.”⁷⁹

Moreover, when they disagreed with federal policy, Federation officials continued to insinuate that red influences were at work. In 1946, when the Truman administration intervened in a steel strike by approving steel price increases, Green complained that “the disturbing element in this situation is the collusion between those persons in the Government seeking to perpetuate government controls or regimentation for their own purposes and Communist leaders in unions who seek to discredit collective bargaining and free enterprise.”⁸⁰ His implication of closet Communist sympathies in the government was quite clear. That same year, the AFL convention heard a report read by John Frey that warned that “for reasons which it is difficult to understand,” the CPUSA had installed “dependable members in many of the Federal departments, including the Department of State.”⁸¹ It is worth reiterating that these practices preceded the tensions of the early Cold War. Indeed, AFL leaders were among the earliest American voices clamoring for a confrontation

⁷⁸ *New York Times*, May 12, 1946; on Reuther, see Nelson Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit* (New York, 1995), 249-270. On the CIO and Communism, see Robert Zieger, *The CIO*, 253-294.

⁷⁹ U.S. House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., March 26, 1947.

⁸⁰ William Green, “The American Federation of Labor’s Wage Policy,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 248 (November 1946), 4.

⁸¹ *Proceedings of the American Federation of Labor, 65th Convention* (Washington, 1946), 554.

with the Soviet Union. “The time has come to call a halt to the aggressive tactics of Soviet Russia and her Communist dependencies,” Green told a convention of Illinois unionists in September 1946. “With us, America is always right and it is Russia now this is [sic] always wrong.”⁸²

In both the US and the UK, trade union officials played a prominent role in postwar foreign policy, and veteran labor anticommunists such as Jay Lovestone and Irving Brown in the US and Walter Citrine in the UK advised their governments on labor policy in Greece, Germany, Japan, and elsewhere.⁸³ They were well placed to detect the rumblings of the growing conflict. In 1947, as observers began to call this conflict a “cold war,” the political context for both labor federations changed. For the AFL, the world finally seemed to be catching up with them and recognizing the gravity of the Soviet threat, while for the TUC, Cold War pressures began to give anticommunist union leaders and Labour officials more room to maneuver.

One of the earliest manifestations of this new dynamic in the US was Truman’s March 1947 executive order banning Communists from the civil service. Well before Truman’s decision, the AFL had been agitating for such a ban. At its October 1946 convention, a resolution decrying the “insidious forces of Communism” called for “the dismissal from the [government] service of any known

⁸² *New York Times*, September 19, 1946.

⁸³ Ted Morgan, *A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone: Communist, Anti-Communist and Spymaster* (New York, 1995); Hugh Wilford, “American Labour Diplomacy and Cold War Britain,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 37, no. 1 (January 2002), 45-65; Christopher Gerteis, “Subjectivity Lost: Labor and the Cold War in Occupied Japan,” in Shelton Stromquist, ed., *Labor’s Cold War: Local Politics in Global Context* (Urbana, IL, 2008), 258-90; Ronald Filippelli, *American Labor and Post-War Italy* (Stanford, 1989); Federico Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992).

member of the Communist party, or anyone known to be in sympathy with any subversive movement.” The resolution was unanimously adopted by the convention, which also directed the AFL to send a copy to the President.⁸⁴

In the wake of Truman’s order, the House of Representatives considered a bill to enact Truman’s order into federal legislation, and called the labor federations to testify. Both the AFL and the CIO represented government workers. The United Public Workers (CIO) lined up with the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Lawyers Guild, and the American Jewish Congress to denounce the loyalty-security program as “subversive of important principles and guaranties of liberties,” and the “first step toward the establishment in America of a police state.”⁸⁵ The American Federation of Government Employees (AFL) declared, “loyalty to the United States of America is and must always be a fundamental prerequisite to employment in the federal service,” and condemned “disloyal or subversive” government employees. The AFL union urged an even more stringent screening program, testifying that “it is just as important that people already incumbents of positions in the Government service should be subjected to searching scrutiny as to their loyalty as should applicants,” and declared full faith in the FBI, which was “well-equipped to do this kind of a job.”⁸⁶ Later that year, William Green recommended, “similar action should

⁸⁴ *Proceedings of the American Federation of Labor, 65th Convention*, 352. At the AFL’s 1947 convention, a nearly identical resolution was again passed unanimously; *Proceedings of the American Federation of Labor, 66th Convention*, 672.

⁸⁵ U.S. House, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, *Federal Employees’ Loyalty Act*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., June 3-10, 1947, 89; U.S. House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States*, 8-80th Cong., 1st sess., March 24-28 1947.

⁸⁶ U.S. House, *Federal Employees’ Loyalty Act*, 76-77. The bill did not advance past the House.

be taken to weed out the undesirables employed in the legislative and the judiciary branches.”⁸⁷ The Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion joined with the AFL in support of the bill.

Meanwhile, the Congress was also considering a proposal to limit the rights of unions to strike and picket. The Taft-Hartley bill, passed in 1947, contained a provision requiring union officers to sign an anticommunist affidavit, raising the ire of AFL and CIO alike. AFL officials railed against the bill, especially outraged given the loyalty they had demonstrated so assiduously. Nevertheless, the affidavit was a boon to anticommunists in both federations. The CIO expelled eleven unions between 1949-1950, and both AFL and CIO quickly organized the nearly one million expelled members into new, explicitly anticommunist unions.⁸⁸

The Dies Committee, now reformulated as HUAC, had resumed its work, and it continued to provide a forum for AFL unionists to attack CIO rivals. The AFL formally endorsed its continuation, praising the committee’s “excellent work under the most adverse conditions.”⁸⁹ In 1947, Congress considered a bill to outlaw Communism altogether. Green appeared to oppose the law, resurrecting the federation’s old opposition to statutory limits on political organizing. Such laws would merely drive Communists underground, Green warned. The best weapon was exposure: “Merciless public exposition of the men and methods utilized by

⁸⁷ U.S. House, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States*, 8-80th Cong., 1st sess., March 24-28 1947, 56.

⁸⁸ Zieger, *CIO*, 277.

⁸⁹ William Green to Congressman Karl Mundt, February 13, 1945, in Legislative Papers, American Federation of Labor, RG 21-001, George Meany Memorial Archives.

Communists,” he said, “will accomplish more than a thousand criminal penalties directed solely against their political activities.”⁹⁰ Throughout the Cold War, HUAC offered just such a forum for interrogation and humiliation.

By the late 1940s, the signal features of American anticommunism and McCarthyism were in place: legal limits on Communist organizing, bans on Communist employment and union membership, and the theater of Congressional hearings. Labor anticommunists had a hand in producing each element of this regime. One other aspect of American anticommunism makes more sense in this light: its tendency to focus on elites. Numerous contemporaries commented on this peculiar feature of American anticommunism, especially since in most other countries, scrutiny fell on the working class rather than the intelligentsia. In the US, the working class seemed to support McCarthyist measures. In 1955, Seymour Martin Lipset puzzled over this issue, commenting that “in the United States and Britain, the conservative workers, those who back the Tory or the Republican parties, tend to have the most intolerant attitudes,” and particularly in the US, “the lower the person is in socio-economic or educational attainment, the more likely he is to support McCarthy, favor restrictions on civil liberties, and back a ‘get-tough’ policy on the Communist states.”⁹¹ For Richard Hofstadter, the explanation lay in a “grievance against intellectuals,” which was why McCarthyism “showed such a relentless and indiscriminate appetite for victims and why it seemed happier with

⁹⁰ U.S. House, *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States*, 57.

⁹¹ Lipset, “The Sources of the ‘Radical Right’—1955,” in Daniel Bell, ed., *The New American Right*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1963), 282-83.

respectable and powerful targets.”⁹² Anticommunism had been a core working-class politics for decades, and trade unionists had been targeting and purging reds long before McCarthy. Little wonder that many working-class voters endorsed extending these practices more broadly.

In Britain, of course, there was not a corresponding McCarthyist attack on elites or intellectuals. The TUC’s anticommunist catechisms had been far more muted, and while Lipset saw increasing intolerance among British workers, this did not extend to a broader push for restrictions on civil liberties.⁹³ It was the Cold War that provided a new impetus for Labour and TUC officials to venture some moves against the CPGB. In late 1946 Attlee denounced the Soviet Union at a TUC convention, arousing the ire of many members (and the cheers of an AFL delegate in attendance,) and the government worked hard to block a CPGB affiliation with the Labour Party.⁹⁴ Thereafter his government and the TUC worked quietly to try to shift popular consensus, and in 1948 created the Information Research Department, a propaganda operation, to sow doubts about the Soviet Union and Communism among the British public.⁹⁵ The government’s care in keeping the IRD secret from the public indicates how much opposition they expected such efforts to generate. As

⁹² Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in America* (New York, 1963), 41.

⁹³ This is not to say, of course, that there was no anticommunism in Britain in these years, but merely to echo others in remarking that it took a more discreet form, sometimes termed a “silent McCarthyism.” On this point see Potter, “British McCarthyism;” Mark Hollingsworth and Charles Tremaye, *The Economic League: The Silent McCarthyism* (London: National Council for Civil Liberties, 1989).

⁹⁴ *Guardian*, October 25 1946; *New York Times*, October 25, 1946.

⁹⁵ On the IRD, see Daniel W.B. Lomas, “Labour Ministers, Intelligence and Domestic Anti-Communism, 1945–1951, *Journal of Intelligence History*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2013), 113-133; Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda 1945–53: The Information Research Department*.

the Labour Party and the TUC sought to edge the CPGB to the margins of their membership, they increasingly voiced some of the same critiques heard from American unionists: the Soviet Union was undemocratic, the CPGB conniving. But party and union officials avoided broader calls for limitations on civil liberties, let alone public trials and humiliations, for Communists in the early Cold War years.⁹⁶

The government's 1948 enactment of "negative vetting" of civil servants exemplified this approach. In announcing the policy, Attlee emphasized its limitations: "there should be no general purge, no general witch hunt."⁹⁷ The TUC formally protested the plan, but not very energetically, and most of its protests involved demands for trade union representation of accused civil servants. Attlee conceded a slot for a trade union representative on the government's advisory board overseeing the vetting process, and the TUC accepted this compromise. While many TUC activists, communists and non-communists alike, deplored the vetting program, there were also supporters. Arthur Deakin, Bevin's successor at the Transport and General Workers, chided fellow trade unionists at the 1949 TUC Congress who worried that innocent civil servants would be caught up in vetting: "The people with whom we are concerned are those who become involved with Communists and are so tied up with them you cannot tell t'other to which. We have

⁹⁶ Nina Fishman, "The Phoney Cold War in British Trade Unions," *Contemporary British History*, vol. 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2001), 83-104. As Hugh Wilford has shown, the American government sent several labor attaches to Britain, beginning in World War II, who sought to collect information on the activities of British trade unionists and to build up anticommunist sentiment in the country. These labor attaches often worked at cross purposes (some more liberal, others more conservative), and were more successful at intelligence-gathering than influencing British politics. Wilford, "American Labour Diplomacy and Cold War Britain."

⁹⁷ *Hansard*, vol. 448, 25 March 1948, 3421.

made it perfectly clear as a Congress from time to time that we are not prepared to offer any support to those who ask that the Government not take effective measures as are necessary to see that there is complete observance of anything involving the security of the State.”⁹⁸ The TUC was as concerned to support the Labour government as its civil-service members.⁹⁹ By 1949, in domestic affairs as in foreign, the Labour government and the TUC shifted back into the full-throated anticommunism of the pre-war years.

What does this comparison tell us about the politics of anticommunism in the USA and the UK? As Marc Bloch observed, comparative history works best when it examines cases that are sufficiently close that difference does not overwhelm the analysis. Better to use “societies that are at once neighboring and contemporary, exercising a constant mutual influence, exposed throughout their development to the action of the same broad causes, and owing their existence in part to a common origin.”¹⁰⁰ The seeming parallels between the US and the UK—their shared Anglo-American jurisprudential traditions, close political alliance in the 20th century, and apparent distance from the revolutions and counter-revolutions that characterized modern European politics—have led many contemporaries and observers to trace

⁹⁸ *Report of Proceedings of the 81st Annual Trades Union Congress* (London, 1949), 504.

⁹⁹ On the origins of negative vetting, see Peter Hennessy and Gail Brownfield, “Britain's Cold War Security Purge: The Origins of Positive Vetting,” *Historical Journal*, vol. 25, no. 4 (December 1982), 965-974; on the TUC and the policy, see Weiler, *British Labour and the Cold War*, 219-28.

¹⁰⁰ Marc Bloch, “Toward a Comparative History of European Societies,” in Fredric C. Lane and Jelle C. Riemersma, eds., *Enterprise and Secular Change* (Homewood, Ill., 1953), 494-521.

moments of divergence and convergence in their histories. McCarthyism is one of the sharpest of these moments.

Historians have pointed to a range of factors that seemed to produce intolerance in the US and tolerance in the UK, from religious fundamentalism, populism, and nativism in the US, to working-class deference, the valorization of privacy, and the solidarity of the ruling class.¹⁰¹ These explanations account for much, but they also threaten to make the outcome appear inevitable: McCarthyism and its absence can seem overdetermined. As Deborah Cohen has remarked, often “what comparisons illuminate are not hitherto unknown developments, but the significance of institutions and phenomena that national historians take for granted.”¹⁰² This account shows that trade unions deserve a more prominent role in the history of domestic anticommunism. In both the US and the UK, national labor federations developed anticommunist agendas according to logics internal to their respective labor movements. The Cold War created a situation that magnified and amplified these dynamics, but it did not produce them.

This comparison yields a seemingly paradoxical result: it tells us more about the US than about the UK. Labor anticommunism was an independent political force in the US in the interwar period, and most effective at the end of the 1930s, when the testimony of union leaders helped create the rationale for new regimes of political policing. AFL leaders sought to inculcate anticommunism among their

¹⁰¹ For an early comparative account that touches on many themes that recur in later scholarship, see Edward Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy* (London, 1956).

¹⁰² Cohen, “Comparative History: Buyer Beware,” in Deborah Cohen and Maura O’Connor, eds, *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 64.

members and provided legitimacy for red-baiters like Martin Dies. The distinctive anticommunist repertoires that unions developed during the interwar years provided a resource on which Cold War politics could draw. In the UK, labor leaders, although also anticommunist by the early 1930s, were not particularly antagonistic toward communists within their unions, nor did they call for action against communists in the polity. Rather, the TUC voiced a form of reluctant toleration of communism that was characteristic of postwar Britain. This reluctant toleration was not unique to the TUC, however. It was voiced by the Labour Party as well. The TUC was in step with broader patterns of political toleration in Britain. Thus British labor anticommunism did not operate as an independent force, either accelerating or curbing anticommunist sentiment or repression. In the USA, by contrast, labor anticommunism was both a generative and a motive force.¹⁰³

Politics mattered. Anticommunism and the forms that it took, including McCarthyism, were not inevitable outgrowths of preexisting political cultures; rather, those political cultures were made and remade through concerted political action. Understanding its labor-movement origins helps explain why Cold War anticommunism often came dressed in a workingman's cap.

¹⁰³ For a recent study that emphasizes the contingency of the rise of the American security state, see Alex Goodall, *Loyalty and Liberty: American Countersubversion from World War I to the McCarthy Era* (Urbana, IL, 2013.) On Conservative toleration, see Philip Williamson, "The Conservative Party, Fascism, and Antifascism, 1918-1939," in *Varieties of anti-fascism: Britain in the inter-war period* (Basingstoke, 2007), 73-97.